

YouTube as Capital Battle Arena in the Digital Age (Case Study of Top 10 Youtubers in Indonesia)

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Abstract

YouTube is a popular new business field in Indonesia. Content creators compete to gain the most popularity and subscribers among others. YouTube is like a new arena in which there is competition and dominance. Every content creator has a habitus and capital that becomes a strategy or means to win the contestation in the arena. This research is examined using a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the habits and modalities used by content creators in the YouTube platform arena. The concept used in this study is a concept developed by Bourdieu about habitus, capital and arena. The unit of analysis of this research is the ten YouTube accounts with the highest number of subscribers in Indonesia

Keywords

YouTube, Content creator, Bourdieu, Habitus and Capital.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed people's habits in using and consuming various content on social media networks including YouTube. Interesting statistics regarding YouTube in 2021 as quoted in Marketreading.com (2021) include, (1) YouTube generated \$19.7 billion in revenue in January 2021 and became the second largest search engine after Google; (2) more than 2.3 billion people worldwide use YouTube once a month; (3) YouTube is the second most popular social media; (4) everyday people watch more than a billion hours of video and generate billions of views; (5) Most YouTube users belong to the age group of 15-35 years; (6) more than 70% of YouTube viewing time comes from mobile devices with a male-to-female audience ratio of 11:9; and (7) India has the most YouTube users in 2021 estimated at 225 million.

In Indonesia, there are some interesting data when referring to the We Are Social (2021) report. YouTube is the most widely used social media platform by the public, amounting to 93.8% of the total 170 million social media users. The

data also shows that the number of male audiences or audiences is 54.1% more than women at 45.9%. While the top three content that is often accessed by audiences are songs, djs and movies.

In line with these data, based on the Jakpat survey conducted to 2,321 respondents in 33 provinces in Indonesia, YouTube is the social media most accessed by Indonesian people in semester I-2021. Most or 65% of respondents access YouTube because the platform is considered entertaining. As many as 56% of respondents also access YouTube because they find it informative (Katadata.co.id, 2021). This data shows that YouTube is a sign that there is a change in the media landscape in the current digital era. YouTube is no longer just a medium of information and entertainment but also a new business field for anyone who is able to create interesting content that is liked by the audience. There are many content creators or YouTubers who can benefit from YouTube. Some of them occupy the top positions as top youtubers with the highest number of subscribers among others. In 2022, based on data from Socialblade as quoted by Katadata.co.id (2022), the 10 YouTube accounts with the most subscribers in a row are Ria Ricis, AH (Atta Halilintar), Jess No Limit, Rans Entertainment, Trans7 Official, Frost Diamond, Baim Paula, Indosiar, Gen Halilintar, and Deddy Corbuzier.

Looking deeper, we can see that these ten accounts have distinct personalities, as evidenced by the content produced and subscriber demographics. YouTube has evolved into a new arena (field) in which each YouTuber attempts to display a variety of content in order to gain popularity and profit. Each youtuber has a habit and capital as a strategy for dominating the Indonesian YouTube platform arena. The researchers' investigation of the topic of this research is based on the competition among youtubers to be the most popular (or the winner in the YouTube arena). The main question addressed in this study is how youtubers use their habit and capital to compete in the YouTube arena.

1.1 Objectives

The purpose of this research is to explore how the top ten youtubers in Indonesia use their respective habitus and capital to be able to compete in the YouTube arena.

2. Literature Review

Pierre Bourdieu as a sociologist tries to explain how the position of individuals and groups in an environment or social arena. An environment or social arena that is full of dominance forms a person's personality, which basically already has existing resources or abilities and even tries to obtain other sources of ability through education and or utilizing relationships, connections and the big name of the family. Bourdieu tries to connect objectivistic and subjectivistic elements in the same container, namely the social world.

In his explanation of the social sciences, Bourdieu pays attention to what individuals do in their daily lives. He argues that social life cannot be understood solely as an aggregate of behavior. Bourdieu introduced the concept of habitus which was taken from a Latin word which refers to a typical or habitual condition, appearance or situation, especially in the body (Jenkins, 2014). Through this habitus, Bourdieu tries to unravel everyday social practices and the principles of order that accompany them. Bourdieu explains that social practice is not only understood as a pattern of individual decision-making or social practice as a result of supra-individual structures (Fashri, 2014).

