The Role of Social Media in Developing Nonprofit Brand:
A Case Study on Akademi Berbagi

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ABSTRACT

Social media as a form of development in information technology and communication has open doors for all kinds of innovations to emerge. Initiatives from the society which are present in social media have similar characteristics with the medium that forms social media, which are: open, participative, accommodating two way conversations, and focusing in the connectivity between communities. Social media encourages the formation of identity and image of nonprofit brands as representations of movement/social organization in the era of information.

Through a single case analysis case study on Akademi Berbagi, it was found that the values that are formed as a result of the interactions within the community of social movement activists become the foundation for forming and dispersing nonprofit branding messages that are genuine which comes from, made by and directed to its activists. By optimizing social media, the nonprofit branding delivers a result that is low cost and high impact.

The characteristics of Akademi Berbagi as a nonprofit brand can be said to be similar to the characteristics of social media which are mentioned by Mayfield (2008), which are: openness, participation, two way conversations and focusing on community and connectivity. As a brand that focuses on community, Akademi Berbagi has functioned as the former of social connection and reputation both for individuals and the managing volunteers through conversations and an ability to share in the internet society and the era of information.

Keywords: social media, community, nonprofit brand

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1. Introduction

The era of digital information which was pushed forward by Internet 2.0 has brought various options of new media. This circumstance has given opportunities for ideas from anywhere to meet and bring about innovations. Cross-disciplinary collaborations happen across the world. Human interaction is no longer limited by time and space. Manuel Castells in his book, The Rise of The Network Society: The Information Age - Economy, Society and Culture (2010), reveals that the development of communication and information technology prompted the birth of a new society with different characteristics to those of the society in the previous era. This new society is called network society. This concept describes the current form of social structure in the era of information with three main characteristics: informational, global and networked (in Firman Kurniawan, 2013).

Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein (2010) state that social media is a group of Internet based applications which are built based on the ideology and technology of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Nielsen states that in 2009 social network site users all over the world on average spend more than 5.5 hours a day to access services like Facebook and Twitter. Edelman (in Entherlab, 2010) says that there are four main factors that make Twitter to be a social media that is liked by the public: influence, popularity, engagement and trust. GlobalWebIndex (18/4/2013) states the daily consumption of digital media in Indonesia exceeds the world’s average at 7 hours per day. Meanwhile the consumption of non-digital media reaches more than 4 hours per day. As in a real society, a virtual community is also built through social interactions between the virtual society members. The requirements of social interaction in a real society are social contact and communication. These requirements are also primary the social life of a virtual community.

The era of information has encouraged a paradigm shift in marketing from product-centric to consumer-centric and now we are entering the era of value-driven-marketing. Kartajaya (2010), says that new-wave technology, as a form of development of information technology, encourages a major change in consumers, markets and marketing. This new type of information technology covers three major powers: computers, mobile communication devices and cheap and open source internet. This
technology turns the consumer into a “prosumer”, the combination between a producer and a consumer. We can see the development of new-wave technology through the use of social media.

As a tool to communicate with the public, brand transforms, more than just a visual identity: a name, a logo and a graphic design used by an organization. A brand is a psychological construct which presents in the mind of everyone who is aware of the existence of a product or a service, a person, an organization or movement (Kylander and Stone, 2012). In a 2004 report, Edelman presents the trends of changes in communication which is applicable globally: two way communications, which are becoming more apparent as a product of globalization; digitalization and social change. At a time when social networking is a necessity for a brand, both new and established, it is no longer appropriate for brands to keep some distance to their customers. Sharing is an ideal form to disseminate ideas of a product and it becomes essential for communication strategy.

Billet (2002), and also Jenkinson and Sain (2004), contended that choosing an efficient medium will help in financing, target achievement and communication effectiveness. The use of social media is considered low cost-high impact because both promotion and engagement activity can be carried out online, offline or a combination of both. It is interesting to know what the role of social media is in creating and developing a nonprofit brand that emerges from the initiative of a volunteer based virtual community.

2. Concepts

Social Media

Miles, Rice and Barr in Media: An Introduction (Flew, 2008) state that New Media is a media that is a product of integration and combination between several aspects of technology which are, among others, computer and information technology, communication network and digital information message and media. According to McQuail (2010) the characteristics of new media are, among others, interactivity, sociability, media richness, autonomy, playfulness, privacy and personalization. Marshal McLuhan (1960) said in his aphorism that “themedium is the message” which
is elaborated by Meyrowitz (2009) that a message is significantly influenced by the medium. Jansen (2009) said that

“Social media is a sociological and technological combination which is dialogical (many to many) and sums up the importance an interaction for consumers and society, where people find, read and share news, information an content to other people.”

