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The Communication Strategy of Vertizone TV to Increase the Number of Subscribers

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Abstract: Nowadays, YouTube is not only used for entertainment but also widely used for *da'wa*. One of them is Vertizone TV. Vertizone TV is one of the popular *da'wa* accounts in Indonesia and is relatively fast in increasing the number of subscribers. This research aimed at describing the communication strategy of Vertizone TV in increasing its while knowing the supporting and hindering factors of the strategy. This research applied a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The data collection technique was through observation, interviews, and documentation. This research used the theory of Fred R. David, which states that a strategy process consists of 3 stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. The findings revealed that the communication strategy of Vertizone TV in improving its number of subscribers involved the planning stage by setting vision and mission as well as for deciding the strategy for *da'wa*. For the implementation stage, Vertizone TV also had some strategies to get more viewers and subscribers. In the evaluation stage, Vertizone TV reevaluated the implemented strategies whether they were effective and efficient. In addition, this evaluation stage was done to find out the pros and cons of implementing the strategy.

Keywords: Communication Strategy, YouTube, Subscribers

A. Introduction

The emergence of various media and the development of information and communication technology makes it easy to reach the wider community. Along with the development of technology, humans are faced with situations and conditions where they have to interact with each other due to their social nature. This interaction process is called communication. It is the “center” or “core” of human life because effective communication can help us improve relationships with other people (Liliweri, 2015). Today's communication users continue to grow along with the development of communication technology. Accordingly, the development of communication technology makes it easier for anyone to achieve goals and one of which is by using social media.

Social media or also known as social networking, is part of new media. Social media has strengthened the position of the internet as a new media communication where distances are no longer visible, information and messages can be conveyed globally in a short time. Along with the times, the presence of social media is increasingly diverse and growing rapidly, one of which is the social media YouTube.

YouTube is one of the social media in the form of videos where users can upload, watch and share various kinds of videos for free. Generally, videos on YouTube are video clips of movies, TV and videos made by the users (Sulaeman and Fazri, 2020). YouTube is now the largest video content sharing site in the world. YouTube users in Indonesia have reached more than 93 million unique viewers (over 18 years old) who watch videos on YouTube every month for the past year, until 2020, YouTube social media ranks first on the most accessed platform in Indonesia as much as 88% of the total number of population.

In general, the increase in YouTube user data in Indonesia is very significant, proving that YouTube users are growing. Therefore, YouTube social media can be used to upload videos with a variety of interesting and useful content such as educational content, economics, culture, tutorials, vlogs and so on. The present YouTube is not only used for entertainment but also widely used by scholars as an effective *da'wa* medium.

Currently, there are many *da'wah* YouTube accounts in Indonesia that can be used as a means to spread goodness, for example, by presenting Islamic studies in the form of videos. One of the most popular *da'wah* YouTube accounts in Indonesia is Vertizone TV. Vertizone TV is a YouTube channel containing Islamic studies or lectures, stories of mualaf, *syahadat* and so on. Vertizone TV has also collaborated and become part of the official channel of the Indonesian Mualaf Center. Vertizone TV currently has 1.02 million subscribers and has uploaded 1,404 videos.

Based on this phenomenon, YouTube is now widely used to preach to Muslims about Islamic studies through videos. Vertizone TV's uploaded *da'wa* content in the form of inspiring studies and stories of mualaf. Vertizone TV is one of the popular *da'wa* accounts in Indonesia since it presents interesting and up-to-date content. Besides, it also exposes contemporary ustadz with different backgrounds. As a result, it intrigues viewers and, at the same time, increases the subscribes. Accordingly, it is not surprising that Vertizone TV has its own strategies and techniques to increase its subscribers.

The purpose of this study was to describe how Vertizone TV's communication strategy in increasing the number of subscribers and find out the supporting and inhibiting factors of Vertizone TV's communication strategy through the theory proposed by Fred R. David. Theoretically, this research may contribute to developing theories about communication strategies and adding insight into the communication and da'wa science.

This study used a theoretical basis related to the communication strategy proposed by Fred R. David. Similar research was done by Anggy Masyita (2018) with the title Islamic Da'wa Strategy for Ibnu The Jenggot YouTube Account in Raising Awareness of Islamic Values. Similarly, research by Tiara Rahmadaniar (2018) with the title Muslimahdaily.com YouTube Account Da'wa Strategy in Disseminating Hijab, by Indra Prathama Putra (2019) with the title Communication Strategy for Startup Companies in Getting Subscribers, and seven other studies.

