

## SURVIVING AGAINST CELEBRITY YOUTUBERS: AN ANALYSIS OF RAHMAWATI KEKEYI PUTRI CANTIKA

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### ABSTRACT

*The phenomenon of many people that want to become YouTubers has become trending segments nowadays. Most of people that try to become YouTubers try to reach people attention in order to get their own popularity. YouTubers compete among others to create interesting or even controversial content. One of them can be seen from a YouTuber named Rahmawati Kekeyi Putri Cantika. The aims of this study is to find out the communication strategy applied by Kekeyi on her YouTube account as she did it as the way to maintain and increase her popularity. The data of this research was obtained from one of the controversial contents uploaded by Kekeyi on her YouTube account. This study used impression management theory as the grand theory, and two supporting theories; self-representational behavior theory and dramaturgy theory. Using the three theories above, researchers selected Kekeyi's content in the form of video as an analytical material. The researchers discovered that Kekeyi applied aspects of the three theories above on her YouTube content as the strategy to maintain and increase her popularity on YouTube.*

**Keywords:** *controversial youtuber, Kekeyi, impression management theory, popularity.*

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### INTRODUCTION

YouTube is a website for sharing videos and it was registered on February 14, 2005, by Steve Chen, Chad Hurley, and Jawed Karim, three former employees of the American ecommerce company PayPal. They had the idea that ordinary people would enjoy sharing their "home videos." The company is headquartered in San Bruno, California (Hosch, 2021). YouTube has more American viewers between the ages 18-49 than any cable network, helping increase its revenue by an estimated a billion dollars over the last year

(Luscombe, 2015). Since its creation in February, 2005, YouTube saw rapid growth; sixteen months after its creation, one hundred million clips were being viewed per day (comScore, 2006). In October 2008, the site attracted one hundred million American viewers a day, estimated to be over two thirds of the internet users in the United States (comScore, 2008).

In Indonesia, people begin to make their accounts and upload their video contents on YouTube as they expect to be popular. According to Fortune Magazine, the rise of YouTube has been called to overtaking

television as the most-watched platform. Moreover, it has branched out with YouTube TV (Solomon, 2017). YouTubers (independent creators of Youtube) have the attention that advertisers and cable networks desire (Burling, 2015).

Becoming a YouTuber looks promising for some people. There are so many children nowadays who aspire to become YouTubers because the salary from creating content is quite profitable rather than going to a 9 to 5 job. However, creating content is not as easy as we think. Many new artists who come from YouTube are competing to create content, start from positive content, informative content, or even controversial content. Once the YouTubers manage to gain audiences, they also need to create content that makes viewers become loyal to subscribe and watch the contents that they upload. Therefore, a lot of YouTubers make their content interesting, different, unique, creative, or even controversial to gain profit for their YouTube channel. One of the YouTubers that try to gain more attention from viewers through controversial contents is Kekeyi.

Rahmawati Kekeyi Putri Cantika, or 'Kekeyi' in short is one of the most well-known female YouTuber from Nganjuk, East Java. She was born in 1995, which makes her a 26-year-old woman now. On April 29th 2018, she began to gain popularity through her controversial makeup tutorial video, where she used a balloon as a beauty blender on YouTube. In her first video, she got 12 million views on a video makeup tutorial using a

balloon as her makeup tools. Although it was a rather unusual method of makeup, she received both support and hate comments.

Through rapid technological development, Kekeyi's video reached the public fast via YouTube and spread to various social media. As we know YouTube is one of the most accessed platforms by various audiences in Indonesia. Its audiences vary from youngsters to adults. The percentage of YouTube users in Indonesia is 88 percent of the total population and ranges from 16-64 years old (Tesalonica, 2020).

In this case, technology can be used by anyone easily with the help of the internet and smart devices such as computers, smartphones, and laptops. With the help of advanced technology, we can easily get a lot of information, regardless of time zone and border. The internet is contained with an unlimited and a varied amount of information, which is why people are competing to gain popularity because not only will they become a famous person, they can also gain profit for themselves. But this opportunity is not for everyone. To get this opportunity, you have to be different and create content as creative as you can be. As for Kekeyi, she managed to gain popularity because of her uniqueness that she shows through her content.

The idea to create such controversial yet unique content came after she was bullied due to her looks. The content that Kekeyi created is different from the other YouTuber, especially when she started her YouTube content as beauty video blogger (vlogger).

