

Maintaining Business During Covid-19 Pandemic Through Social Media: A Content Analysis of Indonesian Football Club Instagram Account

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has become the largest football industry with a huge fan base. Football continues to become a profitable brand and generates extraordinary profits, considering that football has a wide and large market share. As a brand, many football clubs have realized the power of branding in marketing clubs outside the club's local market through branding strategies carried out into content on social media. Currently, social media has become a popular and effective new media in the branding strategy of a football club. Their Instagram account has gained millions of followers in recent years, creating an effective medium for sales and promotion. Many Indonesian big brands agree to sponsor the club as a way to promote their products as well. However, the global pandemic hit from March 2020 to August 2021, and there was a long hiatus for football matches, considering the branding activity of a football club is very dependent on the passing of matches in a competition. Football matches become the 'main product' that attracts the attention of fans and sponsors. Due to this catastrophe, how can football clubs in Indonesia maintain business during the COVID-19 pandemic through Instagram content? Using a semi-structured interview with internal parties of a big football club in Indonesia, this study generates some practical summaries and implications on how to maintain business during the COVID-19 pandemic. The result shows the significant influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the content analysis of the Football Club in Indonesia through Instagram.

Keywords: *COVID-19, football, content analysis, social media, Instagram.*

INTRODUCTION

Football is one of the most popular sports among people from all walks of life and has global appeal (Chadwick et al., 2019; Effendi, 2016). Previously, football was only a sports activity and public entertainment, but it has become a national and even global industrial power with asset values up to billions (Koo, 2009). Since the ban on government funds for managing a football club, Indonesian football is in a transition period towards a modern football industry (Sulistiyono, 2011). Football is the most popular sport in Indonesia, with the most extensive fan base compared to other sports games (Rakhmat, 2021).

Football has a bright potential market in Indonesia. According to the results of a Nielsen Sport poll, 77 percent of the Indonesian population is interested in football, making Indonesia the world's second-largest football fan country (Arifianto, 2017). A football team must consider the correct branding and marketing plan to attract consumers and differentiate themselves from competitors in a competitive business, one of which is using social media (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018). Over the last decade, one of the most significant tools used to convey the brand image in the sports industry is social media (Newman et al., 2017).

In recent years, Instagram has become one of the most popular social media platforms; until July 2021, the number of Instagram users in Indonesia reached 91.77 million (Rizaty, 2021). Several recent studies and arguments show that Instagram has been used to engage sports fans, generate business, and achieve social goals through images, videos, and news being shared (Kim & Hull, 2017). Instagram presents a strong public visualization that has the potential to create interaction with the public (Latif et al., 2024). Many football clubs in Indonesia have millions of followers on Instagram and use Instagram as media for promotion, marketing, getting sponsors, and selling their products (Nurhidayat, 2020; Waliyudin, 2020).

Social media helps to raise brand exposure; what's more, it allows for two-way contact, allowing every audience, consumer, and fan to communicate directly with their favorite players, clubs, and businesses (Singh & Nimkar, 2020). Many brands recognize this possibility and work or partner with football clubs as sponsors to advertise and improve sales of their products through the use of the football club's social media (Abon & Adebayo, 2020; Mattesi, 2019; Popp & Woratschek, 2016). Such activities like the workout apparel worn by football players who will appeal to fans to purchase the same clothing. More exposure to images on social media raises brand awareness and, as a result, will raise sales. This collaboration benefits not only the brand but also the club itself.

As an industry, football does provide extraordinary income returns, even in times of crisis, such as the global economic crisis of 2007-2008 (Dimitropoulos et al., 2016; Parnell et al., 2021). However, in early 2020, the world was shaken by the COVID-19 virus, which spread to all continents until it became a global pandemic (Lin et al., 2021). COVID-19 has undoubtedly led to a global economic crisis following the global economic crisis of 2007-2008, having significant consequences for the non-sports industry and the sports industry around the world (Mohr et al., 2020). In contrast to the economic crisis of 2007-2008, the COVID-19 pandemic brought sports competitions and matches, including football, to a complete halt; moreover, in Indonesia, the competition was suspended for more than one year (Firmansyah, 2020; Harahap, 2021; Parnell et al., 2020). Given that, football competitions and matches are the main selling product or selling point of a football club (Koo, 2009; Szymanski & Smith, 2010). Not only in Indonesia, but several football clubs in Europe also experienced derivative impacts from the COVID-19 event, such as a reduction in club income and finances, especially in ticket sales, broadcast rights, and sponsorships (Luo, 2023). Based on these problems, how can football clubs in Indonesia maintain business during the COVID-19 pandemic through Instagram social media content analysis?