Habitus is interpreted as a tendency or habit that is internalized and inherent in oneself and can change which is able to influence practices and actions without requiring awareness (Yahya, 2017). As the fruit of history, habitus produces practices, both individual and collective, according to the schema contained by history. Habitus is a source of strategy that is objectively used as a more acceptable strategy when compared to other strategies. Habitus is like a system that lasts a long time, a transposable disposition, is the fruit of a certain basic environmental structure which becomes a general principle and a practical structure that can objectively regulate and be regulated and will run in a harmonious orchestration without having a conductor (Bourdieu, 1977 in (Gasa, 2016)).

Bourdieu's thought about habitus cannot be separated from the concept of the arena (field). The arena becomes the locus or place where an individual interacts with other individuals, both those from one group or different groups. The arena or realm is an arena of power in which there is an effort to struggle for resources (capital) and also to obtain certain accesses that are close to the power hierarchy. It is the structure of the realm that guides and provides strategies for position occupants, both individuals and groups, to protect or improve their position in relation to the level of social achievement (Fashri, 2014).

Arena or realm is the same as a place where each individual struggles to occupy the highest position by utilizing all available resources and the structure of capital or capital owned. This capital or capital is a concept that cannot be separated from the concept of habitus and arena. Bourdieu explains that capital is a determinant of the structure of class relations in society. The struggle that occurs in the social world illustrates how individuals place themselves in certain arenas in order to secure their position and even their position (politically) by utilizing the resources they have. Capital or capital contains important characteristics, namely (1) capital is accumulated through investment; (2) capital can be given to others through inheritance; and (3) capital can provide benefits in accordance with the opportunities owned by the owner to operate the placement (Haryatmoko, 2003).

According to Bourdieu in Fashri (2014), capital can be classified into four types, namely first, economic capital, which includes production tools (machinery, land, labor), materials (income and objects) and money that can be easily used for all purposes. and passed down from one generation to another. Second, cultural capital is the overall intellectual qualification that can be produced through formal education or family inheritance. Cultural capital includes, among others, the ability to present oneself in public, the possession of high-value cultural objects, certain knowledge and skills from educational outcomes, as well as certificates (bachelor's degrees). Third, social capital refers to social networks owned by actors (individuals or groups) in relation to other parties who have power. Fourth, all forms of prestige, status, authority, and legitimacy that are accumulated as a form of symbolic capital.

3. Methods

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to explore and explain the phenomenon of competition among content creators/youtubers in Indonesia in gaining popularity and great influence in society. Data was collected through document study by reviewing several documents related to the research topic. In addition, data were also obtained through non-participating observation. According to William in Given (2008), non-participating observation is a method that is relatively unobtrusive to the community being studied because the observations are carried out without direct interaction with participants (Rachmawati, 2017).

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis. Ratna (2004: 48) in Ginting (2019) divides content into two types, namely latent content and communication content. Analysis of latent content will produce meaning, while analysis of communication content will produce meaning. This study uses content analysis methods to understand the habits and strategies used by content creators/youtubers in winning contests in the social media arena, namely YouTube.

4. Results and Discussion

YouTube is becoming a popular video platform today. YouTube was developed by Jawed Karim, Chad Hurley and Steven Chen who originally wanted to create a dating website for college-age students. They named YouTube.com and launched it for the first time on February 14, 2005. The users of this website do not make videos that will be used for dating (dating) but rather for self-broadcasting so the three decided to change their business model and make room for all kinds of people video (Eves, 2021 p. 4-5).

YouTube continues to grow until it becomes a popular media in society. YouTube provides space for the growth and development of creativity from various walks of life. The ease of access and the lure of material benefits certainly encourage everyone to become a content creator. This is as shown by Labas & Yasmine (2017) in their research finding that content creators initially use YouTube like other social media, but then try to gain profit, material and popularity, from the various content produced.

The audience can freely choose what content suits their individual needs due to the variety of content available from various existing channels. Recognizing that every audience requires a variety of content, content creators compete to occupy the top position by collecting many subscribers, much like in a competition/battle arena. As the country with the third most total YouTube users in the world (Katadata.co.id, 2022a), Indonesia has many content creators whose popularity rivals that of international YouTube content creators.

Before becoming a famous Youtuber and occupying the top position in Indonesia, these ten content creators have diverse backgrounds, ranging from ordinary people, public figures to national media. The competition among the ten Youtubers is certainly inseparable from the ownership of capital so that they can compete in the arena of the entertainment world based on the YouTube platform. Starting from Ria Ricis who is famous for having a cheerful and

easy-going character and being able to communicate well. He has 29.2 million subscribers. Previously, she did not have access to economic capital. She comes from a simple family; her father is an employee and her mother is only a housewife. However, Ria Ricis has a symbolic capital which she got from her sister, namely Oki Setiana Dewi, who is an artist, writer and preacher who has influence in society. In addition, Ria Ricis also has cultural capital which she obtained from her undergraduate education at a private university in Jakarta, majoring in Communication Studies. The ownership of symbolic and cultural capital as well as Ria Ricis's habitus which is reflected in her character and daily life are her main strategies in this competition.