B. Research Method

This study used a field research method onto the Vertizone TV. Also, this qualitative research applied a descriptive approach. The descriptive-qualitative method examines the status of a group of people, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought or a class of events in the present. (Nazir, 1988).

This research focused on communication strategy (Fred R. David's theory) and subscriber aspects. The operational concept of the communication strategy has several indicators, such as formulation strategy, implementation strategy and evaluation strategy. Whereas in subscribers, it is a way to increase the number of subscribers in Youtube.

Data collection techniques employed observation, interviews and documentation. Observations were made by observing Vertizone TV activities, especially relevant strategies to increase the number of subscribers. The interview was conducted with Eko Susilo as the admin or manager of the Vertizone TV YouTube account (Vertizone TV Program Choir, Conceptor & Content Creator). Documentation was seen from Vertizone TV's metadata in the form of related documents, analytic data of viewers and subscribers to Vertizone TV's YouTube account, as well as documentation of activities by Vertizone TV.

This study used the theory strategy proposed by Fred R. David, which consisted of three stages: planning, implementation, and strategy evaluation stages. Consequently, the research referred to the findings obtained from observations, interviews and documentation from Vertizone TV and then analyzed and processed according to the theory of Fred R. David.

C. Results and Discussion

Communication strategy is a combination of planning and management of communication to achieve a goal. Strategy is the relationship between communication plans and communication management to achieve the goals that have been set. Therefore, the strategy must be able to show how to operate in a practical way (Cangara, 2013).

1. Vertizone TV's Communication Strategy

Based on this research, to find out how the strategy used by Vertizone TV in increasing the number of subscribers, the author uses the theoretical concept of Fred R. David, who suggests that from a strategy process, there are three main stages: the first stage of formulation strategy, the second stage of implementation strategy and the last stage of evaluation strategy (David, 2017).

The first stage, formulation strategy. Formulation strategy is the first stage in the strategy process which includes developing a vision and mission, awareness of internal strengths and weaknesses, setting long-term goals, identifying external opportunities and threats of an organization, searching for alternative strategies and selecting certain strategies to achieve goals.

The second stage, implementation strategy. After formulating and selecting the established strategy, the next step is implementation or action in the strategy. To achieve success in implementation strategy, an individual or organization requires discipline, commitment and hard work.

The third stage, evaluation strategy. The evaluation strategy is the final stage by comparing things from the results with the level of achievement of goals. This final stage was conducted by evaluating the formulated strategy.

These stages are intended to review whether the strategies used are effective and efficient enough to achieve the desired goals. By looking at these three, the final results that will be obtained can be used as a reference to reassess the strategy used, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the strategy. The evaluation strategy is an important element because a success that has been achieved can be measured again to set the next goal.

2. Vertizone TV's Communication Strategy Formulation

In the early stages of formulating this communication strategy, Vertizone TV has its own way of establishing a vision and mission that will serve as a reference in carrying out its performance in order to achieve the predetermined goals.

The formation of a vision and mission is an ideal goal to be achieved in a community or organization. Based on the above vision, Vertizone TV has the main goal to become a professional media that can preach Islam in general, Fii Sabilillah, and provide benefits for the people to get the pleasure of Allah SWT. To realize this vision or goal, Vertizone TV formulates a mission that will be carried out by its members. It starts from the first mission by upholding Islamic values in da'wa's media.

"So our vision is to become a professional da'wah media, which means that we want to serve the people and Fii Sabilillah in totality. We are the media as a form to serve the people, and Fii Sabilillah is the term to serve in the way of Allah. Now, what we want here is not only limited to providing benefits to the people, but on the other hand, here there is a more urgent goal, which is Fii Sabilillah to get the pleasure of Allah."

(Interview with Eko Susilo, Vertizone TV Program Chairman, 17 February 2021: 13.57)

The Vertizone TV channel was formed initially with the intention of just preaching, in the sense that its main goal does not necessarily only want to get appreciation from humans, such as getting subscribers, likes and comments. Because according to Vertizone TV, the first principle that needs to be instilled is religious values and upholding Islamic values by means of preaching in the way of Allah, providing benefits for believers, gaining the pleasure of Allah, instead of only chasing worldly stuffs.