Social media has several basic characteristics, which are 1) openness, 2) participation, 3) conversation, 4) community and 5) connectedness (Mayfield, 2008 in Nugroho, 2011). Conventional media, such as broadcast media and mass media usually need a financial model which is quite expensive to publish information (Principato, 2009). The popularity of social media is caused by the strength of relationship, communication and interactivity which is felt by the user. Social media users utilize social media for personal relationship with friends, for political interest and to support the success of certain business, or the core of the business is social media itself (Solis, 2009). Seven functions of social media according to Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) are:

1. **Identity**: this function describes how far social media users reveal their identity in an interaction. The difference in preference of social media use of each user will become clear and will become one of the elements in forming their identity.

2. **Conversations**: this function describes the interaction between social media users. Many platforms of social media are designed to help users have conversations. Erik Qualman (Socialnomics, 2012) mentions two types of conversations in social media: designated and organic.

3. **Sharing**: represents how far users share information, distribute and receive content. The term “social” often implies an exchange between users, as Paul Watzlawick says, “One cannot not communicate, and the related idea that one cannot not influence”.

4. **Presence**: is tied to the closeness between interacting users. Social media presence is influenced by intimacy and closeness, and a higher level of social media presence is tend to make conversations influential.

5. **Relationships**: represents how far user can get connected with other users. Connected means users has a place to interact, communicate share social objects, meet up or just get to know each other as friends or fans.
6. **Reputation**: social media gives a new definition about reputation for the user, as a person, as an institution and as a brand. In the beginning of the trend to use Twitter as an interaction channel interpersonally and between a person and institutions or brands, the number of followers becomes a simple reference to measure the level of social power represented by that account. As time goes by, the number of followers is no longer the only valid and reliable indicator.

7. **Group**: represents so far social media users can form a community in the development of their interaction process. The community that is formed in social media can be organic and planned for certain purposes.

**Social Network, Community, Social Capital and Volunteerism**

Little John (2005) says that in order to be considered having quality, a social network must have at least three characters: 1) the size or number of members; 2) interconnectivity/relationship, having a reason to be connected to other networks; and 3) a possibility to influence thought and behavior. Kartajaya (2010) defines community as a group of people who cares about one another more than it should be. Within the community there are tight personal relations between the community members because of similarities in interest and values. According to Komninos (2002), a virtual/online community is a learning and innovation environment on real and virtual levels, and is a center of knowledge, information, technology and innovation. There are various reasons for someone to join a virtual/online community. The most cited reason in literature is to access information (Furlong, 1989; S. G. Jones, 1995; Wellman, et al., 1996). A virtual/online community is also considered to have a distinction compared to traditional/conventional community, especially in the strength of “the weak ties” related to relations with strangers or acquaintances to get useful information through online network (Constant, Sproull, & Kiesler, 1996).

Flew (2005) believes that as communication and information technology develops, which encourages the strengthening of networks and the forming of communities, there is a connection between the Internet and social capital. Jaan van Dijk (2006) states that,

“The Internet is a powerful tool that supports both those who are rich and poor in so-called social capital. It supports those already strong in social contact, civic engagement and sense of community and enables those weak
in these things to further isolate themselves and to be excluded from the many opportunities the new media have to offer.”

Hodgkinson (2003) says that “Volunteering means conducting work with no pay”. While the UNDP in the book, Mengembangkan sebuah Infrastruktur Relawan (2005), says that volunteerism is a form of social behavior that is done voluntarily, which merits the community and society as a whole and the individuals themselves, and it is not driven by monetary reasons. Voluntarism must be open in order to benefit people from various backgrounds so they can be involved in a meaningful way. Putnam (1993) says that one of the key to understand the role of volunteers in increasing social capital is their role in a volunteer association and the strengthening of horizontal network between civil societies.