Second, Atta Halilintar is the first child of the Halilintar couple Anofial Asmid and Lenggogeni Faruk. Unlike Ria Ricis, Atta Halilintar has access to economic capital because his parents are successful entrepreneurs. He also has social capital because of the connections that come from his parents. His popularity grew after he married Aurel Hermansyah, who is a singer, artist and daughter of the famous Indonesian musician, Anang Hermansyah. Thus, Atta Halilintar also has cultural capital with inherent social status, both from his family and also his wife.

Third, Jess No Limit. Youtuber whose real name is Tobias Justin has a sister who is also a YouTuber, Jessica Jane. Tobias Justin studied at a private university in Indonesia but did not complete it. Even though he does not have access to the four capitals, Tobias Justin is able to survive with his skills in playing games and coupled with his communication skills and friendly demeanor which is the fruit of his habitus.

Fourth, Rans Entertainment is a company formed by Raffi Ahmad and Nagita Slavina. Both come from rich family backgrounds and have been in the media/television industry in Indonesia for a long time. Both have strengths in the ownership four capitals.

Fifth, Trans7 Official is a channel managed by Indonesia's national media company, Trans 7. Trans 7, previously known as TV7, was later acquired and became part of Trans Corp. Trans 7 as an entertainment television media already has an existence in the community having access to economic capital because it is supported by Trans Corp. This also has an impact on the ownership of social and symbolic capital due to relationships or connections and social status and the influence of Chairul Tanjung as the owner of Trans Corp. In addition, as a media company, Trans 7 is managed by people who are experts in the broadcasting world, thus enabling it to gain cultural capital.

Sixth, Frost Diamond created by Kananda Widyantara has 20.7 million subscribers. Almost in line with Tobias Justin (Jess No Limit), Kananda Widyantara does not have access to the four capitals but has different characters and characteristics so that his content has a place in the hearts of Indonesian people. This is the fruit of his habitus.

Seventh, Baim Paula is the channel of two public figures. Namely Baim Wong and Paula Verhoeven. Baim Wong is an Indonesian actor who has been in the media/television industry for a long time, while his wife Paula is a well-known model. Just like Raffi and Nagita (Rans Entertainment), both of them have power on the four capitals.

Eighth, Indosiar is a private television media that has been broadcasting since 1995. Just like Trans 7, Indosiar has access to the four existing capitals.

Ninth, Gen Halilintar is a content creator who comes from one family, the Halilintar family, which is also the family of Atta Halilintar. This family consists of eleven siblings, the majority of whom have their own YouTube accounts so that the existence of this family is widely known by the public. The Lightning gene has power in economic, social and symbolic capital.

Tenth, Deddy Corbuzier is a public figure who was initially known for his profession as a magician. He was not raised in a wealthy family but has a strong motivation and passion to be able to develop and progress through education, where he has twice received higher education at home and abroad. Deddy has access to social, cultural and symbolic capital.

Apart from this different capital ownership, the achievement of being the top 10 youtubers in Indonesia is achieved because of the habitus that is the characteristic of each. This habitus difference affects attitudes, ways of speaking, habits, daily stature, including in creating content. These ten channels have their own characteristics, which distinguish them from one another. This confirms the existence of fragmentation in audiences or audiences, where each channel has different viewers and subscribers. The content presented by these creators/youtubers is in accordance with the

needs of the audience in Indonesia, so it is not surprising that their channel occupies the top position. In addition, dominant capital ownership is not the main factor in determining position in the YouTube contest arena. Access to capital can be obtained through the manifestation of habitus owned by each player. The ability to utilize the fruits of this habitus ultimately brings players who previously did not have the power of capital, into a position that deserves to be reckoned with.

6. Conclusion

YouTube is similar to a playground. The actors/players, like in a game, try to use various strategies and resources to win. The competition among some of Indonesia's top ten YouTubers demonstrates their ability to utilize and maximize capital to create interesting content for their followers. In addition to capital ownership, they have their own personality and characteristics, which are undoubtedly influenced by the habits and background of the environment in which they live. This competition should be viewed positively because the content on their YouTube channel is unique.

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Biographies

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