



Gaining public support: Framing of esports news content in the COVID-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The internet transcends time and space providing dynamic opportunities for communication during the COVID-19 pandemic, which bodes well for the practice of physical distancing in most countries worldwide. Sports fans and players, affected by the cancellation of physical tournaments started shifting to virtual gaming tournaments and esports as the most viable alternative. In this context, sports-related news media outlets in Indonesia have paid more attention to esports and its related events. This research aims to examine the different perspectives of esports as reported by three selected online news portals in Indonesia during the lockdown (social limitation) period, namely Indosport.com, Detik.com, and Viva.co.id. Based on Fairhurst and Sarr's Framing Theory and their seven tools, the researchers analysed news stories from these selected news portals using the qualitative content analysis method. The present study, focusing on PUBG Mobile Pro League Indonesia (PMPL ID) Season 1, reveals a high level of user engagement with video games and esports. The study identifies a neutral perspective whereby the news media outlets reported that the match can be watched through online streaming platforms during the lockdown period. Additionally, the constructive perspective focused on the stimulation and awareness of the public to watch livestreams and support via donations. Conversely, the deconstructive perspective highlighted the unfulfilled expectations of public by the organisers.

Keywords: **qualitative content analysis, esports, framing theory, public excitement, news portal**

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of 2019, the world has been gripped by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the initial cases being recorded in Wuhan, China (Chinmi, Marta, Haryono, Fernando, & Goswami, 2020). At the very onset, the World Health Organization (WHO) cautioned countries of the rapidly spreading COVID-19 outbreak and its consequences. The WHO Regional Director for Europe, Dr. Hans Henri P. Kluge, warned of the rapid rise of cases and deaths and called for escalated response to take pre-emptive action wherever possible (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2020). In Indonesia, President Joko Widodo released a presidential decree and declared COVID-19 a national emergency. The decree required the public to commit to self-quarantine and imposed territorial quarantines. In the meantime, the restrictions on massive gatherings were also duly complied in most sectors. Such restrictions have resulted in new behavioural norms including the replacement of regular social activities with home-based alternatives. Also, restrictions on outdoor activities lasted for two weeks while the Indonesian authority continuously monitored the outbreak.

Without being able to leave home, people needed to access accurate information related to the pandemic, and, as a result, they pursued a variety of media consumption activities. Online media and internet have been the primary means of constructing interpersonal communication and the primary source of information for decades in Indonesia (Arnus, 2019). During the pandemic, all forms of social interaction and work activities were banned to comply with social distancing. In a way, social distancing may give rise to impersonality and individualism, but a loss in sense of community. Using current internet trends on the forging of social connections, researchers have begun to study the nature of social interaction in computer-mediated contexts (Okdie & Guadagno, 2010). Indeed, the internet has become the most significant platform for information publishing, sharing, and archiving during the period of mobility and social restrictions (or lockdown) imposed by most countries.

One of the affected life aspects during the pandemic is sports. Sports could be appreciated from various dimensions which represent (a) physical activity; (b) a set of skills; (c) competitive; (d) level of stability; and (e) institutional organisation.

The pandemic raised concerns on the possibility of organising or participating in sports. In this context, electronic sport (esports) that employs electronic devices to facilitate the player, rose ubiquitously as an alternative. The input of players and teams, as well as the output of the esports system, are mediated by human-computer interfaces in which communication and information can be transmitted (Tannady, Resdiansyah, Andry, & Marta, 2020). Therefore, the interface also provides an advantage for people to access information (Marta et al., 2019). The esports medium is facilitated by an electronic system (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). The basic reason that encourages more people to play esports can be attributed to the social aspect, that is, limited or no public interactions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This online interaction becomes more intensive for the online player due to several reasons such as satisfaction of achievement, buoyed by positions in online communities in the form of competition standings, supported by solidarity and team participation, compliance with social norms in society, high levels of trust, and fulfilment of personal pleasure (Tseng, Huang, & Teng, 2015).