LITERATURE REVIEW

a. Indonesia Football Industry

The development of the football industry in European countries indirectly affects the dynamics of Indonesian football, starting from club officials, coaches, and players, to supporters (Sulistiyono, 2011). The benefits that may be gained by football clubs are the reason that (Luo, 2023) tickets, club merchandise, sponsors, television station broadcasting rights, and even the sale of the club's players (Sendy et al., 2014). The role of a football club marks the characteristics of the modern football industry as the core business of a company that is a legal entity. This means that previously amateur clubs have turned into professional clubs and have become business units whose main goal is to generate profits (Sulistiyono, 2011; Suwandi et al., 2017).

This has also become a concern for the Indonesian government, which supports the industrialization of Indonesian football by prohibiting football clubs in Indonesia from using government funds and budgets since 2011 through Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 22 of 2011 (Hermawan, 2012; Sulistiyono, 2011). The development of football in Indonesia has encountered many challenges, including cheating issue, match-fixing, bribery, and corruption among the top management of Indonesian football, causing division in the league. As a result, before the COVID-19 pandemic, football in Indonesia was also halted completely due to sanctions and suspensions from the Ministry of Youth and Sports and even FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association) in 2015-2016 (Astuti, 2016; Azizi, 2020; Prastya, 2018).

With the introduction of Liga 1 as Indonesia's elite football competition in 2017, the Indonesian football league has continued to progress for the advancement of Indonesian football in the international arena after the Ministry of Youth and Sports and FIFA lifted sanctions. PSSI (Indonesian Football Association) formed this competition as the embodiment of the first professional football competition in Indonesia. Following FIFA requirements which state that the top league of a country must be participated by at least 18 clubs, and each club is expected to be a professional club without the help of government subsidies (Haditama, 2018; Ayolndonesia, 2019). Slowly but surely, the development of the Indonesian football industry is heading in a positive direction. One of them is the achievement of the Bali United FC club, which successfully listed its name on the capital market, making it the first club in Southeast Asia, and even the second in Asia as a club that managed to Go Public (Tan, 2019)

b. Indonesian Football in Pandemic COVID-19

After facing sanctions from FIFA, which resulted in the complete cessation of football competitions in 2017, the stable Indonesian football climate was again shaken by the COVID-19 outbreak, which resulted in the temporary suspension of national football activities (Wijaya, 2020). On March 16, 2020, the Indonesian League 1 and 2 were forced to stop running until they were finally canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Adhikresna, 2021). The cessation of football competition has caused many problems for football clubs, especially in finances and player salaries (Wijaya, 2020).

The club's financial problems are the main one because they have implications for player salaries (Wijaya, 2020). The club's unstable financial condition means that decisions must be made immediately. The uncertainty of competition and the loss of financial support from sponsors means that many clubs are in salary arrears. The serious financial condition of clubs has also caused many clubs to terminate contracts without meeting the deadline.

Several League 1 and League 2 clubs in Indonesia were forced to disband due to the Covid-19 pandemic, including Madura United, Persipura, and Persebaya for League 1 and Cilegon United, PSMS Medan, Persewar Waropen for League 2. The reason for the dissolution of the clubs was the uncertainty of the start league, the majority of players' contracts expire in December 2020, unable to pay players and officials, and there is no other income apart from match tickets. Then several clubs were declared bankruptcy after the official competition was not reopened, and these included Sriwijaya FC, Perserang, and Persik Kediri (Simbolon, 2021). The derivative impact of postponing competitions creates losses in sports businesses and its related industries such as organizing leagues, events, business, travel, tourism, infrastructure, transportation, catering, and media broadcasting (Pradiksa & Prianto, 2022).

All football clubs in Indonesia are experiencing the tremendous impact of COVID-19, without exception. Even some clubs, such as Persebaya Surabaya, Madura United, and Persipura Jayapura decided to dissolve their clubs. The three clubs decided to dissolve their teams because most of the player contracts had expired as of December 31, 2020, and they were unable to pay their obligations to the players and officials, while Persib Bandung and Arema Malang chose to dismiss their teams (Jun, 2021; Wijaya, 2020).

The high number of positive cases of COVID-19 and its rapid spread in Indonesia has resulted in the Indonesian government and PSSI as the institution that oversees football in Indonesia, delaying and even cancelling Liga 1 2020 for the sake of mutual safety. Most clubs understand and accept the decision of the Government and PSSI that safety is paramount. The health aspect, of course, must be prioritized considering that football matches are very likely to be a means of spreading COVID-19, although it does not deny the fact that the club has suffered huge economic losses (Wijaya, 2020). As a result, some clubs have been compelled to keep innovating to survive and earn money during the COVID-19 pandemic (Praisra et al., 2021).

c. Social Media Use in Football Marketing

Due to rapid advances in internet-based information and communication technology, web communication, which was originally a one-way communication, has evolved into a dynamic two-way communication through social media (Abeza et al., 2016). Social media becomes a platform to create online participation because of the ease of access. This condition creates engagement for an individual/group who intends to create relationships with other parties through interaction and communication so that they can influence each other (Atnan et al., 2024). The advantage of social media is that it provides direct and fast communication, as well as creating two-way interactions so that transparency and accountability can be realized (Sukmayadi et al., 2024). Today, millions of people, especially among the younger generation, are connected daily through social media, such as having discussions on Facebook, expressing complaints on Twitter, watching videos on YouTube, sharing stories or liking pictures or videos on Instagram, or scrolling down through the video platform TikTok (Parganas et al., 2015; Kharmalki & Raizada, 2020). The emergence of these various social media platforms has changed the communication approach of all levels of society from multiple sectors around the world; social media has become the most suitable platform for internet users worldwide to communicate with each other. Interact, share information, and post their own, including their brands (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008).

