

FROM LIKES TO LOVE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT AND THE POPULARITY OF TENNIS IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Tennis, once a sport primarily enjoyed by a select group of fans, is experiencing a tremendous resurgence in popularity, especially in Indonesia. This resurgence can be attributed, in part, to the rise of social media content featuring celebrities such as Raffi Ahmad, who has brought tennis back to popularity. This condition can be shown by the difficulty of accessing tennis courts and tennis equipment stores, which many consumers again visit. This article explores qualitative research conducted to understand social media content, tennis popularity, and the experiences and perspectives of current tennis players. This research uses a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the study of social media content, the popularity of tennis, and the experiences and perspectives of current tennis players in Indonesia. The primary method used in the study was semi-structured interviews with informants, including tennis players, tennis coaches, tennis supply store staff, and tennis court managers. This study aimed to explore the function of social media on the rise in popularity of tennis and explore the challenges tennis fans face. This study aims to comprehensively understand the qualitative aspects of the rise of tennis popularity in Indonesia through qualitative interview methods. The insights gained through this research are to inform strategies to promote the sport further, improve accessibility, and positively impact the tennis community.

Keywords: *Tennis, Sports, Social Media Content, Celebrities*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tennis is a sport that was once popular in Indonesia and has experienced a decline in popularity in recent years (Brown, 2008; Utami & Saputra 2017). However, lately, tennis has been back in the spotlight thanks to social media content featuring Raffi Ahmad, a celebrity who plays tennis (Lasmawan & Yudhistira, 2023). The content attracted public attention and showed the influence of social media on public interest in tennis. This study aims to examine the relationship between social media content and the popularity of tennis, as well as look at the views of tennis players and current tennis court users. This study's formulation of the problem is how social media content, especially content that presents celebrities when playing tennis, affects public interest and involvement with sports.

Furthermore, this study will explore the implications of social media content on the popularity of tennis in Indonesia and how this phenomenon can be harnessed to revitalize the sport. By answering these questions, the study aims to understand the dynamics between social media, public interest, and the popularity of tennis. These findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of the potential role of social media in promoting tennis in Indonesia and inform strategies to increase participation in the sport.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

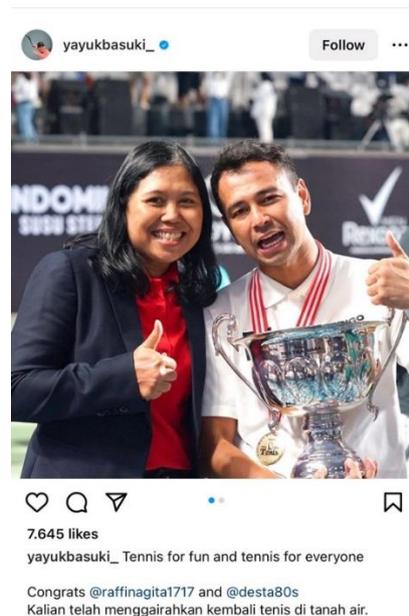
Social media has evolved tremendously since its inception and has become a communication channel that has the potential to influence people's behavior. In particular, previous research has shown that social media has played an essential role in promoting sports and creating engagement among athletes, fans, and sports organizers (Hameed et al., 2020; Shuart (2007); Tito & Fatoni, 2023). In this section, researchers will explore some of the previous research studies that have provided evidence of the significant influence of social media on people's interest and participation in various sports. Researchers are also examining how social media can be an effective platform for connecting with sports fans, improving athlete performance, and increasing sports engagement.

Previous research studies have consistently shown that social media is essential in creating people's interest and participation in various sports. A study conducted by Fitzpatrick, K. R., & Sutton (2010) revealed that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have helped sports organizations to connect with fans and improve communication. They found that social media lets sports organizations update fans quickly on news and events, which was previously a time-consuming process. As a result, fans are more involved with the sport and more likely to participate in the community.