The pandemic has transformed the format of sports due to movement control and social distancing. However, individuals could still obtain the pleasure of gaming in the form of esports, using social media-based streaming platforms such as Facebook or YouTube. In this regard, online news portals play an important function of informing esports fans about their favourite teams and relevant updates from the comfort of their homes during the pandemic.

In esports tournaments, athletes must protect themselves from COVID-19, and the organising committee is responsible for their safety in the tournament to prevent any COVID-19 transmission. This is important because the tournaments involve two teams with five players each, who meet on the battlefield to compete (Macedo & Falcão, 2020). Thus, self-protection of players is of paramount importance. Every participating team is committed to win. Team commitment itself is essential, as it facilitates long-term cooperation that enhances the mutual awareness of member skills, and leads to long-lasting team performance and success.

In esports, team commitment is necessary because the trust of fellow players can help raise performance standards. Thus, esports is not only enjoyed as a fun game but also as an achievement that players can be proud of (Liao, Tuan, Pham, Cheng, & Teng, 2020). It is a different experience for those who only enjoy esports for recreation and do not participate in tournaments. Professional players are generally interested in tournaments which makes the sports attractive to a broader audience (Hallmann & Giel, 2017). People tend to enjoy esports by physically attending tournaments or via streaming platforms because watching their favourite players compete is a unique attraction (Heaven, 2014).

Training is a core aspect of all athletes, including esports athletes, to increase the probability of winning. Several teams even rely on artificial intelligence (AI) to demonstrate simulation of competition games. They continue to play the same game as a benchmark to the AI's performance to be successful in the real tournament. In the end, the team “compares the results of the findings to conclude the performance of the players trained with different machine learning techniques” (Khan, Naeem, Asghar, Din, & Khan, 2020).

The main objective of this study is to examine the different perspectives of news related to PUBG Mobile Pro League Indonesia (PMPL ID) Season 1 during the lockdown period. Three news portals were selected to examine their perspectives regarding the pandemic's impact on virtual tournaments. The implications of this study include distinguished reporting frames which contain valuable and constructive insights from the general public for esports stakeholders. Specifically, in the context of pandemic that impacts multiple aspects of life, the reality presented by the media tends to take sides with certain parties (Marta, Prasetya, Laurensia, Stevani, & Syarnubi, 2020). In other words, the manner in which a reporter presents esports news is not only aimed at gaining public support but also manifests certain implicit interests to lead the readers' perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the past, several researchers have reviewed whether there is general consensus that esports requires skill, is competitive and has a level of stability, e.g., coaches, sponsors, and large number of followers (Cunningham et al., 2017). Public interest to watch esports matches by being physically present or as an online stream is directly proportional to the extent that these requirements are met by teams. Players who treat esports as a leisure activity are the targeted viewers of tournaments. From the psychological aspect, esports gamers play video games more intensely than recreational gamers (Khan et al., 2020; Cunningham et al., 2017). The studies have also shown that esports players and recreational players play video games differently in terms of game time, i.e. esports players play longer on weekdays and weekends. In the same way, the motivation of the two types of players is also different; esports players aim to score significantly higher than recreational players due to specific motives such as the competitive climate, as a means of interaction and socialisation with peers, and to develop personal skills (Bányai, Grif, Demetrovics, & Király, 2019). Further,

being a professional esports player is more challenging compared to a casual player because of the intensity of practices and training with a professional coach.

Online news outlets publish related news and updates to generate public interest to watch esports tournaments directly or through online streaming platforms. In this regard, the internet has enabled certain forms of communication that go beyond the unidirectional approach of the traditional media (Eid, 2009).

