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# Optimizing Creative Digital Content Among Magazine Publishing Company in Malaysia During Pandemic Covid-19

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### ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 outbreak is now spreading across the globe, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. This study is aimed to investigate the impact of Covid-19 on the Malaysian magazine publishing industry. Thus, the publishing companies have to optimize their creative digital content through new media and consider that their potential of audiences spend several hours per day in using this media across various platforms. The objective of this research study is to identify the importance of creative digital content platforms used by the publishing company to reach their target market and to explore the magazine publisher's main reason in creating creative digital content during Covid-19 crisis. To understand the effectiveness of creative digital content for magazine produce by the publishers, this study used a qualitative research method and conducted an in-depth interview with people/publishers/writers' content and editorial unit. As a result, this study indicated that it is not surprising that publishing companies will consider innovative digital content as one of their digital marketing strategies, taking into account the high potential of audience would spend most of their time in using social media across various platforms. The overall results of the study showed that creative digital content development possesses a strong perceived potential to enhance user interaction across its dimensions.

## 1. Introduction

The disease outbreak arising from the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) has significantly affected society, the economy, and people around the world in several ways. Although new technologies have been commonly used in the past, the Covid-19 pandemic emergence involves the use of certain technologies in several sectors [1].

The pandemic of Covid-19 is now spreading around the globe, leaving in its path a trail of devastation. This study aims to understand the Covid-19 impact on the media landscape in Malaysia especially to the magazine publishing industry. It highlights those companies that will benefit from Covid-19 effect over 12 months, as well as the businesses that will lose out.

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Covid-19 advent has prompted governments to declare lock-downs. These influences dramatically the way people communicate, function, and consume media. On the one side, throughout the lock-down, there are rumors of printing products such as magazine and book sales surging, because many people are trapped at home searching for entertainment or opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills through online platform.

In the last 3 months, people did not realize that they actually read more content or information online rather than read printed newspaper or magazines. As with what is happening right now, Covid-19 has shifted our pattern of physical media content consumption. The experiences with the material now reach beyond their physical nature.

The Covid-19 crisis is badly affecting the publishing companies especially small publishers. In macro, the Covid-19 transmission contributed to the implementation of curfew or activity regulation, making a major impact on the magazine publishing industry, in particular publishing firms, retailers, and book stores. Thus, this affects the employees of each business or book store directly. At the same stage, the publishing industry's economic downturn also affected the writers, especially those who relied heavily on writing. Survival for businesses or firms in the publishing industry, both large, medium, and small businesses are particularly affected in sectors that are less in demand during the economic crisis because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The newspaper, book, and magazine industry around the world today is facing the most difficult period. Given the massive potential audience available who are spending many hours a day using social media across various platforms, it is not surprising that publishing companies have to embrace social media as one of their marketing channels [2].

A study by Hansen *et al.*, [3], owing to the constant market situation that is constantly changing, innovation is taking place on both the technical side, e.g., through the major networks continuously introducing new apps and services and the user/ consumer side, e.g., people seeking new uses for social media.

This kind of research gap appears whenever a novel idea or phenomena such as this Covid-19 pandemic arises that haven't study or researched been thoroughly or at all researched. When a social media platform is introduced, for instance, there is a chance to investigate its effects on users, potential uses for marketing, effects on society, and many more aspects.

### 1.1 Creative Digital Content

Along with the development of computer technology, the form of content has changed and how it is disseminated to the public is also influenced by progress technology. The creative digital content is just as important as the text material itself. For interactions happening across various channels and on different devices, it is essential to assess this kind of content in as many formats as possible. It will help to deliver the brand message to several possible audiences from this type of content; in the format that the audiences wish [2].

Creative digital content is referring to the digital tool based on using audiovisual images, mainly on the Internet, to achieve different goals in a marketing strategy. Some people are primarily visual and digital tools like video making are more important than text-only tools to communicate with people. Any business organization might need website video clarified, Facebook data graphic, or Instagram features stylish cinematography. Despite the vast amount of video content and the variety of consumer interest, understanding the features of online video is of great importance for technical, economic, and social reasons [4].

While the digital content market in Malaysia continues to grow, the digital creative content industry in the region has also grown to accommodate that rising. Value content development has

become increasingly important as Goggle refines its search criteria in an attempt to shut down traffic-grabbing sites [5]. When they handle this strategy correctly, innovative digital content will allow the business organization to stand out. In fact, creative digital content is about giving customers the sort of content they want, something they do not see very often [6].