The strategy or method of *da'wah* used by Vertizone TV at the second mission point is to convey *da'wa* in general. Supposedly, preaching should not discriminate between groups or social organizations (ormas) and may come from any school, as long as the *da'wa* incites goodness and is in accordance with the guidance of Allah SWT. Vertizone TV, through its study program, carries out its *da'wa* by inviting or presenting ustadz figures with different backgrounds, such as Gus Baha, K.H Anwar Zahid, Cak Nun, etc.

The selection of resource persons in this *da'wa* program depends on the creative team or program coordinator from Vertizone TV by proposing ustadz figures with different criteria and backgrounds to be the guests. After further discussions, the creative team or program coordinator negotiates with the leaders. Vertizone TV prefers to broadcast ustadz figures with different backgrounds in an effort to attract viewers and increase the number of subscribers. Under the consensus, Vertizone TV will identify the potential supporting and inhibiting factors in carrying out the strategy.

In the third mission point, Vertizone TV facilitates Muslims to learn and convey religious knowledge by forming a community program called Yuk TPA which has now changed its name to Indonesia Qur'an Centre. This community program is a place or forum for learning the Qur'an from basic to advanced levels.

In addition, Vertizone TV also carries out good *da'wah* by promoting Ukhuwah Islamiyah or brotherhood among Muslims according to its mission in point four. Vertizone TV, in carrying out its *da'wa*, never discriminates against any group or background. This channel always tries to establish good cooperation or relationships with Uztadz figures, resource persons, collaborating communities and subscribers to their YouTube channel as a step to support and strengthen Muslims' brotherhood.

The last point of Vertizone TV's mission is to build a *Fii Sabilillah* media generation or struggles in the way of Allah SWT. Vertizone TV's goal in building its *da'wa* channel is nominally oriented and to provide religious benefits. In terms of preaching and *da'wa* in the way of Allah SWT, of course, it takes sincere and selfless people to continue to strive for proper and impactful *da'wa*.

Overall, Vertizone TV established and developed a vision and mission, determined the *da'wa* methods, identified opportunities from resource persons, and realized internal strengths and weaknesses.

3. Implementation of Vertizone TV's YouTube Account Communication Strategy to Increase the Number of Subscriber

After formulating and selecting the established strategy, the next step is to implement the strategy or action in the strategy. At the implementation stage of this strategy, Vertizone TV implements the strategy to increase the number of subscribers effectively and efficiently.

In this case, Vertizone TV seeks to create commitment and work together to become a solid team to achieve the goals. In addition, improving the communication strategies to increase the number of subscribers is by innovating interesting, informative, inspiring and useful da'wa content.

Vertizone TV, in its implementation, applies the following strategies:

1. Focus on Providing *Da'wa* Content

The original purpose of the Vertizone TV YouTube channel was to spread kindness. Vertizone TV has the principle of continuing to spread Islamic value *da'wah* content and continues to develop the channel so that it can provide benefits for the people. The content presented by Vertizone TV also discusses a lot about da'wah studies that can be followed and enjoyed by all groups.

"First of all, our intention is only to preach. We are an Islamic da'wa channel whose purely purpose is to preach and spread benefits to the people. We provide religious values, which, God willing, are good values because it will be a special attraction if these people really want to learn the right teaching. Therefore, one of the important things is our intention in creating a YouTube channel" (Interview with Eko Susilo, Vertizone TV Program Choir, 17 February 2021: 13.57).

2. Presenting Interesting Ustadz

The problem that often arises in preaching is how to attract viewers to be interested in watching the channel's content. Because nowadays, people tend to be interested in entertaining content or something viral rather than educational content, especially *da'wa* content. Therefore, Vertizone TV innovates and renews its loyal audience by presenting inspirational ustadz figures with different backgrounds, professions and *da'wa* methods.

3. Presenting Up-to-Date *Da'wa* Information

Preaching in this modern era requires relevant strategies so that the *da'wa* can be accepted in accordance with the development of today's society. Vertizone TV packages its *da'wa* content by presenting information from different sides, always adjusting to the times and updating *da'wa* in the form of materials, methods and media. The discussion emphasizes viral or contemporary issues and adjusts to the current audience's preferences. In addition to displaying up-to-date *da'wa* information, Vertizone TV always displays positive information to provide benefits and influence for subscribers and viewers.

4. Branding of Vertizone TV Social Media

Branding is very important in developing a YouTube channel because it brings unique characteristics that distinguish it from other YouTube channels. One of Vertizone TV's strategies to increase the number of subscribers is by branding through social media because social media is considered more effective as a means of preaching, especially in the modern era.