The rapid growth of social media also greatly affects people's consumption patterns in enjoying the sports they like. For example, Instagram is becoming the most popular social media among young people who like certain sports to discuss with other fans on Instagram profiles of their favorite clubs and athletes (Kharmalki & Raizada, 2020). It is also used by sports organizations, such as football clubs, to share visual content for the sake of branding, marketing, and increasing fan engagement (Nurhidayat, 2020; Singh & Nimkar, 2020; Waliyudin, 2020).

In addition, seeing the huge football market opportunity, many brands cooperate or partner with football clubs by becoming sponsors to promote and increase sales of their products by utilizing the football club's social media (Abon & Adebayo, 2020; Mattesi, 2019; Popp & Woratschek, 2016). Therefore, many football clubs are also competing to offer something interesting and different, both visually and by filling out interesting content on

social media to get the attention of fans and sponsors (Annamalai et al., 2021; Ozora & Susanto, 2021).

Wheeler said that in building a brand, it is important to create a touchpoint with consumers, namely the selection and distribution of each content on social media, and how it can build relationships with consumers (fans, sponsors, football community, investors, etc.) (Wheeler, 2017). Ricardo Mattesi's research results proved that social media has a very positive impact on a football club in addition to increasing fan interaction and involvement, building identity, increasing commercial income, and enriching the value of a brand (Mattesi, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Researchers used a content analysis approach to understand the dynamics of the Indonesian football business during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of an Indonesian football club's Instagram content strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic, where football activities which are the main product, have been completely stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The method used in this research is the descriptive-qualitative method (Lambert & Lambert, 2013). The qualitative descriptive method was chosen because it can describe the research object through photographs, video, illustration, and narration so that it suits the researcher's conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Apart from that, this method can reveal the underlying situation, so that it does not lead to misconceptions, misunderstandings, and misinterpretations (Fadli, 2021). Apart from that, this research uses a case study research type, taking one of the Indonesian football clubs, which is quite superior in digital marketing through Instagram, as the research sample.

The main data collection was conducted using a semi-structured interview method with key informants who were the heads of the club's social media division (Kevin Septian as Head of Creative Bali United) to ensure the validity and originality of the data. In addition to conducting interviews with experts (Bryan Barcelona as a Social Media Specialist & Football journalist Persis Solo), the researchers collected secondary data through direct observation of the club's social media accounts, past studies, and credible internet article sources.

The research was conducted between April and June 2021 because this period can describe more than one year of Indonesian football competitions being stopped due to COVID-19, so it is very suitable for data collection. Interviews took place face-to-face, and the social media application WhatsApp was also used. To avoid data distortion, each interview process was written down in notes and recorded using digital devices. To avoid meaning bias, the researchers reduced the collected data before analyzing and discussing it together. The first step was to transcribe the interview from the audio recording, tracking, and organizing process (intensive and selective processing of interview transcripts so that data/information is unbiased and easy to process) (Haryoko et al., 2020) and establish the coding scheme. During the initial stage of coding, the researchers went through revisions until a conclusion was reached. Following the initial model, the coding scheme was applied to the entire data. Furthermore, it was presented and the conclusions were drawn in qualitative form according to Miles and Hubberman to answer the existing problems and determine the findings to be meaningful (Sugiyono, 2007). For the sake of participants' privacy, all their background information was reported anonymously.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The massive spread of the COVID-19 virus has caused this virus to become a global epidemic that affects various lines of life, including the world of football. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, everything related to football will take place under new circumstances and adjustments (Parnell et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic will greatly affect the condition of a football club, from the physical aspect to the business economy. Business economic factors require clubs to look for breakthroughs that allow clubs to continue to run the economy as professionally as possible, even though many marketing activities have been paralyzed due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Hariadi et al., 2020).

As we know, the world of football includes players, coaching staff, spectators, management teams, administrative staff, stadium security, sponsors, journalists, marketing staff, and many more. Football has grown into a multibillion-dollar industry and business (Koo, 2009). Therefore, nowadays, football cannot be separated from business and marketing activities. Football matches, players, and coaching as the main products will collectively work together with business management and marketing to form the era of the digital football world, where all fans around the world can be connected along with advances in communication and information technology as we can see.