The term of creative digital content throughout this study is similar to a concept of any content format which involves or contains video content. Among popular types of digital video content include vlogs, animation series, live sessions, testimonials from customers, filmed presentations, and webinars.

According to Hendra *et al.*, [7], source of competitive advantage in business-to-business and business-to-consumer marketing is the internet and social media. The best potential for business growth across all sectors is here. External customer approach, facility approach, relationship approach, conditional and situation approach, internal product approach, human resource approach, and facility approach.

## 2. Literature Review

The media industry is evolving as a result of the technological development of current information technology communication. In most cases, this development is certainly acceptable, but some can kill or paralyze the existence of the existing industry. One of the most affected industries is the publishing industry. This change in trend is also felt by the newspaper industry around the world [8]. The current situation has showed that social media networks have become one of the popular hubs for the news aggregators to deliver the news and information and this has changed the production of the traditional news information [9].

New media channels are seen as the driving force behind the conduct of corporate practices and activities [10]. Malaysia is one of the countries that highlight digital businesses, enabling businesses to use social media approaches as a catalyst for business. The advancement of digital technology, such as social media, has had a huge effect on all the business sector fields.

Historical trends, the publishing magazine industry has become highly competitive with rapid developments in computer, web, and digital technology growth and convergence. Also, the interactive elements of Internet-based digital technologies have increased readers' interest [11]. Not only technology that give impact to the published magazines, it is also affected reader and viewer and it involved all procedures, including the marketing process, advertising segment, and to the very end.

Marketing is seen as the mechanism by which a business provides an activity to promote a product or service that have values for customers or society. This is also understood in the marketing process by adding several main components that cover the 4P aspects of Product, Price, Promotion, and Place. Through time, the marketplace of the traditional values has slowly shifted through its digital segment towards a new type of media and has created a fusion of medals that not only serve the population, but also the younger generation [12].

Companies, publishers, or publishing companies that involve in the print media industry have experienced many limitations and challenges after the emergence of the new innovative technologies. The attention has now moved to the digital marketing strategies programs or methods adopted in the new millennium to improve the revenue and high-quality of an advertised product [13].

Therefore, this is significant to research on the effect of the use of digital technologies, such as blogs, websites, social media, and applications or development resources within an organization. In addition, video is a powerful and interactive medium, enabling the viewer to be affected by various

communication fronts by combining verbal, vocal, and visual communication into one format. They are known as the most compelling qualities that influence the willingness of viewers to recall key messages [14].

According to Yi and Tuba [15], online video community has been warmly accepted by users. Nowadays, people live in the time in which anyone can be a producer of content and a publisher. Online video content is created and consumed more than ever by users. Digital content production has become increasingly relevant to organizations. As social media networks produce the volumes of content on a daily basis, it has become important for brands to engage in storytelling to stand out from the crowd, thereby becoming storytellers and publishers.

### **3. Research Objective**

The objective of this research study is to

- i. Identify the importance of creative digital content produced by the publishing company to reach their target market during the Covid-19 crisis;
- ii. Explore the main reason magazine publisher create their creative digital content instead of direct or traditional content during the Covid-19 crisis.

### **4. Methodology**

In general, this study is a qualitative study. One technique that is arguably important and has high validity is a research instrument that uses the interview method. Data collection through interviews in-depth conversations is the backbone of this study.

As for the interview process, the researcher asks questions about the main objective of the study. This is because researchers can directly obtain information and data from the respondents of the study. By this approach, the study considers the interviewer's views and aspirations. The qualitative approach lets the researcher explore new viewpoints and views of each person.

The data and interview sessions were collected in June 2020 in two publishing companies which are Nu Ideaktiv Sdn. Bhd. and Star Media Group Berhad. Then, in-depth interview was carried out with a team of Content and Editorial unit. A representative from Mingguan Wanita is Mrs. Nur Syazwani Mehat as Digital Content Writer and Mrs. Norlia Jaafar as Editor of Kuntum magazine have been interviewed.

The interview protocol questions of this study were constructed in the form of open-ended questions, i.e., interview participants are free to express their views based on the questions given without restriction. Responses from the respondents have been reported in a special form before being classified and interpreted by a particular category. The researcher used the interview as the primary data collection and triangulated it with supporting records.

#### *4.1 Creative Digital Content*

##### *4.1.1 Nu ideaktiv Sdn. Bhd.- mingguan wanita magazine*

Nu Ideaktiv Sdn. Bhd. is an Astro (broadcast company) and Karangkrak Group (publishing company) partnership venture project. Nu Ideaktiv is a Malaysian and Nusantara content company founded on 2 May 2018 and is dedicated to spread the information by creating great and inspiring content that touches life.