Instead of being feminine, she built a unique image and as she got more famous, it seemed that she became even weirder. She also developed her content, not only she created content that relates to beauty, but also in other categories such as *mukbang* (eating show) content, relationship content, and prank content. She also has been creating content with a certain characteristic, which made her content seem different from other YouTubers. For instance, during her mukbang content, usually, YouTuber will eat viral foods, but Kekeyi ate pentol and it seemed that she was influencing her viewers to eat *pentol* (Indonesian snack that resembles meatball). That content created a new brand image for Kekeyi and people now see Kekeyi as Queen Pentol. In her first episode of eating pentol, she gained eight million views. It is quite amazing how she could easily get those million views as in fact, there is nothing special in that video. All she did is only show herself eating portions of pentol yet she still gained views and subscribers. Other than that unusual way of eating content, Kekeyi still focused on her makeup tutorial content.

She also does not make a better quality of her content as she wants people to know her with a commoner image. Based on her content, we can see Kekeyi is lacking in effort. She is not using high-quality cameras or properties, she does not bother in changing her image toward a positive one. Also, usually, other YouTubers would have cats or dogs or other normal pets, but Kekeyi has chickens and ducks for her pets. We believe that it is her effort to build that commoner image. She also

does not try to improve her makeup ability or try to change her fashion style. Unlike other beauty vloggers who tries to improve themselves as time goes, Kekeyi stays consistent with her unique image, and that is a good strategy to make people see Kekeyi and prefer to watch Kekeyi's YouTube channel than the other Youtube channel even though the content is more professional than Kekeyi's. Also, unlike other beauty vloggers whose beauty and physique are outstanding, Kekeyi became viral because she does not qualify Indonesian beauty standards. After going viral, Kekeyi actually used her physical appearance as the characteristic of her figure.

As part of her popularity technique, she chose the handsome guy named Rio Ramadhan to support her publicity so that she could get huge attention from the viewers on her YouTube channel. She created the image of a perfect boyfriend for Rio. The kind of boyfriend who is kind and accepts Kekeyi as she is, the Kekeyi who is full of her weirdness and becomes more dramatic. Not only the dramas, both of them also made songs to do more publicity. The greater the number of viewers and subscribers was very beneficial for their profits and fame. Therefore, seeing how Kekeyi's popularity, the researchers wanted to analyze how Kekeyi maintain and increase her popularity on YouTube.

In this research, the researchers intended to use one grand theory and two supporting theories. To help analyzing how Kekeyi created strategies in achieving and maintaining her status as a famous figure in

society, the researchers used impression management theory. According to Xiaoxiao Ma in her journal, Goffman stated that all social behaviors are based on a theatrical metaphor where individuals attempt to present an image of themselves that others will accept as sincere. Goffman believes that there is motivation behind all human behavior. In other words, in order to obtain social approval and avoid social disapproval, people are motivated to constantly manage their public images (Ma, 2017).

Impression Management is the process whereby people seek to influence the image others have of them (Rosenfeld, Giacalone, Riordan, 1995). It is concerned about making efforts to control and influence other people's perceptions. The theoretical framework of impression management was first developed by Erving Goffman in 1959. The book authored by Goffman (1959), reveals about presentation of self towards society. The concept of impression management is a dramaturgical metaphor of individuals as actors on a stage performing for audience. Individuals interact with others in such a manner that they could create a positive image of themselves in the minds of others in order to fulfill their physiological and psychological needs. From the perspective of social psychology impression management is concerned with studying how individuals present themselves to others to be perceived favorably by others (Hooghiemstra, 2000).

To support the grand theory, we also intend to use two other theories, self-

presentational behaviors. According to Schneider, he analyzed that there are four aspects of presenters' behavior which are, verbal presentations, nonverbal expressive behaviors, artifactual display, and purposive behaviors. These four aspects heavily influence the way presenters create a certain impression, especially in an online situation (Ma, 2017). Also, we are going to use Dramaturgy theory as another supporting theory which assumes a place, a moment, and an audience to whom the identity is being presented. This places identity formation both in a social context (such as a classroom, a chatroom, a family) as well as at a particular point in time. This implies that identities can shift with varying contexts and moments.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study focused on analyzing the strategy to maintain and increase the popularity of YouTubers, particularly Kekeyi. The researchers did several stages in finding out that case.