Social Marketing: Nonprofit Branding

Different to commercial marketing whose main goal is to gain optimal financial profit from consumers, social marketing’s goal is to market ideas. Public as consumers are stimulated to stop a bad habit or behavior and/or to start a good habit. According to Kotler and Lee (2008) social marketing is a comprehensive activity in transaction of selling and buying social “products” which are not profit oriented, directed to change attitude and behavior. Social marketing is a combination of the application of communication principles and marketing techniques to deliver various social products. In commercial marketing, the main goal is the financial aspect, while in social marketing, the social aspect (the movement and/or social change) is the main goal. Factors that influence marketing communication are a) Source; b) Message; c) Channel; and d) Receiver.

Pine and Gilmore in Authenticity (1998) contend that nowadays consumers can determine if a brand is fake or real, especially in the context of promise from the brand. Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan in Marketing 3.0 (2010) introduces the concept of 3Is: brand identity, brand integrity, and brand image. Kotler (2006) conveys that branding in the context of nonprofit is a process of forming the desired brand identity. Brand image is how the nonprofit organization wants the brand to be perceived in the minds of the target audience. Daw and Cone (2011) says,
“Effective brands create an emotional and personal connection that brings people together around shared interests, values, and aspirations and inspires action. Breakthrough nonprofit brands are well owned, well understood, and celebrated. They walk and talk differently than traditional nonprofit brands. They share ownership of the organization’s essence and put their constituents at the center of their brand.”

Rice and Atkin (in Metzgers; Media Effects in the Era of Internet Communication, 2009) find that the communication of a campaign will become more effective if using various types of communication to approach the audience and especially in using peer-to-peer based communication. Buchanan and Luck (2006) say that the trend in nonprofit institution communication shows that the use of Internet and mobile-technology will become one of the important aspects in encouraging the development of nonprofit institution communication. They also say that viral marketing is one strategy that can be utilized by a nonprofit institution of movement. Rowley (2010) adds,

“social media provide nonprofits with an opportunity to create a dynamic online presence and potentially increase their brand awareness with limited resources while still remaining connected to members, volunteers, and the public on a personal level.”

Kylander and Stone (2012) say that the strongest identity of a nonprofit brand is when both the internal identity and external image of the organization are consistent and parallel with its values and mission. When the people who are involved, both the staff, volunteers in the nonprofit organization can embrace the general identity of the brand, there is cohesion in the organization which builds focus and strengthens shared values. Lucky, Shannon and Rathi (2012) state that a nonprofit organization that use social media should combine the strength of the staff, members and volunteers to increase its existence through increasing the frequency of information dissemination (posting) which at the same time can also build a conversation between followers or friends on social networks.

The following figure is a frame of thought as a synthesis of concepts used in researches to understand the role of social media in developing a nonprofit brand.
The model above can be described as follows:

a. The intersection between community and social media forms a networked virtual community and creates a social capital. The ability of social media to connect individuals with the same interest and to increase interactivity between the users encourages a closeness between each other.

b. The intersection between social media and nonprofit organization forms a breakthrough in social marketing which encourages a more effective social media branding for nonprofit. Other than to form an image, social media enables identity formation of social movements which is common to be initiated in the era of information.

c. The intersection between community and nonprofit organization forms a volunteer community.

d. The intersection between social media, community and nonprofit organization forms the concept of nonprofit branding in the networked society in the era of information.

3. Research Method

Qualitative research methods are used in this research to enable the writer to study certain issues exhaustively and in detail because the data collection is not limited to certain categories. Qualitative research methods are also chosen to be able to understand various human problems in a social context by creating a whole and complex picture.
that is presented, to report a detailed view of the information sources. To answer the research question, the writer will use a research strategy through study case to gather detailed and rich information, covering the dimensions of certain cases or several small cases, in a wide span.

This research will use the instrumental study case method because the goal is to evaluate the role of social media in developing a nonprofit brand which is volunteer- and community-based, in this case Akademi Berbagi. The writer will use single case study design with single analysis. Single case study means choosing a case to see the role of social media in developing a nonprofit brand which is volunteer- and community-based. In this research, the data will be collected through:

1. Documentation through pictures and videos of activities and publication materials of Akademi Berbagi and news coverage on Akademi Berbagi in the mass media;
2. Collection of archival records in the form of a list of names of volunteers who manages Akademi Berbagi;
3. Direct observation and participative observation in various activities held by Akademi Berbagi, and
4. Structured interview to collect data that not only can fulfill the writer’s needs to answer the research question but also is valid and reliable. The writer will do the interview using a general guideline in the form of themes and topics with several informant who are considered credible from managing volunteers of Akademi Berbagi, volunteer teachers, to reporters who cover the activities of Akademi Berbagi.