The company builds values for others and values for the community, promotes growth and show a strong will to succeed. They hold 39 intellectual properties, spanning a variety of genres and leading market segments with 13 active IPs. They also were leading in publishing industry as the core of Malay culture. The product and content can be enjoyed through print, radio, application, television show, and on-the-ground events, and is expanding to include more possibilities for Malaysian and Asian audiences.

Nu Ideaktiv continues to deliver fantastic content to the public, with more than 40 years of industry experience. Under Nu Ideaktiv, 13 brands of magazine captivate and spark a monthly conversation with over 20 million people. But for this research, the study just focuses on Mingguan Wanita magazine’s creative digital content and addressing women’s lifestyle, beauty, fashion, women’s rights, dilemmas, issues from end-to-end.

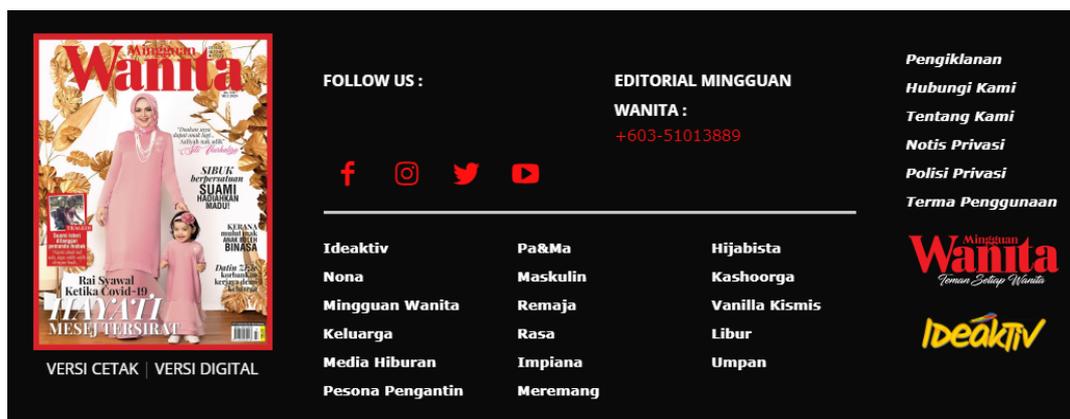


Fig. 1. Mingguan Wanita magazine

#### 4.1.2 Star media group berhad - kuntum magazine

Star Media Group Berhad (SMG), formerly named Star Publications Berhad (Malaysia) is a Malaysian media corporation engaged in newspaper and magazine publishing, printing, and distribution.

SMG started as a single-product organization that has slowly developed into a multi-channel media corporation with a wide presence in several businesses- Print, Digital, Radio, and Events & Exhibitions.

After 50 years, SMG remains consistent in its commitment as a media organization to keep its audience linked and motivated in line with its aim to Inform, Inspire, and Innovate through its products and services.

Kuntum magazine under SMG companies has been selected to meet the purpose of the study. Kuntum magazine is known as a children’s educational magazine and was published monthly in Bahasa Malaysia for children age ranges 6 to 12 years old. This magazine’s objective is to help children to expand their knowledge on topics ranging from maths and science to robotics and languages. Kuntum was mentioned as the only educational magazine to be endorsed by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. Kuntum magazine has been inspiring young Malaysian minds ever since February 1980 and the aim is to be one of the tools and medium for children to create bond with their parents, teachers, and friends through the stories and activities that fill its pages.

40 hadiah istimewa menanti anda!  
Setiap bulan, pelanggan baharu Kuntum layak untuk sertai peraduan hadiah bulanan & hadiah suku tahunan.  
Layari Facebook Kuntum di 'Majalah Kuntum' untuk maklumat lanjut mengenai hadiah yang boleh anda menangi!

Langkah mudah untuk anda sertai:  
**Langkah 1**  
Klik butang di bawah untuk melanggan  
**Langkah 2**  
Nantikan pengumuman pemenang di Facebook kuntum  
Hanya RM33 + RM22 (Kos Penghantaran) untuk 11 edisi majalah sepanjang tahun  
**LANGGAN DI SINI**

Mari bersama-sama memupuk sifat ingin tahu!  
Selamat datang ke Kuntum, bermula dengan cerita pengetahuan am ke cabaran minda UPSR, Kuntum kembali mencerikan dunia pengetahuan si cilik dengan pelbagai aktiviti pendidikan yang menyenangkan. Langgan hari ini dan terokai dunia pengetahuan dan bersama-sama memupuk sifat ingin tahu.