This is evidenced by the fact that we can see daily updates on the activities of our favorite football clubs at any time, not only during matches, through social media. This is not only done to please fans but also for economic and business interests, considering football is a broad and strong market. As a benchmark, the football market in Europe is considered worth ~25 billion pounds, with a combined 'Top 5 European League' revenue of ~13 billion pounds in the 2017/18 season (Deloitte Consulting LLP, 2019). Much of this growth is due to the hyper-commercialization and commodification of football across Europe. Global investment funds, multi-national conglomerates, sovereign wealth funds, and even royalties are now common ownership structures in world football (Parnell et al., 2021).

Our informant acknowledged that currently, there is quite a tight competition in the digital marketing world of Indonesian football even though the Indonesian League has just entered the industrial realm and is growing like European football. In his interview, our key informant said that:

Now Indonesian football is growing industry, and the war is not only happening eleven against eleven on the field, but the war is also happening in digital marketing, including content on social media. (Kevin Septian – Head of Creative Bali United FC)

However, what happens to the world of football when its main product is temporarily suspended, even in Indonesia, for more than a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic? On March 16, 2020, the Indonesian League 1 and 2 were forced to stop running until they were finally canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has a big influence on the sustainability of a football club because matches and competitions are the 'main selling' of a club to attract the attention of their target market. Branding and marketing activities are, of course, also very dependent on this; therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic has paralyzed a club. This greatly shakes the condition of the Indonesian football industry, which is still new and not as stable as the European leagues.

As a result, many clubs experienced financial difficulties and chose to dismiss their clubs; even three major Indonesian League clubs, namely Persebaya Surabaya, Madura United, and Persipura Jayapura decided to dissolve their clubs. The three clubs decided to disband their teams because most of the player contracts expired as of 31 December 2020, and they felt unable to pay their obligations to the players and officials (Jun, 2021). Bali United FC also experienced financial constraints due to the COVID-19 pandemic as the defending champion and the club with the highest market value in Indonesia. Based on the financial statements of PT Bali Bintang Sejahtera Tbk, which manages this club, revenue was only IDR 45.8 billion until the first semester of 2020. This figure is down 37% compared to the same period in the previous year. They also lost up to Rp 12.5 billion (Lidwina, 2020).

In response to this, football clubs in Indonesia are thinking about how to get alternative income outside of football matches for the club's survival (Praisra et al., 2021), one of which is by continuing to use Instagram. According to our sources, Instagram is currently a better medium for conveying the main identity of a football club than the official website. Every branding activity and official club information are delivered first on Instagram. Indeed, the interest of the Indonesian people to become Instagram followers of their proud football club is quite large. Data as of November 2021 showed Persib Bandung with 4.9 million followers, Persija Jakarta with 3 million followers, Persebaya Surabaya with 1.9 million followers, Arema FC with 1.4 million followers, Bali United FC with 1.1 million followers, and many more. According to the 2020 AFC (Asian Football Confederation) poll edition, Persib Bandung which has the most followers, followed by Persija, Persebaya, and Arema, is the most popular club in Southeast Asia (IDNTimes, 2021). This makes many brands want to sponsor in exchange for promoting their products on their Instagram pages.

Although their branding activities have been disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several football clubs in Indonesia have chosen to remain consistent and creative in creating content on Instagram, even though their branding activities have been disrupted due to the pandemic. One of them has agreed to be our primary source for this study, where the club is considered a pioneer in the digital realm of Indonesian football, with over 1 million fans. According to an explanation from our source, who happens to be the head of creative who oversees the social media content of one of the clubs, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the football industry in Indonesia. In the early days of the lockdown and the postponement of competitions, it came as a bit of a shock to the activity on social media of clubs in Indonesia, not only the clubs he worked for.

Therefore, like it or not, the club must adapt to this condition, including in the content on social media because some content contains cooperation with sponsors that must be respected. Our key informant said that the COVID-19 pandemic did not interfere with the workflow of the creative team; it just needed an adjustment from being used to meeting face-to-face to being completely online because, during the lockdown, the Indonesian government required offices to work from home (Wahyudi, 2021). The most difficult part is the essence of creating content that previously depended on football activities, both matches and team training activities because this pandemic forced the creative team to make modifications and even create new things that had never been done before.

Our key informant explained that the process of creating a strategy for this content was not much different from what was usually done before the COVID-19 pandemic. From the observations, it was found that in creating a content strategy while collaborating with the social media team, the first step that the creative team takes is to do research. Research is

carried out to find out complex market behavior patterns that can continue to change at any time. Seeing the competitive environment in the increasingly competitive world of social media requires the creative team and media for football clubs in Indonesia to continue to improve and consider it a challenge that must be conquered.

According to our informant, the team he leads has an SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and SEM (Search Engine Marketing) team that assists creative heads with research and digital analysis that is useful for establishing the appropriate social media content strategy. Research usually uses digital marketing tools or social media monitoring such as Google Trends, Ripple10, CrowdTangle, social media insight, etc.; in-depth observation of competitors; observe design trends or topics that are going viral.