The analyses of mass media frames involves three main components: language, thought, and forethought (Alexander, as cited in Fairhurst, 2005). The first element, language, is the medium most often used by humans to interact. This medium also serves to support the next element, thought, to see the media frame's perspective in the form of a particular message. In turn, this message leads to the last element of forethought so that it indirectly influences the delivery of people's daily communication (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). The framing technique, according to Fairhurst and Sarr, has: a) a metaphor to frame a conceptual idea by comparing it to something else; b) stories (myths, legends) to frame a topic via a narrative vividly and memorably; c) tradition (rituals, ceremonies): cultural mores that imbue significance in the mundane, closely tied to artifacts; d) slogan, jargon, and catchphrase to frame an object with a catchy phrase to make it more memorable and relatable; e) artifact: objects with intrinsic symbolic value – a visual/cultural phenomenon that holds more meaning than the object itself; f) contrast to describe an object in terms of what it is not; and g) spin to present a concept in such a way as to convey a value judgment (positive or negative) that might not be immediately apparent, to create an inherent bias by definition (Amah & Afulike, 2017).

Schmeltz (2014) described framing as a strategic process that forms social constructs based on topics that revolve around certain aspects. Depending on the issue as seen through persuasive communication tools, a person's thinking pattern or frame is formed as he or she is exposed to information. News is the medium used to implement the framing process, while the tools offered by Fairhurst and Sarr lead to the formation of frames among readers.

The framing theory, first proposed by Fairhurst and Sarr and then adapted by Xu & Clark (2019), was used as a reference for mapping the content analysis of the present study. Additionally, the researchers optimised the analytical tools of Fairhurst and Sarr's framing theory to strengthen its structure. This is in line with Roberts & Stein (2015), who saw the potential of the framing device as being able to enliven a fact more impressively.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main characteristic of news reporting is information that is relevant to the event (Pristianita, Marta, Amanda, Widiyanto, & Boer, 2020) and it is a given that, news leads the opinion of its readers. Therefore, Murfianti, Marta, and Rahyadi (2020) suggested a process of tracing media representations using a qualitative approach.

Sample selection

In analysing the media coverage of esports tournaments in Indonesia, the researchers selected Indosport.com, managed by PT Media Sport Indonesia. The online media outlet has established itself as the foremost source for "Latest News on Sports and Football" and has specifically added an "esports" feature to its news portal. Next, the researchers juxtaposed news on PMPL ID Season 1 from this portal with similar topics on other general news portals. The purpose was to obtain various perspectives based on the interests of other selected media, namely: Detik.com, which is a business brand of PT Trans Digital Media and Viva.co.id, managed by PT Viva Media Baru.

Research instrumentation

This study utilised the research framework from Fairhurst and Sarr to conduct a content analysis on the perspectives presented by the three selected online news outlets on PMPL ID. Sya & Marta (2019) explained that media has its peculiarities in framing reality (events, actors, groups, etc.), and these peculiarities are used and constructed with certain meanings. As such, the role of the media in directing the public through the issues presented can be traced through a qualitative content analysis (Awais, Awais, & Alhossary, 2020).

Data analysis

The advantage of content analysis lies in its ability to find consistency of message across contexts (Sudarsono, 2016). Table 1 lists the selected news articles for this research.

Table 1. The selected news articles from the three online news portals

No.	Title of news article		Online news outlet	Published date
	English	Bahasa Indonesia		
1	<i>Coronavirus Threatens Indonesia's Largest PUBG Mobile Tournament</i>	<i>Virus Corona Ancam Turnamen PUBG Mobile Terbesar di Indonesia</i>	Indosport.com	March 10, 2020
2	<i>Corona Moves PUBG Mobile Pro 2020 Competition to Online Stream</i>	<i>Corona Bikin Kompetisi PUBG Mobile Pro 2020 Pindah ke Online</i>	Detik.com	March 11, 2020
3	<i>PUBG Tournament Can Help Fight Coronavirus in Indonesia, How?</i>	<i>Turnamen PUBG Bisa Bantu Perangi Virus Corona di Indonesia, Caranya?</i>	Viva.co.id	April 5, 2020

Firstly, the framing frames were categorised into seven predefined framing types. The selected news articles were then analysed simultaneously and classified into one of the seven types. The analysis starts with mapping the metaphor elements seen from the conceptual idea among the three selected news articles. Then, the second element in the form of stories is traced as the main narrative of each news, thus revealing the third and fourth elements (traditions and artifacts) in the form of symbolic values that match the selected news with similar news in other media. Next, the fifth element, namely catchphrase, is obtained by a elaborating phrases in the news text which are expressed from three perspectives, followed by a discussion of the contrasting aspects of the three news perspectives as the sixth element. Finally, the news stories are assessed to reveal the seventh element which is the spin used by media.