First, the researchers analyzed Kekeyi's Youtube content. In this step, the researchers focused on observing how Kekeyi represents herself and her image. To do that, we took several samples such as the first video that made Kekeyi become famous, which is her makeup tutorial with balloon. We choose that because we want to observe why Kekeyi used that idea to make the content, why she decided to upload it and use that viral video to

develop her YouTube channel. Other than that, we are also going to use a video where Kekeyi collaborates with other YouTubers to analyze her popularity that leads to collaborating with other YouTubers. Lastly, we used two of Kekeyi's music videos. We choose these videos because we want to observe how Kekeyi maintains her image and also to prove that she uses her uniqueness to develop her YouTube channel as well as gaining a lot of subscribers.

Second, the researchers selected Kekeyi's content on her YouTube channel to be analyzed. We selected videos that are controversial which look amateur and filled with drama. Here, after choosing several controversial videos, we tried to find the strategy behind her content that made her get a lot of attention from the public and gain her popularity. Using the videos, we observed Kekeyi's behavior that represents how she builds her impression to the public and continue on classifying her content that supports our research.

Last, the researchers analyzed Kekeyi's video content that relevant to this study and applied the management theory from Erving Goffman and self-representational behavior and dramaturgy theory. From the stages above, the researchers took a conclusion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Rise of Kekeyi's Fame

Kekeyi gained her popularity when she uploaded her controversial makeup tutorial video titled 25K Makeup Challenge where she did her makeup by using a balloon as her beauty blender. The video was uploaded in April 2018 and has been watched by more than 12 millions of YouTube viewers. On her 25K Makeup Challenge, Kekeyi received more than 200 thousand likes. But this does not mean that she did not receive negative responses from the public. She also received more than 110 thousand dislikes and she turned off her comments section due to the negative comments that she received.

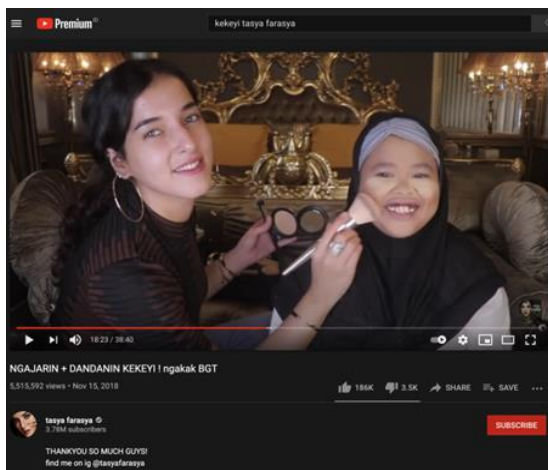
Although makeup tutorial videos have been done by other beauty vloggers, Kekeyi received massive attention because of her unique choice on using a balloon instead of a beauty blender. This choice of hers made her stand out from other beauty vloggers. Other than that, throughout the whole video, Kekeyi talked in a soft tone of voice which supported her in creating a modest and innocent image of herself to the public.



**Figure 1. The Rise of Kekeyi's Fame Through Makeup Tutorial Video**  
Source: Youtube, 2021.

Her unique choice in choosing a balloon as her makeup tool was definitely an act of impression management as she managed to choose to appear differently than other beauty vloggers. She definitely used the assertive strategy of impression management theory as her choice relates to the definition of assertive strategy where it is used for building a certain reputation with a specific target, and not just a reaction against requests that are situational (Versigny, 2018).

Kekeyi was definitely looking for attention as well as anticipating reactions from her viewers which can help her become more famous on YouTube. Her choice of tone and words showed that she managed her verbal presentations to the public. As it was mentioned by Schneider on self-representational theory, verbal presentations are one of the aspects that a certain person keeps in mind as she represents herself in a certain situation (Ma, 2017).



**Figure 2. Kekeyi with a Famous Beauty Vlogger**  
Source: Youtube, 2021.

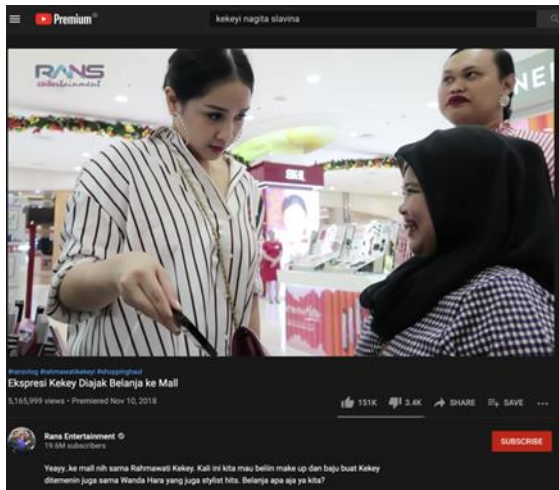
As she gained more fame with her controversial content, Kekeyi was asked to do