After doing research, the next thing to do is identify, articulate, and try to play on every idea found in the research process. After the data are collected, the creative head will gather the creative team and the social media team to discuss, and determine what strategies to work on social media for the next few months. Based on the statement of our key informant, the first thing the creative team did was determine the communication and strategy philosophy. From the creative head's statement, the creative team's way of articulating and processing any data obtained during the research is to look for the language of communication or, in Wheeler's theory, referred to as Key Messages (Wheeler, 2017). The right Key Messages land on followers, according to the latest trends, and look for the philosophy of the communication so that it is easy to be specified as a content strategy for the next 3-6 months.

According to our key informant, after the creative team agrees upon the content communication strategy, the next process is the creation of visuals, also called key visuals, to be forwarded to the design team. At this stage, the design team will receive an agreed strategy brief from the creative team. The design team will immediately process the brief to provide visual design and design options. The design team will offer visual options and discuss with the creative team to create the right key visual to represent this content strategy. The aim is that the goals or messages expected by the creative team can be conveyed to consumers properly through an attractive visual design display.

Thus, in creating a content strategy on social media, especially Instagram, it is based on research, not just imagination or team intuition to gain insight into the strategy to be built. In addition, market research can be done online thanks to technological advances, so the COVID-19 pandemic is not a significant obstacle to continuing to do research. According to our sources, the findings from the research can be used as a guide to determine the general content strategy for the past 3-6 months and then be forwarded to more specific daily content strategies such as videos, gamification, memes, advertisements, etc. Research can also be used as a guide when creating daily content, which frequently changes due to trends or viral. Daily content can still be related even though it has been programmed previously in the general content strategy. Summarizing from the results of the interview, if the research process in the preparation of a content strategy is described in the table, it is as follows:

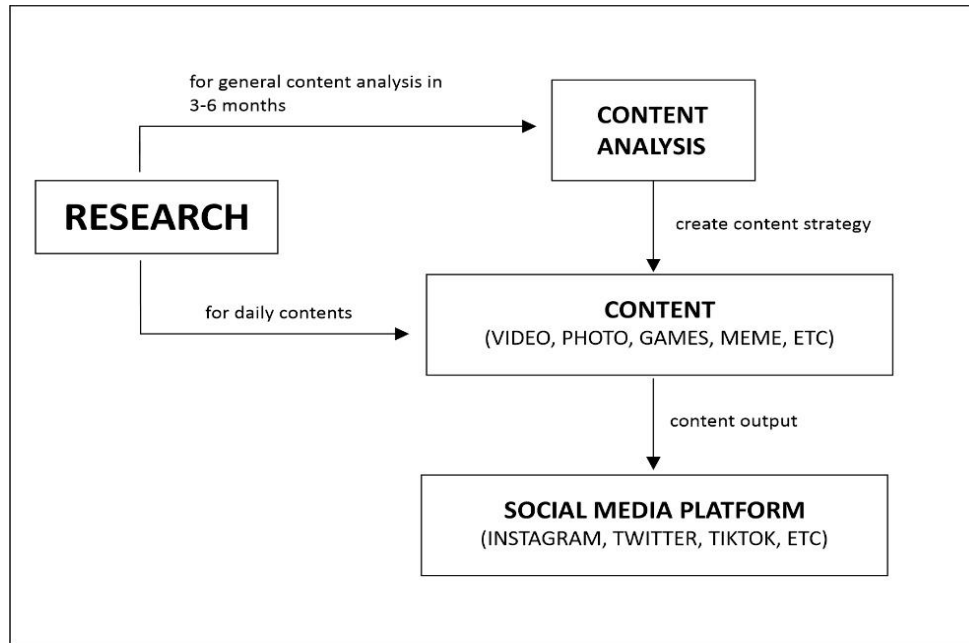


Figure 1: The process of creating a content strategy on social media

According to the table above, it can be said that research is everything in determining the right content strategy regardless of the conditions. Even if there is a COVID-19 pandemic, content on social media, especially Instagram, can continue to flow, with modifications and creativity to anticipate changing situations without losing focus. Following the statement of our informant who said that:

Yes. If we go back, before taking action, we always rely on research; one of the research tools is Instagram insights. From looking at the insights, we can find out the demographic conditions of our followers, from which city, what the age range is, what the spoken language is, and so on. So we can create content that is right on target. (Kevin Septian- Head of Creative Bali United FC)

For example, the Bali United FC club carried out a content strategy to respond to the COVID-19 condition and the cessation of football activities, wrapped in a campaign entitled #NungguinYa. The campaign, conducted from November 2020 – January 2021, was intended to communicate the concerns of football lovers who are waiting for the Indonesian Football League to be held again, which was stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the execution was slightly inversely proportional to the restless atmosphere; the creative team of Bali United FC conceptualized this campaign with a fun and cheerful concept, which was made like a festival atmosphere. In this campaign, the aim was to entertain Bali United FC fans instead of stopping football activities involving fans and giving gifts or giveaways to fans. In this context, Bali United FC also cooperated with sponsors. Even if football is suspended, sponsors are free to advertise in this event to fulfill the contracts and responsibilities of clubs with sponsors.



