



TikTok as a Promotional Media for Post COVID-19 Art Exhibitions

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Abstract. Government recommendations and regulations regarding activity restrictions imposed during Covid-19 have hampered all aspects of activities, including artistic activities. After the pandemic, artistic activities that are actively carried out again reaped considerable enthusiasm. This is also influenced by the habits of social media users who have experienced escalation during the pandemic. This research was conducted to analyze the use of TikTok in sharing electronic word-of-mouth visual content about ongoing art exhibitions. The method used in this research is qualitative, collecting observational data on TikTok's visual content about art exhibitions and interviews with artists and content creators. The results of this study found a change in behavior in response to audience interaction with art through visual content on TikTok. The eWOM visual content by visitors on TikTok has increased the enthusiasm of visitors to the ongoing art exhibition.

Keywords: Art Exhibition, Electronic Word of Mouth, Visual Content, TikTok, Promotional Media

1 Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an outbreak that has occurred globally and has brought considerable losses to the world community. This disease, part of the virus family, was first discovered in the province of Wuhan, China, in 2019. Due to the rapidly growing virus spread, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Coronavirus a pandemic on March 11, 2020. WHO also gave recommendations to take measures to limit activities with large community groups [22]. Before and during the implementation of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) or social distancing, and until the implementation of the new normal, all events that cause crowds are prohibited [7].

The imposition of social and physical restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted all aspects of life, including cultural arts activities. Various performing arts activities, fine art exhibitions, film production, and screenings planned before the pandemic could not hold according to the plan [21]. Indonesia is rich in ethnic, cultural, religious, and historical diversity. One of the cities in Indonesia that

has a beautiful and robust image of culture, art, and tourism is Yogyakarta. This condition is a unique and special attraction for improving the country's economy [19]. So that the pandemic has had an enormous impact on art workers, as well as an economic contribution to the creative industry sector; some arts workers (such as singers, dancers, and painters) are utilizing digital media to work during a pandemic [4].

After COVID-19, art activities, such as performing arts and art exhibitions previously performed in person, started adapting to digital media. Virtual space in this era could be an alternative medium for artists to keep working during the pandemic because the audience can enjoy art mobile [20]. However, virtual space is considered not equivalent to physical exhibitions. In virtual spaces, works of art can only view without being able to present new experiences that can consistently achieve in physical exhibition spaces [18]. Artjog is an international art exhibition event held annually in Yogyakarta and organized by virtual exhibitions. During the COVID-19 period, Artjog was held online and offline, with offline visitors limited to only 90-150 people per day [10, 16].

2022 is considered the year of awakening or recovering the world economy from the impact of the pandemic [6]. The return of activities with large-scale community groups, such as schools, religious services, music concerts, art exhibitions, Etc., marked this economic recovery effort. 2022 is the first time Artjog has done live again. With the implementation of strict health protocols and limiting the number of visitors, the event, which has been held for around two months, attracted approximately 60 thousand visitors. In the following year, the number of visitors has expected to increase [12]. The prediction of the increase in the number of visitors to the exhibition is allegedly due to the dissemination of information through increasingly massive social media. Due to the pandemic conditions, social media has become popular because of its speed in disseminating information, sources of social support, and the variety of content available [9].

The role of social media as a promotional medium has continued to increase after the COVID-19 pandemic. In this era, consumers use social media to find all information about products/services before making decisions [3]. Since the digital era, social media has commonly been used as a promotional medium. Almost every gallery or art exhibition uses online media nowadays (e.g., social media and websites) to publish exhibition news and information [7]. Dissemination of information through social media is becoming popular because it can deliver in various formats (text, photos, video, and audio). With expectations, these features and media will reach a wider audience and art enthusiasts. The massive promotion activities on social media make the party carrying out the promotion must understand well the type of social media, the target audience, and the information form.

One of the social media that has grown in popularity since the pandemic is TikTok [13]. This social media is a short video-based media equipped with music features. Exhibition organizers carry out the form of promotion on TikTok, and many consumers also share their experiences while at art exhibitions. Social media uploads by visitors invite the audience's curiosity to learn more about the event [1]. This phenomenon can categorize as an electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) promotion strategy.