While language provides the easiest way to understand something, it determines how our mind decides what and how we choose to frame something while forethought refers to the measure of control exerted over our spontaneous communication (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). The thoughts of a communicator can be explored through the study of language and media frames are a method of sharing knowledge (Rahmawati, Mulyana, & Safitri, 2019). In the context of the present study, the form of media messages is news, related to online game sports enthusiasts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Metaphors

Esports competition, in the form of tournaments, can be widely watched by the public either by attending a match physically or indirectly by live streaming. Table 2 shows that

the PUBG tournament as an online game has a significant advantage in that it can be played anywhere as long as the place has a reliable internet connection. Further, as the game is dynamic, it does not bore gamers easily. Besides, they can be enjoyed by gamers simultaneously anywhere, without the need to be in the same location or even country (Syafitri & Ikhsan, 2019). Based on the three news stories, the live-streamed game can still be enjoyed by many.

Table 2. Analysis of metaphors

Online new outlet	Metaphor	Finding
Indosport.com	“The health and safety of our players and staff is priority. Therefore, we have decided that PMPL 2020 should be closed to the public to avoid any unforeseen issues or situation related to the coronavirus outbreak,” (@ pubgmobile.esports.id)	Both Indosport.com and Detik.com reported on the COVID-19 outbreak and highlighted that this will not halt the upcoming esports tournament. The competition will be live-streamed instead and can be accessed by the public.
Detik.com	Unfortunately, Tencent, as the game developer, made a decision to live-stream the tournament. This decision led to many fans being disappointed as they had wanted to come and watch the game directly.	
Viva.co.id	PUBG Mobile's Marketing Director for Southeast Asia, Oliver Ye, enthused that in the Regular round, esports fans will be spoiled with the highest skill set of PUBG Mobile matches.	Meanwhile, Viva.co.id, assured that the live-streamed esports tournament would still be as exciting and as worthwhile to watch.

In the world of sports, esports can be included in the category of sports that involve fine motor skills, such as chess and bridge games. It is different from conventional sports, which is widely understood and experienced by the wider community in the form of physical activities that use muscles and burn calories to train gross motor skills (Kurniawan, 2019). According to all three news outlets, as the PUBG Mobile tournament only requires the players' fine motor skills and not face-to-face interactions, both staff and athletes are protected from any potential COVID-19 transmission. As a comparison, in South Korea, several television channels have been intentionally established for broadcasting esports events for the young adult population, which is the predominant demographic that watches esports (Southern, 2017). Outside of South Korea, viewers watch esports events through online mediums such as Twitch and YouTube, which offer streaming services and data storage to record the tournaments. This aspect of esports allows passive viewers to contribute to its success as a part of the target demographic of esports who enjoy watching and being a part of an exciting event without the need to actively participate.

Interestingly, the selected media in the present study illustrate the perspective that esports can still be organised and conducted through online mediums to entertain audiences even if the audience is not present at the game venue. Edge (2013) discovered that online esports broadcasts create a particular community as a target market. This trend is growing, as evidenced by the large number of subscribers dedicated to following and intensely watching every content presented.

Tracing the stories

Table 2 illustrates that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the PUBG Mobile tournament will be live-streamed. Steam, a leading gaming distributor, reported more than 20 million

concurrent active users, the highest in its 16-year history. Live-streaming platforms such as YouTube Gaming and Twitch reported a viewership of 10 million and rising (King, Delfabbro, Billieux, & Potenza, 2020). This reflects a growing trend for live-streaming platforms becoming popular with people who want to enjoy the game anytime, anywhere. Moreover, this phenomenon has also been boosted by the tremendous increase of internet users (Nurrahmi, Sari, Marta, Setiawan, & Rahim, 2018).