Another study by Smith, A. C. T., & Sanderson (2015) uncovers the connection between social media and sports fan engagement. Their study found that social media creates opportunities for developing a sense of community among fans and allows them to communicate efficiently. They also found that social media helped create a sense of belonging, increase loyalty, and increase the frequency of interaction among fans, thus playing a role in increasing sports fan engagement.

Social media has become an effective platform for promoting sports because of its ability to reach a wider audience. Studies by (Kang, J., Kim, H. J., & Kim, 2020) found that social media is one of the most influential and practical tools for sports marketing. Their study revealed that social media can reach a larger audience and provide more significant exposure for sporting events, which promotes people's interest in and participation in sports. Similarly, a study by Kim, K & Ko (2017) shows that social media is essential in promoting sports tourism. They found that social media provides convenience for sports organizers and is an effective way to promote sporting events and attractions, helping to attract tourists and boost the local economy.

Social media has proven valuable for promoting sports and creating a sense of community and belonging among sports fan communities. This has allowed sports organizations or associations to connect with fans, improve communication, and create opportunities for engagement. In addition, social media is an effective tool for marketing and promoting sporting events, attracting tourists, and boosting the local economy.



Source: Instagram account @yayukbasuki_

Figure 1. Screenshot of Tennis Player Yayuk Basuki's Social Media Accounts

Given the potential benefits of social media, it will continue to play an essential role in influencing people's interest and participation in various sports. Several previous studies have shown the influence of celebrities in sports. Celebrities, such as Raffi Ahmad, often become role models and significantly influence people's interest in sports (Bush et al., 2004; Farren, 2018). The involvement of celebrities in sports can increase the sport's popularity and encourage people to try and follow the sport (Carlson & Donovan, 2013; Carlson & Donovan, 2017). By examining these topics, this study is expected to provide a better understanding of the relationship between social media content and the popularity of tennis, as well as the views of tennis players and current tennis court users in Indonesia.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

In an attempt to explore the complexity of the relationship between social media, the popularity of tennis, and the views of individuals within the tennis community in Indonesia, this study chose an in-depth qualitative approach. The study consists of several complementary methods, creating a comprehensive framework for analysis. The study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the relationship between social media content, tennis popularity, and the perspectives of tennis players and court users. The study used participant observation and conducted interviews (Anzul et al., 2003; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015)) with key informants, including tennis influencers, avid tennis fans, and tennis court managers. Participant observations (Knezevic, 2020; Spradley, 2016) Allow direct observation of social media interactions and their impact on tennis engagement, while interviews provide valuable insights into the motivations, experiences, and perceptions of individuals involved in the tennis community.

Participant observation, which allowed researchers to witness tennis-related social media interactions directly, provided unique insights into how these platforms influence engagement and perceptions of the sport. Additionally, a series of interviews with tennis influencers, players, loyal fans, and court managers provide a deeper understanding of individual motivations and experiences within the tennis community. Nevertheless, the study also incorporates aspects of literature research and searching for references via the internet to strengthen the theoretical basis and monitor the latest trends, pursuing a holistic understanding of how social media plays a central role in shaping and maintaining the popularity of tennis in Indonesia.

This combination of methods allows for the disclosure of diverse perspectives related to tennis and social media. It presents a complete picture of social media's involvement and influence in sports. Drawing on direct experience through observation, personal interaction through interviews, and insights from literature and online sources, this study seeks to delve deeper into the complex relationship between social media, the popularity of tennis, and individual views in the unique context of Indonesia. The results of this study are expected to provide a richer and more relevant understanding for the tennis community, social media practitioners, and decision-makers in the world of sports.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on research interviews with informants, the popularity of tennis has increased rapidly since the existence of tennis content on social media that not only features sports but also features amateur players who are celebrities. This can be felt by the five informants interviewed. According to informant four, it is evident from the difficulty of getting a field schedule, which is always packed throughout the week. What used to be tennis courts are often empty and unmaintained; now, in addition to being complete, many tennis courts have been renovated to be more aesthetic. Informant two, a tennis coach, also revealed the same thing. According to the tennis coach, his schedule became suddenly full. Unlike the early 2000s, it was not easy to get students. There is an increase in demand for trainers. Whereas he only trained one to two hours a day in the past, now it can be four to six hours on weekdays and the whole morning to night on weekends. Which automatically increases the trainer's income. Social media content on Instagram also helps promote tennis coaches. What used to be the coach had to "pick up the ball" advertising or find clients himself; now, since there is social media, coaching orders have come by themselves.