Furini [15] conducted a similar topic, using Twitter and hashtags as the object of his research. Meanwhile, research on promotional media for art exhibitions still needs to be researched. So that this research was carried out to complete gap research with

the latest phenomena and understand TikTok holistically as a medium for promoting art exhibitions after the pandemic. The benefits of this research can be used as material for consideration in designing promotional strategies for art and cultural events in Indonesia. The limitations of the research were art and cultural events held in Yogyakarta, with the eWOM promotion media studied being TikTok.

2 Method

Qualitative methods are used in this study by considering the problem to be studied as a social phenomenon. The data collection technique used in this study was screen observation of the visual content found on TikTok. Of the 1053 total population of TikTok's visual content about exhibitions in Yogyakarta in 2022, 50 videos took as samples for in-depth observation. This sample was selected randomly, taking into account the number of interactions from the content. Interviews were done with one of the Indonesian artists who were active and domiciled in Yogyakarta, namely Angki Purbandono. These sources were selected based on their qualifications as artists actively working during and after the pandemic. Interviews were arranged with 5 TikTok content creators who uploaded visual content about art and culture exhibitions in Yogyakarta in 2022. The qualifications of the content creators interviewed were selected based on the audience's active interaction (enthusiasm) for the uploaded content. The secondary data used in this study was in the form of research-related literature studies.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Changes Interaction Responses to Art

A pandemic is a condition that impacts almost all industries globally. This study found that the pandemic caused changes in interaction responses (adaptation) to art from artists and audiences. Judging from the Interaction Adaptation Theory, adaptation's purpose is to help meet survival needs by strengthening the bonds of relationships with others. This theory's type of interaction pattern conveys reciprocal behavioral responses and responses that involve behavior to offset the other person's behavior (compensation). The changes in interaction with art take place reciprocally between fellow TikTok social media users.

Changes in appreciating artwork have started since the era of social media [18]. The audience tends to share their opinions about an artwork on social media. Sharing visual content on social media could also build cultural capital because it becomes capital in mechanism production, in rare cases that can affect economic and social capital [14]. However, the acceleration of rapidly growing information dissemination and the variety of social media features allows anyone and anything to go 'viral.' This viral condition can occur due to several factors, such as the dissemination of information by fellow social media users through the share feature, ID tags, and hashtags. Previous research conducted by Furini [15], found that the use of hashtags proved to have a significant impact on promotions indirectly because they could maintain group conversations on a

particular topic. In this case, through the internet, all interactions or exchanges of information can happen in two directions. Like how content creators and audiences influence each other in the way they appreciate and enjoy an artwork through their visual content.

The diversity of features in TikTok stimulates the audience to be more creative and flexible in expressing their opinions about art exhibitions or artwork. Despite the aesthetic value, the information message in the visual content also plays an important role. According to the content creators interviewed, the main point is the value of honesty in their experiences as audiences and the way they enjoy and interpret artwork. The visual content is proven grown the audience's interest in art; 80% of content creators in this study are interested in art triggered by TikTok visual content. Previous research found that Indonesian audiences quickly catch information through visuals [2]. The interest in art by TikTok's audience kept growing during and after the pandemic, caused by the massive information dissemination in TikTok. It also impacts artists in creating artwork.

Artists consider more of situations, conditions, and audiences in art-creating. For artists, the ease with which everything becomes viral in a pandemic is a stimulant to keep developing and learning to understand situations while creating artwork. With that, it will remain by the culture and norms that apply in society and suit the target audience. The value of success in art is when they can inspire, stimulate the audience's imagination, and represent the feelings or circumstances of the audience who enjoy it. The changes that occur to these artists indirectly stimulate artists to be more sensitive to their surroundings.

According to Sukaya [23], the art creation method generally has three stages: inspiration, development, and formation (visualization). Each stage of the creation method refers to conveying inspirational ideas by considering several other factors (materials, techniques, tools, to the idea execution process). If traced in the process, changes to artists can occur at each stage as an evaluation. According to the source, the pandemic situation played a role in interpreting different ideas. The source of inspiration in creating art remains the same regarding the emotions (such as love, conflict, dissatisfaction, comfort, etc.), and the social media era increases the probability that the artist will see the entirety.