Majalah  
Animasi  
Jelajah Sekolah  
Lakar & Warna  
Belajar Mandarin  
SPAN

MENDIDIK • MENGHIBUR • MEMUPUK NILAI MURNI

Fig. 2. Kuntum magazine

## 5. Results and Discussion

### 5.1 Reason Produce Creative Digital Content

#### 5.1.1 Reader more active in social media platform

Since social media becomes more common and the most widely used during the Movement Control Order (MCO) major changes in digital marketing activities have seen in those two magazines which are *Mingguan Wanita* and *Kuntum*. The targeted audiences from those magazines can be seen active through the platforms on social media including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. The traditional way of getting information (such as reading printed magazines) has not become the main medium as the audiences chose social media to obtain the information. Therefore, organizations should prepare their team in producing the content that is relevant to the audiences through social media.

These two magazines started to be more visible to the readers and audiences on the various media platforms especially online medium during the MCO that has been announced by the government since 18 March 2020. Hence, the change of the news content from the traditional platform (such as printed newspaper and magazine) to the online medium has led the journalists to prepare the news or information through social media platforms, in which the reader can access information at their fingertip quickly.

According to Dwivedi *et al.*, [16], social media refers to highly interactive online communication platforms built on mobile and web-based technologies that allow people and communities to engage

by sharing of views, exchanging information, co-creating, discussing, and producing content created by users. This can be seen that online and digital media supports businesses and also its operations so, businesses that are active on social media may attract more clients and visitors. Clients especially online users feel more comfortable to get information or to interact through social media rather than browsing the websites. Social media platforms seem to provide two-way communication between the users (readers of Mingguan Wanita and Kuntum magazines) and the publishers as they can share their thoughts, insights, and ideas.

In addition, most of the company started to create content and put in the form of video as part of the marketing strategy. Mingguan Wanita team mentioned that to easily create a video content, it needs to be simple, exclusive, refreshing, and engaging video. Therefore, video is one of the medium that a company can provide to deliver a simple message, to inform about product release and customer review or other related information that can benefit their potential customers.