various collaboration videos with not only other beauty vloggers but also celebrity. For instance, Tasya Farasya, a famous beauty vlogger, did two collaboration videos of both of them giving a whole makeup look to each other. Throughout the two videos, Kekeyi managed to interact well with Tasya Farasya, despite just meeting her for the first time. Kekeyi managed to create a good first impression by being humble and joking around with Tasya Farasya. By showing her easy-going nature, not only she impressed Tasya Farasya, she also impressed YouTube viewers. She managed to get good reactions from her viewers as she represents herself well to get the society's approval which relates to impression management theory.

Another example could be seen from her collaboration with Nagita Slavina, a well-known celebrity who is apparently also an active YouTuber. Kekeyi did several collaboration videos with Nagita Slavina, but in the video above, Kekeyi was seen hanging out and Nagita bought her lots of makeup products and tools which can support her YouTube career. Other than going to a shopping spree with Nagita, Kekeyi was also invited to Nagita's house where they did makeup together and shared a heartfelt moment during one of the collaboration videos that they did together.

The heartfelt moment is a clear example of dramaturgy theory as during that moment, Kekeyi showed her vulnerable side to the viewers as she revealed the real reason behind her decision to be a YouTuber. Still, throughout the whole collaboration video,

Kekeyi maintained her innocent and modest image by acting shy and speaking softly.



**Figure 3. Kekeyi Hung out with a Famous and Active Youtuber**

Source: Youtube, 2021.

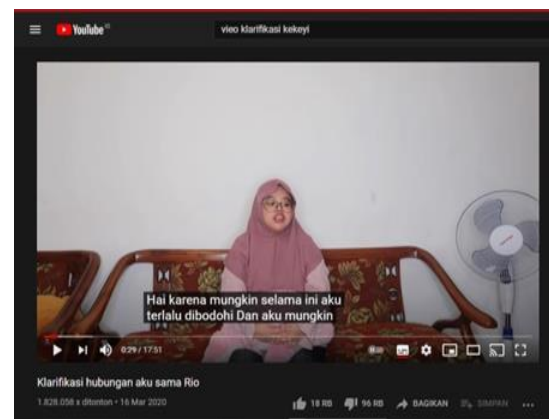
From the videos above, it can be seen that Kekeyi had successfully created a great impression on the celebrities that collaborated with her. As Goffman believes, there is always a motivation behind all human behavior. In other words, in order to obtain social approval and avoid social disapproval, people are motivated to constantly manage their public images (Ma, 2017). On top of that, Kekeyi also applied some of the aspects that relate to self-presentational behaviors which are her verbal presentations and purposive behaviors during the collaboration videos. The two statements above can be associated with how Kekeyi acted around the two celebrities in which she acted humble and innocent, so that she could gain more attention and bring more audiences to her content.

### **Relationship and Viral Strategies**

After she became famous, Kekeyi decided to date a guy who is younger than her named Rio. Kekeyi chose Rio to be her

boyfriend because Rio is a handsome person and looks very different from Kekeyi. During that time, people thought that Rio was definitely way out of her league. Thus, a lot of people began to be interested in their love story. Because people saw “uniqueness” in Kekeyi’s relationship with Rio. At this moment Kekeyi acted as an innocent and funny girl.

From this relationship, people started assuming that Kekeyi’s relationship with Rio was a scripted one. They wanted to take the advantages from the YouTube engagement, people said that Kekeyi only needed attention, so that is why she dated Rio.



**Figure 4. Kekeyi and Her Relationship with a Handsme Guy**

Source: Youtube, 2021.

Shortly after, Kekeyi broke up with Rio that made people become even more curious about what happened between the two of them. People started to wonder and inadvertently make Kekeyi more famous. Not only that, Kekeyi used that advantage to play victim and create more drama after breaking up with Rio. She acted as the one who is feeling cheated, she tried to blame Rio and make Rio’s image

as the bad guy. She made the chronology look more dramatic.