"If we enlarge the channel, there is usually something called branding. Branding is how other people know us, so as a form of other people respecting us. We are in this branding, one of which is so that the Vertizone TV channel remains the term, it doesn't only focus on YouTube, we have to build branding in the form of social media to help increase the number of subscribers as well." (Interview with Vertizone TV Program Coordinator, 17 February 2021: 13.57)

In addition to using YouTube social media, Vertizone TV also promotes its channel through Instagram and Facebook social media by posting teasers or video footage, then adding a YouTube link and a little description in the post caption. Vertizone TV also has an official store in Bukalapak by selling various merchandise such as da'wah t-shirts, calendars, honey and books about religion. By selling this variety of merchandise, it is considered to be able to increase branding so that more people get to know Vertizone TV's YouTube account.

5. Knowing Vertizone TV's YouTube Segmentation Algorithm

A YouTube channel is growing when knowing YouTube channel algorithm. The YouTube algorithm is crucial because it matches the needs of the audience. By optimizing and knowing the YouTube algorithm, Vertizone TV viewers can get content that suits their needs. In addition, Vertizone TV also regularly checks its YouTube Analytic data to find out how many views, likes and subscribers on a weekly, monthly and yearly basis.



Figure 1. Statistical data on the growth of the number of Vertizone TV subscribers in 2020-2021

Based on the picture above, the number of subscribers is always increasing. In January 2020, there was an increase from 500 thousand subscribers to 600 thousand subscribers. In October, it reached 900 thousand subscribers. At the beginning of 2021, in February, it had reached 1 million subscribers, and until now, it has reached 1.02 million subscribers. The average increase in the number of Vertizone TV subscribers reaches 100 thousand subscribers with a span of approximately 3-4 months. The phenomenon proves that the strategy used by Vertizone TV in its YouTube segmentation algorithm is successful and effective in increasing the number of subscribers.

6. Showing interesting visual videos

A video presentation is necessary as a visual display to be a special attraction for the audience. Vertizone TV, in presenting the video content, is well prepared, starting from making thumbnails and caption of interesting video titles so that the audience is increasingly curious. In addition, Vertizone TV provides a high-quality video due to qualified supporting video equipment.



Figure 2. Thumbnail Youtube Video Vertizone TV

7. Establish *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* and *Silaturahmi*

Effective *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* and *Silaturahmi* are some of the Vertizone TV strategies for Istiqomah in dealing with others and with several other communities. In addition to providing the advantage to followers and the subscriber, this channel can also establish offline *Silaturahmi* with others.

4. Evaluation of the YouTube Vertizone TV Communication Strategy

After formulating and implementing the strategy used in preaching as well as increasing the number of subscribers, the last step in the strategy process is strategy evaluation or strategy assessment. Evaluation of this strategy is very necessary for the strategy process because it is to review whether the strategies used are effective and efficient enough to achieve goals. Evaluation of this strategy is also to measure the methods since what works now does not always work later.

Vertizone TV, after uploading its video content on YouTube, always routinely holds an evaluation meeting once a week on Monday. This evaluation is carried out to evaluate the strategy used and to improve the performance of its own human resources. This evaluation is carried out by involving relevant internal parties such as leaders, program coordinators, drafters, editors and designers. In evaluating or assessing the strategy, Vertizone TV reviewed whether the strategy used was good enough, then the obstacles and shortcomings in creating video content, then whether there were difficulties for the crews.

Evaluation or assessment of this strategy is vital because it can correct previous deficiencies and minimize unwanted things that can happen again in the future. In addition, the evaluation can also show what advantages they have or what attracts the audience the most so that the audience can be interested in their channel as well as subscribe. The discussion of technical errors is also an evaluation material for Vertizone TV. Usually, technical errors often occur in taking pictures leading to inadequate quality of the content. In addition to evaluation with the organization's internal parties, Vertizone TV also pays attention to the responses from viewers and loyal subscribers.

5. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Vertizone TV's YouTube Account Strategy Process in Increasing the Number of Subscribers

In carrying out the strategy process, of course, there are supporting and inhibiting factors. Accordingly, this is also experienced by Vertizone TV in their strategy to increase its subscriber count. The supporting and inhibiting factors faced by Vertizone TV were as follows:

a. Supporting Factors

The existence of ukhuwah Islamiyah & good communication, the commitment of a solid Vertizone TV team and adequate video equipment.

b. Inhibiting Factor

Some interference from outside parties occurred, such as by hijacking social media accounts, especially Instagram. Of course, this incident was detrimental to Vertizone TV due to decreased insight and the lack of human resources.

D. Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on the results of the analysis that has been carried out related to the discussions that have been stated previously, it can be concluded that the stages of formulating a communication strategy for Vertizone TV's YouTube account in increasing the number of subscribers are in the first stage of formulating this strategy, Vertizone TV compiles a vision and mission which is the main basis for Vertizone TV in carrying out the strategy process later. Vertizone TV's vision is to become a professional da'wah media serving the people and *Fii Sabilillah*. Vertizone TV then also arranges the missions that will be carried out to achieve Vertizone TV's vision or goals. In addition, at this stage, Vertizone TV also determines the methods and ways used to increase the number of subscribers, by means of its study program inviting or presenting resource persons of Uztadz figures who have different backgrounds

without distinguishing between groups and social organizations (Ormas) and Whichever school comes from, as long as the da'wah invites to goodness and in accordance with the guidance of Allah SWT.

At the implementation stage of its strategy, Vertizone TV took several steps to realize the visions and missions. These steps include focusing on providing *da'wa* content, presenting interesting ustadz figures, presenting up-to-date da'wa information, branding Vertizone TV social media, knowing the Vertizone TV YouTube segmentation algorithm, displaying attractive visual videos, and establishing *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* and *Silahturrahmi*.

Stages of Evaluation of Vertizone TV's YouTube Account Communication Strategy in Increasing the Number of Subscribers. The evaluation stage is the final stage of a strategy process and reviews whether the strategies carried out are effective and efficient enough to achieve the goals to be achieved. Vertizone TV always conducts routine evaluations once a week involving relevant internal parties such as leaders, program coordinators, drafters, editors and designers. In evaluating or assessing the strategy, Vertizone TV reviewed whether the strategy used was good enough, also obstacles and shortcomings in how to create video content, then the difficulties faced by the members. In addition to evaluation with the organization's internal parties, Vertizone TV always heeds the responses from viewers and loyal subscribers.

The supporting factors for Vertizone TV's YouTube account in increasing the number of subscribers are the existence of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* & good communication, the commitment of a solid Vertizone TV team and adequate video technical equipment. In contrast, the inhibiting factors are interference from outside parties and the lack of human resources.

Furthermore, Vertizone TV YouTube account should further improve videos that are even more interesting and not monotonous in order to increase the number of viewers and subscribers. In addition, double security will be vital in securing social media accounts so that insight does not decrease again.

Then suggestions are aimed at the Muslim community. Enthusiasm and high response from the Muslim community in preaching in this era are crucial to adjust various media's da'wa strategies.

E. Conclusions

Based on the results of the analysis, in the first stage of formulating its strategy, Vertizone TV compiles a vision and mission as the main basis for Vertizone TV in carrying out the strategy later. Vertizone TV's vision is to become a professional da'wa media and *Fii Sabilillah*. Vertizone TV then also arranges the missions that will be carried out to achieve Vertizone TV's vision or goals. In addition, at this stage, Vertizone TV also determines the methods and ways to increase the number of subscribers through inviting or presenting ustadz figures with different backgrounds without distinguishing between groups and social organizations (Ormas) and from whichever school, as long as the da'wa invites to goodness and in accordance with the guidance of Allah SWT.

At the implementation stage, Vertizone TV took several steps to realize the vision and mission that it had established. These steps include focusing on providing da'wa content, presenting interesting ustadz figures, informing up-to-date da'wa information, branding Vertizone TV social media, knowing the Vertizone TV YouTube segmentation algorithm, displaying attractive visual videos, and establishing *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* and *Silaturahmi*.

Consequently, the evaluation stage is the final stage of a strategy process and reviews whether the strategies are effective and efficient to achieve the goals. Vertizone TV always conducts routine evaluations once a week involving relevant internal parties such as leaders, program coordinators, drafters, editors and designers. In evaluating or assessing the strategy, Vertizone TV reviewed whether the strategy used was good enough, the obstacles and shortcomings in how to create video content, and difficulties faced by the crews. In addition to evaluation with the organization's internal parties, Vertizone TV also pays attention to the responses from viewers and loyal subscribers.

The supporting factors for Vertizone TV's YouTube account in increasing the number of subscribers are the existence of *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* & good communication, the commitment of a solid Vertizone TV team and adequate video technical equipment. In comparison, the inhibiting factors are interference from outside parties and the lack of human resources.

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