Sources: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWmA0mYhd_4
Figure 2. YouTube screenshot of VINDES "Tiba Tiba Tennis"

The role of social media is quite significant; tennis sports content titled “Tiba-Tiba Tennis,” performed by celebrity Raffi Achmad aroused public interest in playing tennis. According to informant one is the staff of a tennis equipment store; since YouTube content “Tiba-Tiba Tennis,” many tennis communities have sprung up and enlivened tennis supply stores. This is very good for the tennis sports shop business, which in 2013 was quiet and slumped. Now, people come to stores to buy things they see celebrities wearing on YouTube content. This is reinforced by informant five's statement that complete and trendy clothes and equipment significantly increase confidence on the tennis court. So many come to the supply store to complete and update their clothes and rackets.



Source: researcher documentation

Figure 3. A group of tennis players with new demographics

Cool looks are just as important as the sport itself. YouTube content that presents fashionable celebrities is a reference in shopping for tennis equipment. Social media platforms that help the popularity of tennis are not only YouTube, Instagram is also very helpful in promoting fashion or tennis events such as tournaments. Promotion of celebrity YouTube content is also assisted through other social media content such as Instagram. According to informant five, shopping for trendy clothes he used to find on Instagram. Many celebrities create tennis content using trendy clothing on their Instagram pages. This provoked public interest in dressing trendy on tennis courts. Tennis is now not just a sport, but also a lifestyle.

In this study, it was also found that the rise in the prestige of tennis began with the Covid-19 pandemic. Where tennis is a sport recommended by the government because of minimal contact with other people. According to tennis coaches, the pandemic is more influential than celebrity social media content. The schedule has been full since the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic. YouTube content “Tiba-Tiba Tennis” just helps coaches get new demographics. What used to be tennis was only in demand by men or women over the age of 45 years, now since there is social media content, consumers have increased from young people aged 25-35 years. Most of them are female. This new demographic helps the demand for trainers sharpen because of the large demand for coaching through social media.

The involvement of celebrities in a sport greatly helps the popularity of the sport. In this study, it was found that social media content featuring celebrities helped sports that were previously less popular in Indonesia become one of the sports that are in great demand by the public. It was also found that the Covid-19 pandemic was also an important factor in the rise of tennis and also became the beginning of a lot of social media content featuring tennis. An old tennis player who used to play tennis but quit because he had no opponents, is now back playing tennis because he found many opponents from social media. Watching YouTube content featuring amateur celebrities revives interest in playing tennis for other amateur tennis players.

a. The Transformative Power of Sports Communication and New Demographics for Tennis

Sports communication has evolved significantly with digital platforms, particularly YouTube, which has become a powerful tool for promoting sports and engaging with fans (Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023). Sports communication is a complex field that encompasses various aspects of media, public opinion, and athlete-fan relations (Coombs & Harker, 2021). This concept shapes perceptions and discourses around sporting events and athletes. In the new media environment, understanding online public opinion about sporting events has become crucial to establishing effective governance rules (Hambrick, 2017).

Sports organizations can leverage YouTube to showcase athletes, sporting events, and the overall brand value proposition. Sports organizations can effectively reach and engage with their target audience by posting video content, interacting with viewers through likes and comments, and promoting specific items or events (Chen, 2022). YouTube's algorithm determines the visibility and reach of sports content on the platform. The algorithm, developed by Alphabet Inc., YouTube's parent company, is designed to give users personalized content recommendations based on their viewing history and preferences. Learn more from Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen (2023), who mention that this algorithmic approach to content distribution has changed the business logic of sports promotion on YouTube, enabling the creation of alternative content and consumption experiences.