The research uses three criteria of data validity: Penelitian ini menggunakan 3 kriteria keabsahan data, yaitu: credibility, dependability, and confirmability. In interpreting and analyzing the data, the writer will try to collect data as complete as possible to piece them together and to find a pattern in the collected primary and secondary data. Then the data will be classified, defined and described. The interpretation of the data will then be compared to theories and concepts to draw a conclusion of the result of the research. Thematic analysis will be used as a foundation of a qualitative research about the role of social media in developing Akademi Berbagi.
Akademi Berbagi: Nonprofit Brand Born from Twitter

Social media brings a new opportunity for nonprofit brands which have constraints in doing conventional branding because of financial factors. Contributions from volunteers who are active in conversation medium in the era of information can produce effective results even though it is relatively low cost. Free social media platforms has become a public space for many opportunities for new types of branding in the era of information today.

Akademi Berbagi was established in 2010 as a follow up of a conversation between Ainun Chomsun and Subiakto Priosoedarsono. Free classes are routinely held with the support of volunteers which consists of teachers, students and administrators. The activities are eventually given an identity which is considered consistent with the spirit and the medium that forms it, Twitter. Akademi Berbagi has a logo and tagline which are made by the volunteers. Social media accounts on Twitter and Facebook become complements of the identity as nonprofit organization which develops in more than 30 cities all over Indonesia (Akademi Berbagi, March 2014).

Figure 2 – The Second Logo of Akademi Berbagi

Nonprofit organization can optimize the use of social media for branding that is relatively unlimited by space and time. The role of social movement activator communities which are presented by social organizations is very important, not only in disseminating branding messages, but also in creating those messages. Social movements or nonprofit organizations which are supported by activator communities/sympathizers become brands that are known by the public through interaction on social media, an Internet mediated interpersonal communication medium. The community can be formed as a result of an interaction between active Internet users (netizen) on social media because similarities in interests and interests on certain issues; this is very strategic because it can shorten the time of formation and development.
Other than presenting new opportunities in forming nonprofit brand activator communities in the era of information, social media has a role in the efforts of forming an identity and an image by the community of activators/sympathizers of the nonprofit brand. Social media also helps the design of digital messages which are interactive and relatively unlimited by space and time. Furthermore, social media helps to strengthen the bonds between administering volunteers. This is important in developing nonprofit organization which has financial constraints like Akademi Berbagi. Ainun Chomsun as the founder of Akademi Berbagi says that everyone who has ever participated in the activities of Akademi Berbagi indirectly is a spokesperson for Akademi Berbagi, furthermore she says,

“Social media gives a transparent impression. Because of the early activities on social media, if we are being dishonest or doing things that are not appropriate, people will know. Social media helps us to build credibility, because there are live tweets during classes. So people really see that classes actually happen. By informing through social media, everyone can read and know what are the classes like. When the students are satisfied or not, they can just speak up.”

Furthermore Ainun says that,

“Social media is very helpful, but to last for four years like this, it is more because of the consistency of the volunteers who are solid. This movement can last long because the concept is easy, suitable for the needs of the society and because of the volunteers.”

Social media brings new opportunities for nonprofit brands, which rely on the contribution of volunteers who come from different backgrounds of ability and skills. Other than bringing new opportunities in designing digital interactive messages that can attract the public to get to know Akademi Berbagi better, social media also strengthen the bonds between administering volunteers. This was conveyed to the writer as follows

“In Indonesia social media is also a mean of communication, not just an information disseminator. People can even make arrangements to talk in social media. From there we can greet and remind each other. Social media can bring people together, even though we don’t meet physically, we can know the news. To tighten the relationship between volunteers.”
The optimization of social media use becomes a step for disseminating publication messages about activities. This motivates the emergence of new Akademi Berbagi in towns and cities outside Jakarta. Coordination in organizing classes and other technical matters related to nonprofit branding are carried out through the interactions of the activators on social network 2.0. This is commonly done by nonprofit organization like Akademi Berbagi which tries to maintain consistency in combining online and offline activities. The intensity of interaction between activators creates a strong bond between the activators who are a part of the virtual community. Ainun Chomsun say in a public narration, Akademi Berbagi: Taman Pembelajaran Untuk Perubahan (2012)