Table 3. Analysis of news stories

Online new outlet	News story	Finding
Indosport.com	Coronavirus threatens the biggest PUBG Mobile tournament in Indonesia, PMPL ID season 1, [...] The coronavirus continues to spread in Indonesia and threatens public health in the capital city, and it has forced the organisers to stop spectators from entering the 2020 PMPL arena.	Both Indosport.com and Detik.com concluded that COVID-19 could endanger the audience if the tournament were to be held physically. Nevertheless, despite the pandemic, the PUBG tournament is still held, just not in the usual form.
Detik.com	The rising cases of COVID-19 in many countries have affected several major events, [...] Indonesia was the first country to hold the PUBG Mobile professional league entitled “PUBG Mobile Pro League (PMPL) 2020,” in March.	
Viva.co.id	Currently, there are various types of online games available, one of which is Player Unknown’s Battleground or better known as PUBG. [...] There were 72 rounds of matches that were held in the regular season of the biggest PUBG tournament in Indonesia.	Viva.co.id put a positive spin on its news coverage that the virus has had no effect on the online streaming of the tournament and that it has already entered its grand final round.

Viva.co.id reported that the pandemic did not affect the livestream of the tournament; the audience could still “attend” and watch the game just like the previous ones. However, in comparing the consumption behaviours of traditional sports and esports, Lee and Schoenstedt (2011, p. 43) highlighted that “less similarity was found between esports and three other traditional sports (i.e., game participation, radio listenership, and team merchandise purchase).” Interestingly, there was no significant overlap between esports and two other traditional sports with regard to involvement (i.e., game attendance and using print media about sports) because there has been no attempt, if any, to empirically compare the consumption behaviours of esports and traditional popular sports. This particular finding introduces a new perspective in gaining a better understanding of esports consumption and marketing emphases. Nowadays, watching esports tournaments is as easy as watching traditional sports live on television due to the convenience of inter-device connectivity. Both smartphones and personal computers enable access to watching live or recorded sports events (Rahim, Armay, Susilo, Marta, & Alanda, 2019).

Besides that, esports events also has one or more commentators to enliven the atmosphere and rouse the spectators. “An esports event not only includes players but also includes organisers and sponsors, commentators, and the viewing audience” (Bányai et al., 2019). Using commentators to enliven esports events is necessary for a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon of professional gaming and its appeal to be watched via livestream on Facebook.

The same news story stated that the alternative to watching a tournament directly is by watching its livestream with commentators. The organising committee has assured fans that the online experience will be similar to being physically present in conventional tournaments. Today's information and communication technology (ICT) has made it possible for audiences anywhere in Indonesia to watch the tournament simultaneously. However, security aspects are still necessary to address any potential online threats or issues. Security devices such as firewalls, antivirus programming, and encryption help esports organisers to protect public data from illicit parties (Marta, Gs, Daniar, Seprina, & Pieter, 2019) which guarantees a satisfactory and secure customer experience.

Uncovering traditions and artifacts

The idea of a conventional and audience-packed tournament, as mentioned in Table 4 has been rendered impossible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tournaments which are live-streamed with a remotely based audience, often receive scant press attention and is usually small-scale in terms of spectators. But nowadays, with the emergence of live-streaming services like Twitch, esports has become a large-scale spectator sports which has proliferated throughout the world via the internet. Some competitions draw spectators ranging from 10,000–20,000 viewers, to over 70,000 viewers for some of the more popular games, such as Fortnite (Rothwell & Shaffer, 2019). The Internet of Things (IoT) has broken the traditional rules of watching sport events and can motivate massive numbers of spectators to enjoy online tournaments just like traditional sports events.