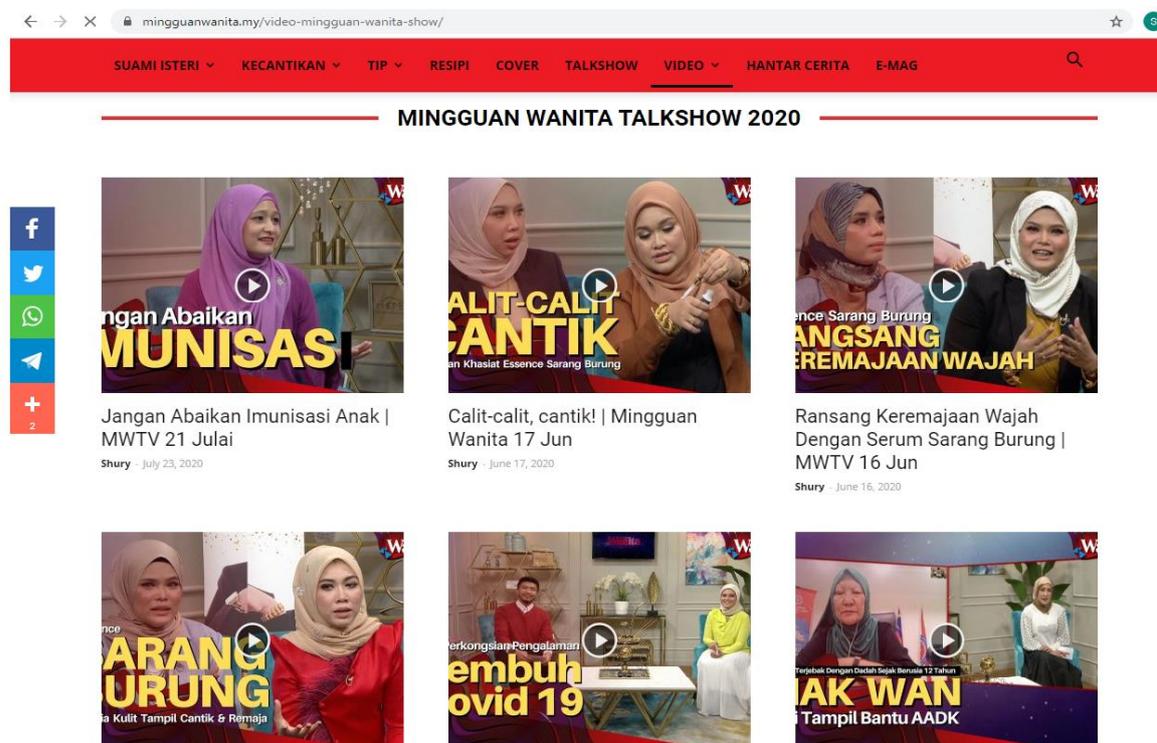


Fig. 3. Mingguan Wanita magazine creative digital content

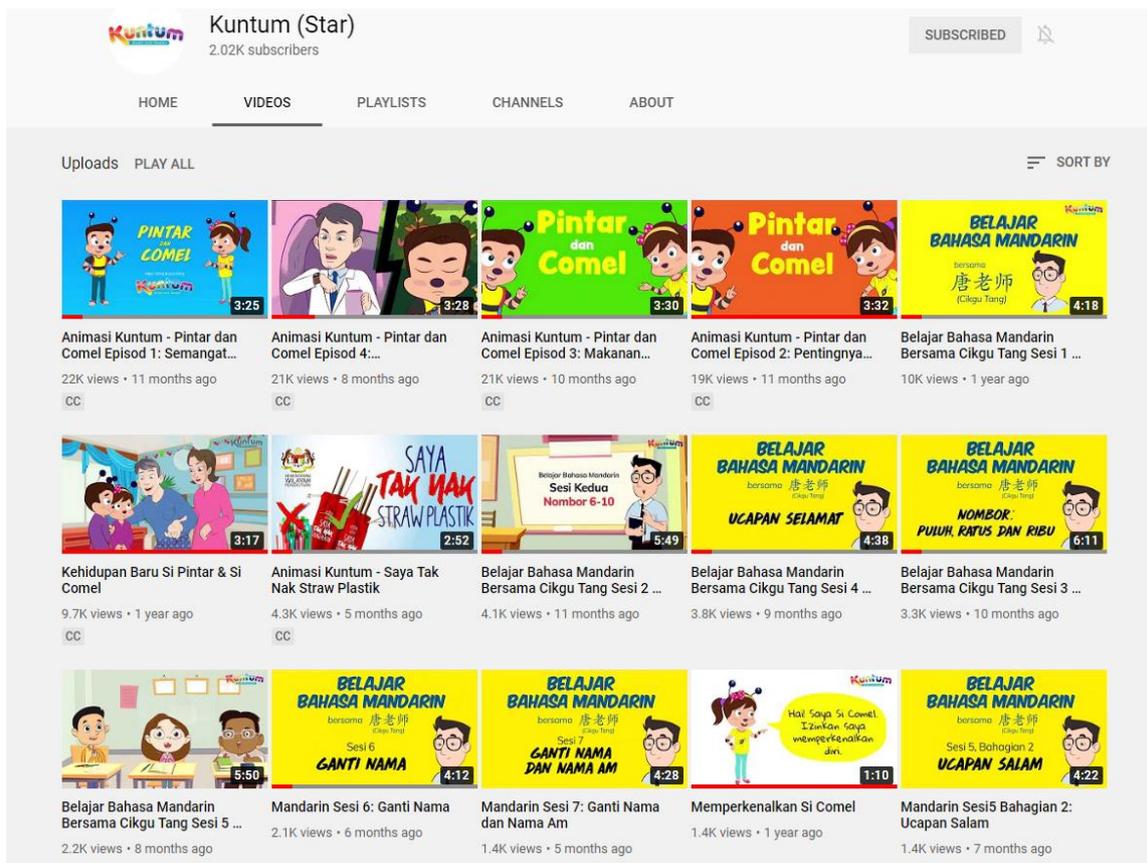


Fig. 4. Kuntum Magazine creative digital content

### 5.1.2 Creative digital content is share-able on social media platform

Creative digital content such as video content is a versatile and immersive multimedia platform that not only offers us a real-life of what is going on but it can be easily shared on different platforms too. This is the main view provided by both informants during the interview session. Consumers like video content as it is simple, while advertisers feel that it is entertaining and can connect to the current situations. After all, video content offers a potentially significant return on investment (ROI) over several channels.

Creating creative digital content not only to make the audience feel enjoyable, but it is also one of the effective methods to get more closer with the audience and at the same time they can get a real snapshot of what is happening not only in the company itself but also other customers. The main aim is to share the audience about theory, knowledge on certain issues, and at the same time to include more details about it.