“Akademi Berbagi is a movement which combines online and offline networks. We communicate, socialize and publicize online. The delivery of classes are carried out offline or face to face. Now Akademi Berbagi is a new platform of learning movement which becomes a conversation subject of many people, both online and on conventional media. The socialization of this activity only uses social media, but the impact is extraordinary. Not just teachers, to get a place to learn and volunteers we also do it through social media. Because of it is simple, everyone can learn and get benefit greatly.”
Various characteristics of Akademi Berbagi as a sample case of nonprofit brand in the era of social media can be said to be similar to the characteristics of social media that are conveyed by Mayfield (2008), which are: openness, participation, two way conversations, focus on community and connectivity. As a brand focusing on community, Akademi Berbagi has function as the shaper of social relationship both for individuals and groups of administering volunteers though conversations and ability to share in the society in the era of information.

The flow of information between administrators that is consistent and relatively not constrained by space and time at the beginning was simply designed, and then it developed according to needs organically. This has a significant impact on the development of Akademi Berbagi as a nonprofit brand. Akademi Berbagi not only became a conversation topic in the virtual domain, but also got a chance to perform nonprofit branding on conventional media which is influential in the real domain. News coverage from various conventional media has a huge impact on the formation of public awareness about a brand.
It can be understood that social media is not just a medium of a message from a communicator to a communicant, but it has an influence on types, forms and how a message is delivered. Social media brought back the nature of interpersonal relationship in the era of information, where the virtual domain is a place that as if were inseparable from the lives of netizen, but also at the same time has a big impact especially in giving an impression in the context of public communication.

Various characteristics of Akademi Berbagi as a nonprofit brand can be said to be similar to what Mayfield (2008) said as the characteristics of social media: openness, participation, two way conversations, focus on community and connectivity. As a brand that focuses on community, Akademi Berbagi has functioned as a shaper of social relationships and good reputation both for individuals and its group of administering
volunteers through conversations and ability to share in the society in the era of information.

3. Conclusion

1. Akademi Berbagi as a nonprofit brand which was born and developed in social media, just as an organism that grows and develops, through the process of conversation that is created by the activators. The activator has given an identity and image of Akademi Berbagi according to their direct experience through involvement in the programs and activities of Akademi Berbagi.

2. Social media as a medium for the birth of the Akademi Berbagi nonprofit brand has given similar characteristics and function to the brand. Akademi Berbagi as a nonprofit brand is open, participative, accommodating two way conversations, and focusing on the community and connectedness among the audience. These characteristics have encouraged the practice of principles such as integrity, democracy, ethics and affinity, which are important to its development in the era of information.

3. Akademi Berbagi has become a nonprofit brand that presents emotional and personal connection which came from interest that inspires concrete action in the audience: volunteers and volunteers to be. The concrete actions are in the form of creation and dissemination of messages that are designed democratically and organically. The consistency of execution and the use of the right tools/medium can have a big influence (low cost-high impact) on the formation of public awareness and brings motivation to participate for volunteers to be. Concepts of collaboration and administering volunteer empowerment gives Akademi Berbagi a chance to grow, develop and survive in the life cycle of a nonprofit brand in the era of information.

4. Discussion

It is important for a social movement that is present in the era of the Internet to be able to bring enthusiasm in the public. In this instance, social movement is present as a brand that interacts with its audience through various social media channels which encourages horizontal communication which has the following characteristics:

1. The message is easily dispersed (viral);
2. The message is easily duplicated in various forms;
3. The message is not constrained by time and space (timeless time).

Manuel Castells in Network of Outrage and Hope (2012) states the importance of elevating the enthusiasm of the audience so there is a hope that can bring social movements close together which will be represented by nonprofit brands with audience that is expected to be able to become activators/fans or even brand advocate.

For Manuel Castells, identity is a source of meaning that is more powerful than social role because of the process of self-construction and individuation that happens during the formation. Identity can organize meaning. Anywhere anyone who constructs a collective identity will determine the symbolic meaning of the identity (in Firman Kurniawan, 2013). It is interesting for the writer and future writers to extend the topic of identity of social movement that is formed by the initiative of civil society in the era of Internet today; both collective and personal identity of the activators. Questions that can be addressed are:
1. Is the identity universal?
2. Does the context of local culture (high-context culture dan low-context culture) have an influence on the formation of the identity?
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