Table 4. Analysis of traditions and artifacts

Online new outlet	Tradition and artifact	Finding
Indosport.com	“We apologize for the inconvenience, but you can still enjoy PMPL ID 2020 season 1 through exclusive streaming [...]” PMPL is the largest PUBG Mobile esports tournament in Indonesia, and the playoffs will be held until March 29, 2020.	All three media outlets opined the need to cancel the tradition of watching physical live tournament, which was to be held for the first time in Indonesia. However, despite the cancelation, the media also appeased the fans by informing them that the tournament will still take place, albeit as a livestream.
Detik.com	PUBG Mobile Indonesia also confirmed that the competition would be live-streamed in its Instagram account. “We will comply with all the guidelines and recommended precautions during PMPL ID 2020 Season 1,” it had stated.	
Viva.co.id	The Grand Final, carrying the theme ‘Be The One’, will be held on 3-5 April 2020. Esports fans can watch the game online at the PUBG Mobile Indonesia Facebook page. This decision was made to protect players, staff, and fans in light of the COVID-19 outbreak.	

Departing from traditional team sports, which involves physical contact, esports relies mainly on teamwork that entails coordination, communication, and cohesion (Wanyi, 2018). Similarly, member attributes, motivation, and team processes are factors taken into account when discussing the characteristics of high-performing esports teams. PUBG Mobile Pro League (PMPL), the largest PUBG Mobile esports tournament organiser in

Indonesia, also urged players to build teamwork without any contact in the physical world. The tournament can be held via mobile phones, and players can comply with COVID-19 protocols to practise physical distancing. For fans, they can still watch the tournament via Facebook's live-streaming service.

Every team that joins the PUBG Mobile Pro League is legitimate. Difrancisco-Donoghue, Balentine, Schmidt, & Zwibel (2019, p.2) stated that "Esports teams have uniforms and coaches; they practise together and regularly compete just like traditional sports, and amass fans like traditional sports teams." Esports teams also encourage their fans to watch the tournament through online streaming, and help promote the team's merchandise. However, licensed merchandise (TLM — trademarked official merchandise) is just one more revenue source for teams and sports organisations (Lee & Trail, 2013).

Elaboration of catchphrase

A slogan or catchphrase refers to an advertising tagline or phrase that advertisers create to express their product's importance and benefits, visually. It can "grab people's time and attention by putting consumers at the heart of the solution" (Zuliana, Tanjung, & Ardi, 2013, p. 8). As an example, Poland used slogans or catchphrases in its public service announcements (PSA) to help "solve the problem of drugs, addiction, and addicted, [...] the idea of a free, agentive, and self-managing subject is visible in the constructions of role models presented in the Public Service Announcement." (Kowal-bourgonjon & Jacobs, 2019). Thus, slogans, jargons, or catchphrases can be used to support public campaigns, either for advocating or preventing something. A study on Facebook translation concluded that "the attitudes and practices of a speech community are not only shaped by cultural identity but can be profoundly influenced by media ideologies (catchphrase or slogan), technical affordances, algorithms, and other nonhuman actors" (Vaisman, Gonen, & Pinter, 2018, p. 17).

Table 5. Analysis of catchphrase or slogan

Online new outlet	Catchphrase or slogan	Finding
Indosport.com	"We apologize for the inconvenience, but you can still enjoy PMPL ID 2020 season 1 through exclusive streaming on the official PUBG Mobile Indonesia Facebook page," he continued. PMPL is the largest PUBG Mobile esports tournament organiser in Indonesia, and the playoffs will be held until March 29, 2020.	Indosport.com informed the public that while they cannot attend physically the tournament, they can still watch through "exclusive streaming."
Detik.com	"The health and safety of our players and staff is our top priority. Therefore, we have decided to change the South Asia 2020 PUBG Mobile Pro League into an online event due to unforeseen circumstances related to the coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19)."	Detik.com explained that the safety of athletes and organising committee is priority during the COVID-19 pandemic using the catchphrase "Online Event."
Viva.co.id	"We believe that Indonesia has the esports talents needed to become the best PUBG Mobile team in the world," he said in an official statement received (VIVA, April 5, 2020).	Viva.co.id stated that this tournament would bring out "The best PUBG Mobile team" from Indonesia.