Regarding promoting sports products on YouTube, gender targeting is particularly relevant (Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018). Gender can affect the types of products that appeal to YouTube users, and sports organizations can adjust their promotion strategies accordingly. By understanding the demographics and preferences of their target audience, sports organizations can create targeted and engaging content that resonates with audiences and drives brand awareness. On the other hand, YouTube has also become a platform for sports-related educational content and knowledge dissemination (Harrison et al., 2016). YouTube's vast reach makes it an effective medium for knowledge dissemination, and evaluating its impact on behaviors and practices can be challenging. The digitization process, including the emergence of platforms such as YouTube, has significantly impacted the sports industry (Vrontis et al., 2020). Social media such as YouTube and Instagram have revolutionized sports communication by providing a platform for sports organizations to promote their brands, engage with fans, and spread knowledge.

Sports communication has evolved significantly in recent years, largely thanks to the influence of social media. This transformation is evident in the case of "Tiba-tiba Tennis" a YouTube content featuring celebrities playing a tennis match. This activity has sparked renewed interest in tennis. This phenomenon has not only revived the tennis equipment retail sector but has also brought about a shift in the demographics of tennis fans. In addition, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has played an essential role in shaping these developments. In a comprehensive exploration, the study examines the multifaceted relationship between sports communication, new emerging tennis demographics, and the pandemic's influence. Through interviews with key informants, including tennis supply store staff and individuals involved in the tennis community, researchers dissect the dynamics at play and provide insight into how sports communication and the pandemic have reshaped the tennis landscape.

Sports communication is a dynamic field that includes the dissemination of sports-related information, promotion, and the development of fan engagement. Social media platforms have become a powerful tool in today's digital age. "Tiba-tiba Tennis" serves as a compelling case study in understanding the transformative role of sports communication.

- 1) **Media Influence:** "Tiba-tiba Tennis" is a prime example of how social media can be utilized to promote sports. This content, which features Raffi Achmad, a celebrity, leverages his influence to generate interest in tennis. Through captivating content, this content has effectively communicated the excitement and accessibility of sports to a broad audience. The informant, a tennis supply store staff member, highlighted the impact "Tiba-tiba Tennis" in the tennis community: "Since the YouTube content 'Suddenly Tennis,' many tennis communities have sprung up and enlivened tennis supply stores." This data shows the power of media in fostering communities around sports.
- 2) **Building Community:** One of the core goals of sports communication is to build a passionate fan base and create a sense of belonging among fans. Social media platforms play an essential role in achieving this. The emergence of the tennis community in response to "Tiba-tiba Tennis" illustrates how this platform can bring people together based on a common interest in sports. The newfound sense of community can also be attributed to engaging and entertainingly presented content through social media apps.
- 3) **Consumer Behavior:** Effective sports communication can drive consumer interest and increase sales of sports-related products. In the case of "Tiba-tiba Tennis", viewers are interested in sports and inspired to buy equipment they see celebrities use. Informants noted the positive impact on tennis equipment stores: "Now people come to stores because they want to buy things, they see celebrities wearing on YouTube content." It shows how sports communication influences consumer behavior and drives foot traffic to retail stores

Impact of content "Tiba-tiba Tennis" exemplifies the transformative power of sports communication in the digital age. Through social media, this content featuring celebrities playing tennis effectively harnesses the power of the media to spark widespread interest in tennis. It brings people together to form a vibrant tennis community, influences consumer behavior, drives individuals to physical tennis equipment stores, and highlights the importance of hands-on experience. The case underscores how sports communication

can bridge the gap between sports and diverse audiences, foster community, and drive economic activity in the sports retail sector. This is strong evidence of the media's potential to shape and revitalize sports engagement, ultimately leading to a broader and more inclusive reach for the sport of tennis.