Figure 2: Screenshot of Bali United FC's Instagram post in the #NungguinYa campaign

The Persija Jakarta club has also done the same thing to anticipate the COVID-19 pandemic, which has also stopped football activities. To keep connected with supporters to satisfy fans' desires while also fulfilling contractual obligations with sponsors, Persija hosted virtual events such as Virtual Meet and Greet with Persija players and even e-sports tournaments as alternative activities to replace football. From these activities, the void of Instagram content slots filled by football matches and training activities can be replaced properly.



Figure 3: Screenshot of Persija Jakarta's Instagram post holding a virtual event

The next example is Persib Bandung. As a social media giant in Indonesian football and even Southeast Asia, Persib also modified its Instagram content to fulfill its responsibilities to sponsors and fill content slots on its Instagram account. For example, Persib's Instagram post, in partnership with the Indomie brand as one of Persib's sponsors, modified the "Support Persib" content. From previously inviting fans to support Persib in facing the next match and visuals full of player activity on the field, it was modified to become an invitation to continue to support Persib Bandung even at home with visual activities of players at home.

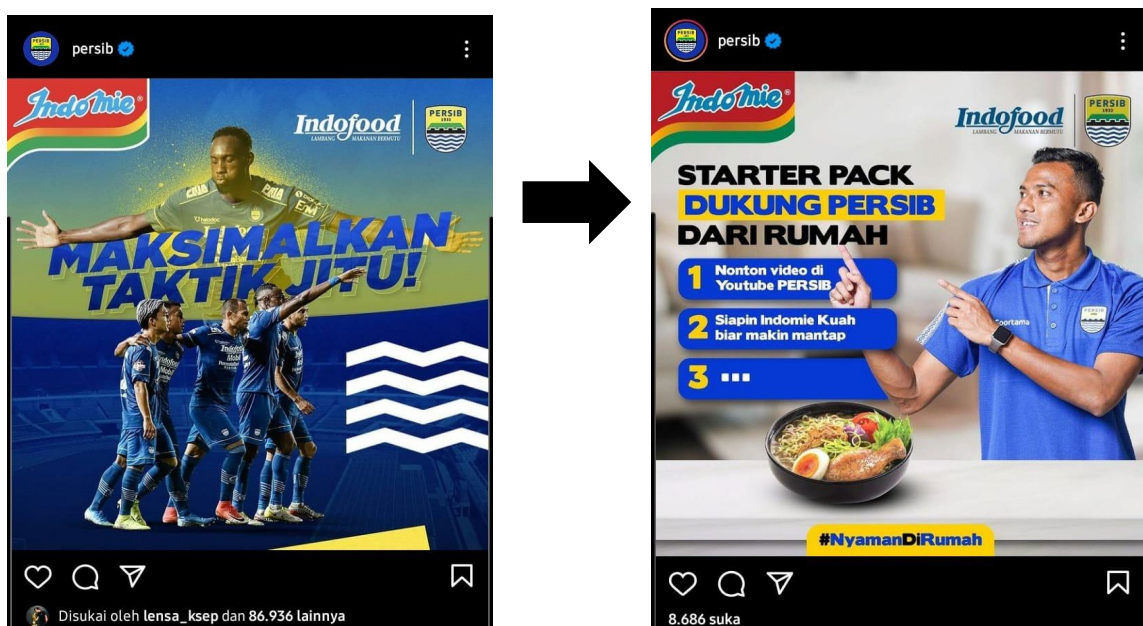


Figure 4: Persib Bandung's modification of Instagram content in dealing with the pandemic

Apart from the examples above, many other football clubs in Indonesia have also implemented similar content ideas by replacing soccer activities on the field with activities at home and providing education to their respective fans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some people also create throwback content, fond memories of the club in the past, memorable goals, gamification, quizzes with prizes, or even cover the daily activities of one of the players at home to show their existence in the world of social media. Some of them also chose to take a hiatus from social media during the competition, which was mostly due to financial difficulties. For example, Persipura Jayapura chose to disband their team on January 6, 2021 and decided to take a hiatus for almost 2 months from social media due to financial difficulties, which resulted in not being able to fulfill the responsibility of providing salaries to players, coaches, and all club staff (Prasatya, 2021).