3.2 The Role of eWOM Visual Content on Visitor Enthusiasm

From a marketing standpoint, visitors' visual content includes electronic word-of-mouth activities. The internet expands the probability of all people sharing their experiences and information about products or services [17]. This freedom and acceleration of the dissemination of information make the opportunity for an eWOM marketing strategy even more incredible and could be a powerful marketing tool.

TikTok is a medium that has sped up since the pandemic [13]. It is a short video-based social media application with diverse content, dance content, singing, daily activities, and exciting product/place recommendations. Few provide features, music (song availability), video and sound editing, filters, likes, comments, shares, and bookmarks. Its popularity is because it uses an anti-social approach, where users do not need

friends or followers to see the application's video content [11, 13]. As a result, anyone can get into For Your Page (FYP) section and has a high percentage to reach a wider audience.

In 2022, content with the theme of product and place recommendations often led to active audience interaction. An active interaction level could know by the number of likes, comments, shares, and bookmarks. Dominated comments are questions about the recommendation information and build a conversation with other relations. Through observations and interviews, it found several main structures in visual content successfully gained the audience's curiosity and attention.

The value of beauty in art exhibitions or artworks is the main reason for the visual content created. 90% of the content prioritizes the aesthetic value by shooting the art exhibition's ambiance, including the experience and process of interpreting an artwork. Technically, it accomplishes using long shots and close-up techniques. Meanwhile, 10% of visual content contains information shared via text, such as location, entry fees, and exhibition operating hours. Most information is delivered by text because content creators believe that text can transfer information better. Content creators need to share information about the art exhibition because they want the audience to experience it as they do. For the audio, 78% of visual content uses current popular sounds on TikTok and the rest use combination of content creator's voiceovers.

Visual content creation during art exhibitions is done spontaneously, without a pre-planned concept. Content created using mobile phones and emphasizing parts of the gallery space or remarkable and inspiring artwork. Unlike a pre-planned promotional video, the content creator keeps spontaneous in the process to maintain a real sense of experience. Creating well-done visual content can also give the creator a sense of self-satisfaction, especially with an active response from the audience that is considered appreciation.

Visual content aims to appreciate the artwork and invite the audience to enjoy artwork at art exhibitions. This study found that visual content has successfully increased the number of art exhibition visitors. Content creators personally get contacted by exhibition organizers because of the increased number of exhibition visitors, known because of the information in their TikTok videos. Nowadays, search information about an art exhibition in TikTok is usual.

Of the sudden increase, few visitors only came to follow the trend, yet artists and exhibition organizers saw it as positive. Because they believe that art is complex to enjoy and interpreting an artwork will differ for each person. As a form of preventive action against uncomfortable things that might occur, such as specific rules and conditions for enjoying the artwork, gallery seekers need special attention to maintain and direct the flow of visitors' activities at art exhibitions. In addition, to increase the visitor experience, exhibition organizers can use the experience design, such as theme, concept, and styling [5].

Art exhibition organizers have indirectly realized this finding by improving gallery seekers' quality and creating similar visual content through the exhibition's official account. The result reactions differ from the visual content created by visitors. In this gap, exhibition organizers ask content creators to help create visual content and promote art exhibitions. By data, around 90% of TikTok's visual content is based on a personal

urge, while the other 10% is a special request from art exhibition organizers. Nevertheless, the content creator has complete control of visual content creation because the exhibition organizer only sends a special invitation. The collaboration process between them is still relatively low, with the level of risk from exhibition organizers being relatively high. This situation proves that there was awareness among art exhibition organizers of the positive impact on visual content by visitors.

4 Conclusion

The increased use of TikTok during the pandemic has changed several interactions with the arts in the art exhibition. Other intentions were found in appreciation, how to enjoy and interpret an artwork by the audience, and the process of creating art. Visual content on TikTok has played a role in increasing visitor numbers at several art exhibitions in Yogyakarta. The low level of awareness from organizers of this matter opens up opportunities for maximizing TikTok's visual content as promotional activities. This study's findings can be considered data for developing an eWOM marketing strategy. Further research could be done by examining more profoundly using different research methods.

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