During the MCO, these two magazines have significantly showed an increase number in creating and producing their creative digital content compared than before in which the creative digital content team need to post and update all information on the media social platform frequently. For example, Mingguan Wanita magazine team will update one posting per hour to update its readers on social media platforms. The content team has to prepare at least 20 to 30 media content to cater and reach the audiences as the hard and physical copies of the latest magazines were not easily available during the MCO.



Fig. 5. Mingguan Wanita facebook page



Fig. 6. Kuntum facebook page

In 2019, Kuntum magazine started their creative digital content in the form of animation. As mentioned by editor, Kuntum animation faced few challenges to launch their own YouTube channel to become a new niche in the digital world after 40 years in the publishing industry.

Kuntum YouTube channel has been created for educational purposes and at the same time to promote good messages to the audience. The animation video entitled 'Pintar and Comel' and 'Belajar Mandarin Bersama Cikgu Tang' are among the first animation videos under the Kuntum production. Besides promoting the animation series, the content team also involved in producing new digital creative content videos such as 'Pengembaraan Edisi Majalah Kuntum', 'Kelab Sains Pintar', 'Chef Junior Bersama Mama Chem', live sessions, and many more. As a result, the YouTube channel has become one of the company's greatest investments and at the same time to promote Kuntum via online.

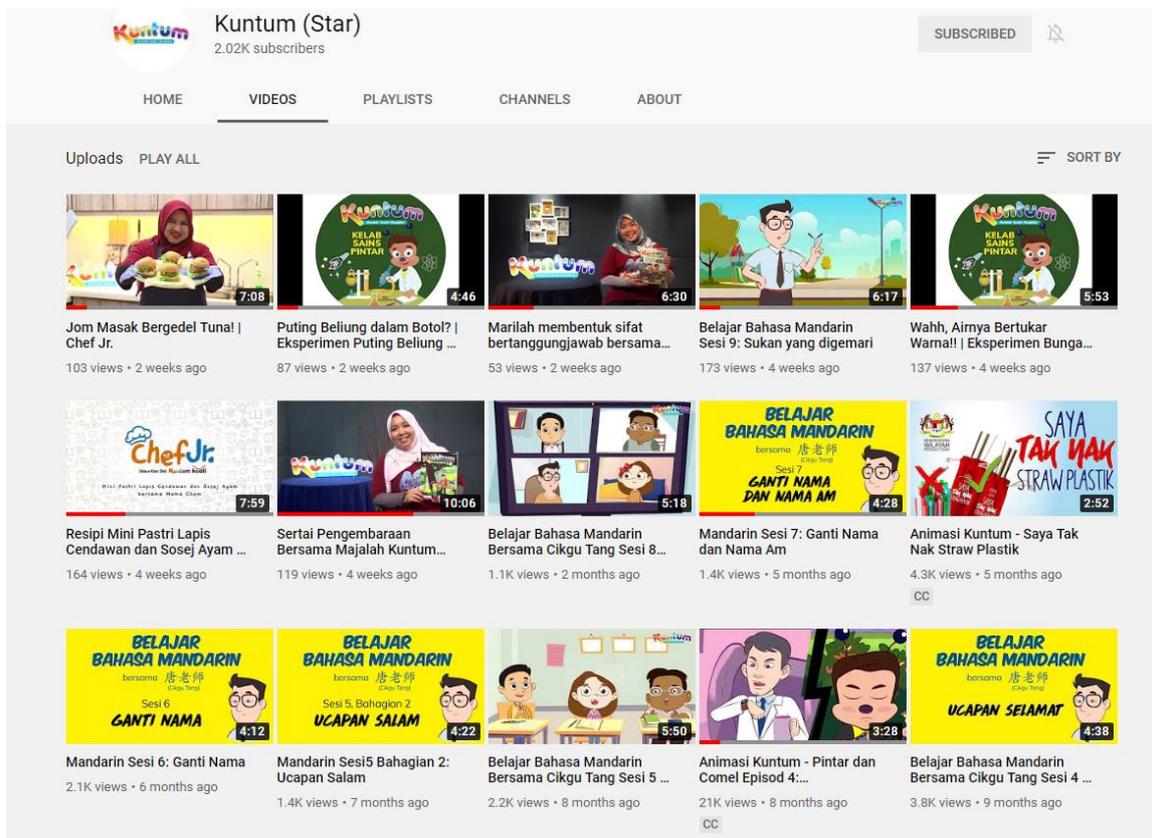


Fig. 7. Kuntum video content on YouTube

### 5.1.3 Driving brand awareness and interest

Any business nature can deliver a special, engaging, or interactive story line experience through creative digital content that helps audiences to create a strong, memorable relationship with their brand and what it stands for. The respondent also adds that the brand awareness creative digital content video is perfect for subject presentations, product demonstrations, method guides, and other realistic tools that help you live up to the promises of value and support that your company makes to its prospects and customers.