According to the findings of our study, unusual circumstances such as the COVID-19 epidemic have no technical impact on developing a content strategy or creating content, particularly on Instagram. In the digital marketing era, consistency and continuity in social media content creation are critical. In addition to establishing a presence, consistency, and continuity in the planning and creation of social media content are critical for increasing brand awareness among the general public or the desired target market (Maryolein et al., 2019; Setyaningsih et al., 2019). This is the basic reason for most football clubs' management in Indonesia to keep trying to be active on social media. Keep trying to think about, looking for gaps in things that can be used as content on social media as alternative content ideas from football activities that have stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The role of social media in the world of football is very important in the current era. Moreover, COVID-19 has provided experience for working online. The implications of social media are very positive for providing information to the public quickly. Apart from that, the huge atmosphere of Indonesian football supporters means that all new news will be eagerly awaited. Based on this, Indonesian football clubs must use social media to increase their popularity and following in society. Then for the government, successful management of social media for the football industry will be able to increase club income, thereby increasing tax value.

As a journalist, I think that Indonesia is a big fan of football in the world, so it has a big market, especially in the broadcast sector on several TV stations. In the current era, clubs are starting to be concerned with branding marketing, broadcasting rights, and social media. If this is managed well, I guarantee it can increase public interest and TV ratings. Even though COVID-19 occurred, public interest is still high because it has a long history which has formed awareness and loyalty towards the club and the National Team. Thus, I guarantee that the COVID-19 incident will not affect the enthusiasm of supporters because it has become part of their identity. (Bryan Barcelona-Head of Media Persis Solo)

PSSI as the parent of Indonesian football continues to improve and move towards industry because it has a high selling value so it can be commercialized. Even though currently the growth of the Indonesian football industry is relatively slow, the opportunities for economic and business value for clubs are very open if they get investors/sponsors.

The age of Indonesian football is indeed old, but industrially it is not yet mature because the format of the Indonesian League still changes every period. The impact of uncertainty over the league format makes investors think twice about making investments. So there is a need for a clear league format, we can follow the example of the English League during the early 90s when they changed their football structure because it was less popular than Serie A or La Liga. (Bryan Barcelona-Head of Media Persis Solo)

Indonesian football once used a format of 4 regions with a system like the Cup/Copa and currently uses the Championship Series format so there is no definite format. The implications of the uncertainty of the league format cause the growth of the football industry to be slow because there are no investors. The Indonesian football industry was running during the Djarum League because there was involvement of the private sector and there had been a shift to football not using the APBD, resulting in the creation of professional clubs. Currently, the club is still dependent on APBD funds so the private sector is less interested in investing because of the complicated regional bureaucracy.

Several clubs in Indonesia, such as Bali United and Dewa United, are examples of clubs that have adapted to the climate of the modern football industry. Both clubs provide modern facilities with the support of professionally managed management. Even though the two clubs do not have a long history, they have been able to transform into modern clubs. They are a club that can carry out modern football practices and make a positive contribution to Indonesian football.

Conventionally, Bali United and Dewa United do not have a football history because they originate from the acquisition of previous clubs. Morally, it can harm sportsmanship and not create loyalty towards football because it shows practices that should not be carried out in today's industry. However, the positive thing that these two clubs provide is that they exemplify modern and professional football management. This is a big credit for the development of Indonesian football because they are superior in terms of management and facilities. (Bryan Barcelona-Head of Media Persis Solo)

Bali United can be used as an example for other clubs in Indonesia because they dare to make breakthroughs that other clubs have not thought about, such as creating a Training Center (TC) facility. Then in the business aspect, Bali United is concerned with forming a business ecosystem and creative world by optimizing social media. Some of Bali United's positive achievements are café facilities, radio, a private agency, active sponsor activation, and a good business portfolio so that it can become a benchmark for new sports businesses in Indonesia. So clubs that have a long history in Indonesia must learn and make positive breakthroughs, especially in the field of sports business.

Clubs that have a long history must follow the example of Bali United in building a business ecosystem, especially sports business. A club must have the courage to take unpopular breakthroughs and adapt to current developments to move towards a more progressive direction. Clubs must pay attention to the supporting ecosystem, such as establishing an academy,

forming sponsorship potential, and other development. (Bryan Barcelona-Head of Media Persis Solo)

The government's policy towards stopping Indonesian football competitions shows unpreparedness in dealing with COVID-19. During COVID-19, Bali United utilized the role of social media for branding media and marketing activities. Currently, social media has become a portfolio and representation of a club for branding. In the past, the media available was newspapers by purchasing several blocks of columns or several advertorials in newspapers, magazines, and television. However, now the club has its medium through social media, so the club can provide information in real-time to update the club's condition and has a role in getting sponsorship offers because it has taken into account the social media portfolio and the team's track record. Investors will also look at social media content because it can show the club's seriousness in building a business ecosystem. Apart from that, social media plays a role in supporting club activities to achieve achievements in the field.

Social media activation is highly correlated with increasing merchandise sales, spectator attendance at a match, and the number of followers on social media. For example, Persis Solo has taken steps to change the narrative on social media to bring supporters to the stadium and received a positive response from supporters, thereby increasing match ticket sales. Then specifically merchandise via social media is used as a hype or teaser tool when launching new products. This has been proven to be able to build a good/emotional narrative in the promotion of a product and will increase product or match ticket sales. In this way, a call to action can be more targeted than just a poster calling for a match.