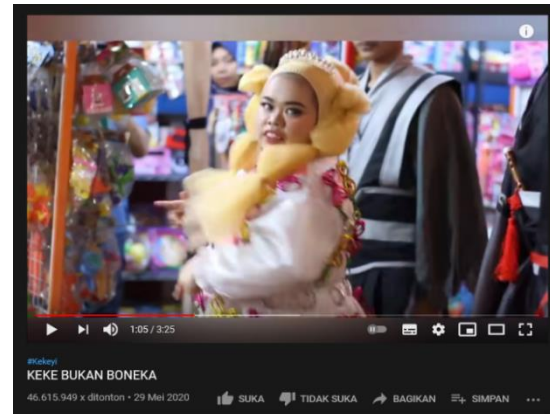
Kekeyi planned a clarification containing expressions of his disappointment about Rio, Kekeyi took the opportunity from her failed relationship to increase her income on YouTube, as seen by the large number of viewers who were interested in the content and the appearance of two Kekeyi's friends who just wanted to be as famous as Kekeyi.

This action can be seen as an example of assertive strategy on impression management theory as Kekeyi made the clarification to clarify her relationship with Rio as well as restoring her image that she has built since the beginning of her career.

Rahmawati Kekeyi Putri Cantika or usually known as Kekeyi, released her first single titled "Keke Bukan Boneka" in May 2020. The single Debut "Keke Bukan Boneka" managed to track number one on YouTube Indonesia with a total viewership of more than 1.8 million in just one day and to it has reached 28 million views. The lyrics of this song created by Kekeyi tell of a person's disappointment over love and her lover's and empty promises of her lover. Besides that, what makes this song famous is the song "Keke Bukan Boneka" itself which is quite similar to the song popularized by Rini Idol entitled "Aku Bukan Boneka" in the past few years.

This song became very popular because since the beginning of 2020 she had been viral because of her relationship which was considered only scripted to gain their both careers. Only a few months of dating, Kekeyi

and her lover broke up in March 2019 which resulted in many feuds between the two of them. It was from this feud that Kekeyi took the opportunity to increase her popularity by teasing her ex-lover through his debut single entitled "Keke Bukan Boneka".



**Figure 5. Kekeyi's First Single Debut**  
Source: Youtube, 2021.

Unexpectedly, even though Kekeyi got a lot of hate comments, this strategy was actually a big success with the fact that she got massive viewers and comments on her YouTube. When she released her song, she asked her fans or Sahabat Kekeyi to watch and give support to her song. She applied impression management theory as well as self-representational theory when she reached out to her fans so that although she did receive negative reactions from the public, there were some who are still supporting her song.

#### **Strategies to Maintain Controversial Image**

After becoming viral from the first video, Kekeyi manages to maintain her image, she keeps using the same hijab model, she also does not try to look pretty like the other YouTuber. This kind of thing fits perfectly with impression management theory. Instead to build a better impression, Kekeyi actually



made her image even worse and seemed to ask the public to insult her. Though it seemed that her image is worsening as she keeps on trying hard to be controversial, it actually shows that she applied the dramaturgy theory to maintain her popularity. Because without her controversial and quirky content, Kekeyi would not be as interesting as she has always been since the beginning of her YouTube career.



**Figure 6. Managing Controversy through Her Contents**

Source: Youtube, 2021.

As seen from the image above, we can see from the way Kekeyi eats pentol, Indonesian traditional food that looks like meatball and made of sago. The researchers viewed that she has a different and strange method of eating compared to other YouTubers. Also, the way Kekeyi chooses to eat pentol, out of all other foods that can be used as mukbang content. Other YouTubers who are not really looking for attention will never think to eat pentol. But Kekeyi uses that pentol to increase her engagement, to make people become more interested with her YouTube channel.

From Kekeyi's look or fashion, she does not try to be prettier or become more stylish,

she maintains to look very simple, even though Kekeyi is beauty vlogger but Kekeyi does not try to learn more about makeup nor improve her makeup skills. Instead, she maintains her makeup to look not as good as the other beauty vloggers. From how she eats to how she chooses to present herself, it shows that Kekeyi applied impression management theory and also self-representational theory to manage her impression to the public.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the researchers viewed there were strategies of impression management, dramaturgy, and self-representational behavior on Kekeyi's YouTube channel. It could be identified through the behavior, speech style, and word selection used by Kekeyi in her videos that she uploaded on YouTube. Kekeyi tried to attract audience attention and increase her popularity as a YouTuber in Indonesia as she applied the aspects during the production of her videos on her YouTube.

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