The use of creative digital content using mobile devices is growing either in short- or medium-term trend and this trend is expected to continue in the future. One of the contents that can be used is video to promote brands and at the same time to create communities, show products or services, attract client's attention, to build love and educate customers.

According to Apiradee *et al.*, [17], although the current research centered on customer engagement and desire to shop via live streaming, from the viewpoint of the seller, little is understood. Yes, the possible benefits of live streaming trade are open to everyone but with this medium, sellers experience different rates of performance. Regarded that creative digital content providing a rich media content that will increase the user interaction and time spent and it's lead to increase on the brand awareness.

It is advisable to start using video as part of the marketing strategy. Video content has a high-value content that putting your brand into video and imparts a sense of authority of the work and also increase recognition towards the brand. This is important as brain processes and retain visual information faster than text, therefore this is one of the crucial ways to deliver key messages through video.

Other than that, the respondents also claimed that the brand content should catch the followers and readers' attention as this will keep them engaged and informed to the latest and current information posted. Hence, loyal customers will keep on searching the web and social media channels frequently if the company keep updating the information through the effective digital content medium.

## *5.2 Important of Creative Digital Content*

### *5.2.1 New digital marketing tool*

According to the Mingguan Wanita content team, a new strategy in the new digital marketing tool is creating various videos that is creative and at the same time implement the concept of making and sharing relevant digital content with the target group to gain their interest and interesting to watch.

Company or business in today's marketing world should aware on how the digital content performs, the number of followers who follow the brand, and how many viewers watch the videos or visit the websites or blogs. This is important as many customers enjoy time-saving methods to read, shop or interact before take any action or made a decision.

As mentioned by Nur Syazwani, publishers of video content find it a challenging situation as most audience watch videos to look for information. Thus, the publishers need to produce creative digital content for their readers and audiences. When, the magazine publishers aware that creative digital content work well and can be used on different social media platforms or websites, it is well known that video content marketing has dominated the social media world.

Instead of rely on the printed magazines, Mingguan Wanita needs to create various creative digital content and one of that is the new talk show series 'Mingguan Wanita Talk Show' which on air on Astro Prima channel every Monday to Thursday. This talk show aim to cater their specific audiences such as housewives, career women, and also families. Not only air in the television, but other video content of Mingguan Wanita will be uploaded on their social media platforms.

Besides from talk show and video, Mingguan Wanita also ventures to an additional new platform which is an online podcast. This 'MW Podcast' is a spoken digital audio files that can be listened through smartphones, tablet or personal computer. For some instances, podcast might also be in a business venture supported by a mixture of a paid subscription model, advertisement, or after-sales product. Affected magazine publisher seems to become the latest area of performance targeting, which has driven the pace of adoption of these new tools.

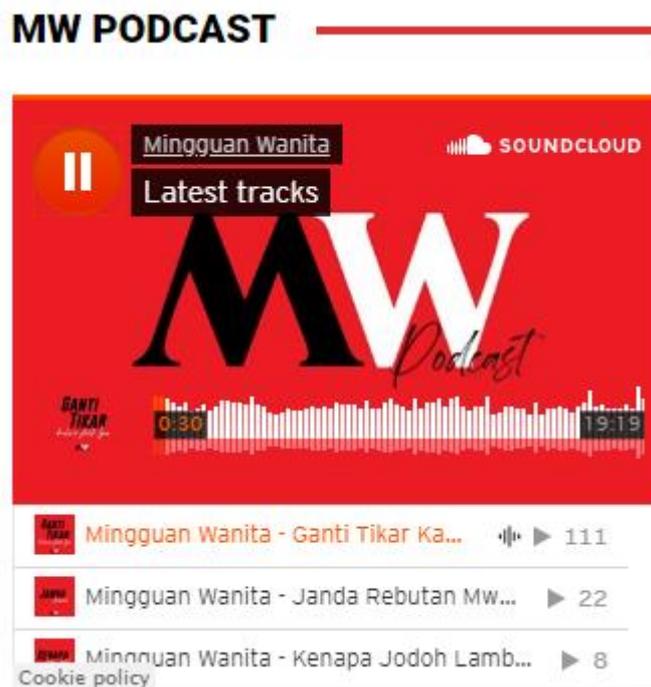


Fig. 8. Mingguan Wanita podcast

Norlia also acknowledged that in recent years, the consumption of digital video content has seen a significant rise. Animation and video series creation is a part of Kuntum's current digital marketing strategy for communicating and staying in touch with their viewers. The team is actively produced new videos and creating new and interesting content videos during the MCO for the audience. To face the current pandemic, all publishing companies have to accept that social media has become one of their digital marketing strategies, considering the vast potential audiences available spend several hours a day using social media across the various platforms.