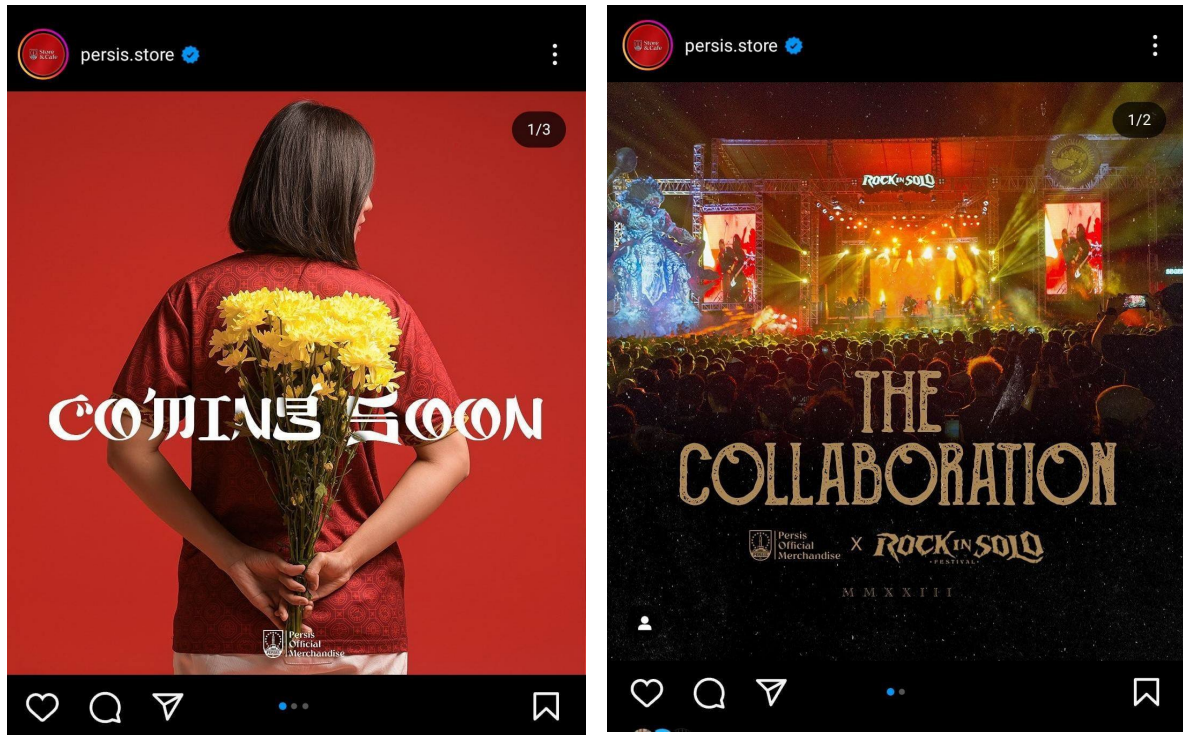


Figure 5: Persis Solo modification of Instagram content in the narration of supporters' presence, before launching new products, and collaboration products

Advances in information and communication technology have become a major factor in overcoming the limitation brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic. Research, meetings, and team coordination can now be done online with a remote system. Therefore, despite the lockdown and requiring the team to work from home, formulating content strategies and creating content on social media, especially Instagram, can continue to flow. The part that makes it difficult is finding the essence of dealing with this abnormal condition. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, branding activities that are the 'main selling' of a football club, such as matches and leagues, have been completely stopped. This forced the creative teams of several football clubs in Indonesia to adapt, modify, and be creative in figuring out how to continue to exist, especially on Instagram and as a form of accountability with sponsors who had already pressed contracts before the pandemic occurred. This difficulty can be solved which was proven based on the Instagram accounts of several football clubs in Indonesia who continue to actively upload interesting and creative content during their absence of League competition (March 2020 – August 2021).

CONCLUSION

We conclude that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the world of football. However, technically this does not pose a big obstacle to football clubs in creating creative content on Instagram even though the main product of a football club, namely football matches, was stopped due to COVID-19. Considering that we have now entered the era of digital marketing, continuity and consistency on social media are important things to work on and strive for.

COVID-19 is not a huge barrier to being creative in developing content on Instagram because every element of the content strategy creation process and daily material on Instagram in particular, can be done online without requiring the creative team or the club's social media team to meet face-to-face. With a little adaptation, adjustment, and modification of the previous content, it can create new alternatives in creating fresher content that is still relevant to the world of football, even though the COVID-19 pandemic has stopped the main activity of football.

Regardless, the COVID-19 crisis can serve as a warning sign to every football club to always be prepared for what must be done in order to exist and survive if, in the future, they face a crisis that causes football activities to halt. Further research that we recommend to complement the limitations of this study is to conduct quantitative research to calculate and compare the effectiveness of each content from before the pandemic with the time of the pandemic. We also recommend adding from the point of view of fans as consumers of football club content.

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