b. New Demographics for Tennis

A sudden surge in interest in playing tennis, triggered by "Tiba-tiba Tennis" shows the potential demographic shift of tennis players. New people not previously inclined towards tennis might get involved, potentially diversifying the player base. This shift has several dimensions worth exploring, such as increased interest. Impact "Tiba-tiba Tennis" The popularity of tennis shows that the sport is attracting a wider audience. The content has made tennis more appealing to individuals who may not have considered it before. The growing interest in tennis indicates the sport's ability to adapt to changing demographics and preferences. This reflects the flexibility of sports to engage new audiences through effective sports communication.

In addition to playing tennis, the study also underscores the role of fashion and style in attracting new demographics to the sport. The depiction of trendy clothing and equipment in sports-celebrity-content has resonated with viewers, influencing their perception of tennis as a sport and a lifestyle. The informant stated, "Well-equipped and trendy clothing and equipment greatly increased confidence in the tennis court." This statement highlights the role of fashion in making tennis more accessible and appealing to diverse individuals.



Source: Instagram account @thegreenslam

Figure 4. Amateur Tennis Competitions Involving Celebrities

The growing demographic of tennis players suggests that the sport is becoming more inclusive. Content "Tiba-tiba Tennis" encourages people to play tennis and conveys a message of accessibility, breaking down barriers that previously might have hindered specific demographics. The message of inclusivity is in line with contemporary sports trends, where efforts are being made to ensure that people from all backgrounds and walks of life feel welcome and represented.

Researchers also highlighted the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which gave an indirect impetus to the development of tennis. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on society, including sports. This effect significantly shapes the development associated with "Tiba-tiba Tennis." First, the pandemic contributed to a substantial surge in online content consumption, including sports-related material, making platforms such as "Tiba-tiba Tennis" more accessible and influential as people increasingly spend time in the digital realm. Second, pandemic-induced restrictions on indoor and team sports increase the appeal of individual outdoor activities, pushing tennis into the spotlight as a safer and more attractive option. Lastly, while the pandemic initially drove a shift towards online shopping, the resurgence of in-person visits to physical tennis equipment stores shows a renewed appetite for real-life in-store experiences, highlighting the importance of an enduring retail dimension in sports equipment acquisition. The pandemic has significantly underscored sports' adaptability and online communication's power in shaping sports trends and consumer behavior.

Case "Tiba-tiba Tennis" and its impact on the tennis community, equipment stores, and confidence on the court is a compelling illustration of the dynamic interaction between sports communication, tennis' evolving demographics, and the influence of the pandemic. Through the lens of this phenomenon, researchers have explored how social media can be leveraged to promote sports and build community, how sports can adapt to attract new demographics, and how external factors such as pandemics can shape sports interests and behaviors.

"Tiba-tiba Tennis" not only revitalizes the tennis landscape but also showcases the potential of the sport to thrive and expand its reach by harnessing the power of communication and engaging with new audiences. The lessons from this case study will be invaluable in understanding the ever-evolving relationship between sport, media, and society and how these elements continue to shape the sporting landscape in the post-pandemic era.

5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that social media, specifically content like "Tiba-tiba Tennis" with celebrities playing tennis, has revitalized tennis in Indonesia. Interviews and observations reveal how social media affects people's interest in tennis, leading to a significant increase in popularity. This has resulted in more people using tennis courts and buying equipment. The content also incorporates fashion and lifestyle, making tennis more appealing to a wider audience. The COVID-19 pandemic indirectly contributed to this popularity as tennis became a safer outdoor activity during restrictions. The study emphasizes how social media creates communities, influences consumer behavior, and adapts to changes in the sport's audience. These insights can help promote tennis and make it more accessible and inclusive. Overall, the research demonstrates how social media, along with other factors, has brought tennis back into the spotlight and offers suggestions for sustaining its growth.

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