Hence, the rapid development in information and multimedia technologies especially in the publishing industry in our country can be seen in line with the rapid development in science and technology fields.

Today, the developments in the technological, multicultural, and digital industries that have taken place drastically in our country and have greatly changed the role and function of the publishing industry should be given more attention by the companies. As a result, a new dimension is emerging in the world of electronic production that seems to play an important role in leading to the immense growth of creative digital content.

### 5.2.2 Creative digital content drives digital marketing strategies

There are several elements that need to be considered in a good digital marketing strategy. This can be challenging such as from social media to search engines and also business owners need to decide the content that suits the audience. While each piece of the digital marketing strategy is important to promote your company online effectively, there are still some elements are going to be more critical than others.

One of the easiest ways to communicate with your target market is to have social media sites. As a powerful tool to create real customer-based relationships, social media gives you a clear path to

communicate, to review, and drive new leads to your website. So, those are all driven by good creative digital content production.

One of the social media marketing strategies is you have to control the content and at the same time your target audience will benefit from it. Not to deny that content is vital to create a clear relationship with audience and thus magazine publishers have to make sure that the knowledge provided can engage the interest of the audience.

Having various creative digital content form is the foundation of any plan for digital marketing strategies. Without it, the magazine publisher will fail to get the publicity needed to generate leads and converting them into potential buyers. Nonetheless, you will be more effective in other digital marketing endeavour when you produce great pieces of content.

In addition to help the publisher companies create confidence and communicate with their target audience, creative digital content also serves as an activator for businesses for other marketing strategies. So, this is the foundation upon which you can promote the company online in the future.

### *5.2.3 How magazine publisher adapt to the new norm*

It is not easy to get a lay of the land in the middle of a multi-pronged crisis – much less to foresee what will look like tomorrow. But publishers are required to do it every day and Covid-19 has made revolutionary change possible.

In these difficult times, when people were (many places are still) confined to their homes, content creators provided their audience with a steady flow of information, art, and even gossip materials to binge on. Newspapers, books, and magazines have played a part in providing ample analytical, thought-provoking material.

Today, users have more media power than ever before, because the viewer will determine what messages they are searching, ignoring, and forwarding on. With the vast expansion of recent years of online video traffic, companies need to be able to be involved in user volunteer content consumption [18].

This pandemic is generating massive views and significantly changing media consumption habits as the editors explained. For time being, the creative digital content like content video, live session, animation series have taken place the traditional medium [19]. Given the fact that the growth and benefits of digital content video has changed the situation where publishers can promote their brand and also materials that the consumers can engage with.

Due to the current situation that the online platforms are more prominent, Generation Z or Millenia have been the main users in using the technology to get information. The Millenia generation reportedly prefers digital technology for content consumption anytime, anyplace, and across various platforms, according to Jon Mowat [20]. Therefore, most of the publishing houses have to either temporarily or permanently stop their print publications as the circulation of magazines and newspapers has been reduced. As a result, publishing companies or bookshops have to shut down their business or else to think other business strategies to survive during the pandemic.

For example, Mingguan Wanita magazine somehow has to stop the publication until further notice (until end of this year). This is different with Kuntum magazine where the publication still running since MCO but with limited order that just focus on the online subscribers or the customers can purchase the magazine from Kuntum online shop through <https://newsstand.thestar.com.my/> and <https://www.kuntum.com.my/>.

#### 4. Conclusion

During the outbreak of Covid-19, it has given several challenges in the publishing industry and publishers have reacted rapidly to different kinds of content requirements and have embraced them in every way.

Findings clearly show that creative digital content plays an important role in digital marketing strategies for publishing companies and this is the right timing for them to explore and get benefit from the creative digital platform available. Time is of the essence for any company or business firm that has yet to take a creative digital content campaign seriously as one of their digital marketing tools. Hence, it is critical that companies must understand the importance of creative digital content and use best practices to attract more customers and followers in future.

There is a limitation to the present analysis. This study just a pilot study, with a small number of respondents, grouped in an example of convenience.

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