All three online news portals used terms such as “exclusive streaming” and “online event” as slogans or catchphrases to promote PMPL. Branding is very important for a successful event. In regard to branding, (Razwan & Catalin, 2018, p. 36) stated that “perhaps many of us would say that it is a logo, a slogan, and a mix of colours that define a company. But branding means a lot more. For esports teams around the world, branding is essential for promoting, creating a fan base, and generating substantial revenue”. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tournament must go on but can only be watched through online streaming. Thus, the organising committee must create public awareness and promote the livestream of the event. The use of jargon in branding has some function as it fulfils a sense of belonging to a specific group. Jargon facilitates “a person to communicate with their groups and the effectiveness of the jargon is a signal for identification” (Syafitri & Ikhsan, 2019, p. 155). Thus, the terms “exclusive stream” and “online event” of PMPL were used by the committee as the slogan or jargon to amplify their event.

Furthermore, words that make up a jargon can be defined as attaching knowledge, which can be a difficult process for transferring knowledge. The difficulties that arise are related more to how to encode information, which depends on the communicants' characteristics such as skills in processing the meaning of messages and their background experiences based on certain types of knowledge that can be shared between other communicants (Patoko & Yazdanifard, 2014). As an image that is retained in the consumer's mind (Maurya & Mishra, 2012), branding is a functional and psychological attribute. Some other perspectives on the meaning of a brand define it as a certain image that people associate with that brand. Another way to describe it is as a consumer's idea of a product. Place branding can be found in all industries from tourism to business and marketing (Hanna & Rowley, 2008). Indosport.com used the term “exclusive streaming” as a slogan to gain public support for the virtual esports tournament that still takes place. In the same way, Detik.com used “Online Event” and Viva.co.id used “The Best PUBG Mobile Team” as catchphrases to reflect their perspectives.

According to Olsen (2015), a competitive game is a match where opposing teams compete with each other. This competitive match can be viewed directly either as fellow participants who are involved in it, spectators who view it in an arena, or even through livestreams organised by the match provider. Happonen & Minashkina (2019) studied the sources of motivation for esports viewers, and also assessed the effect of these sources on the satisfaction of the viewer's experience. Their findings reveal that people watch esports as a form of enjoyment. Also, the experience, the lively game commentary, and pure playing skills displayed by the top-of-the-line professional players are other sources of motivation to keep watching esports. The catchphrases or slogans used by the three online news outlets helped create public awareness for the tournament via online streaming platforms such as Facebook or YouTube.

Contrasting perspective

Contrast refers to two opposing facets of an object or issue, that is, the good and bad or the truth and untruth of something. Indrajai & Mayesti (2018) explained that the definition of contrast, in this case, is likened to the librarian profession in Japanese called “Hitsujikai,” who helps to solve problems by giving book recommendations, and fatal errors will occur if the recommendations are misleading.

Table 6. Analysis of contrasting perspective

Online new outlet	Contrasting perspective	Finding
Indosport.com	As is known, the Indonesian government has confirmed that there are 19 positive cases of Coronavirus. Generally, the patients are from the Greater Jakarta area [...] the match has just been held for the first week on February 6-8, 2020. This match is open to the general audience and takes place at Studio Sepat 72, Pasar Minggu, South Jakarta.	All the three media outlets, Indosport.com, Detik.com, and Viva.co.id explained to the reader that the COVID-19 pandemic is a threat to the tournament. Thus, the tournament planning and implementation will focus on the safety protocols to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus and maintain the safety and health of esports athletes.
Detik.com	In addition to participants, fans and other parties who want to watch live are also not permitted to enter the venue, and the organisers will take serious action against those who do so.	
Viva.co.id	The 'Be the One' Grand Final was held on 3-5 April 2020. Fans of esports watched the game online at the PUBG Mobile Indonesia Facebook page. This [move to the online streaming platform] was necessary to protect the health and safety of players, staff, and fans during the COVID-19 outbreak.	

It is common that objects in media can tell the viewer contrasting true or false perspectives. As highlighted by WHO, dealing with the unforeseen challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a significant toll on everyone across the world. The struggle for “message control within an inescapable frame is consuming but operates through the publicly asserted rhetorical position of mutual mistrust and independence” (Rintel, Angus, & Fitzgerald, 2015, p. 50). With regard to the contrasting perspectives of media, Sokół (2018) highlighted that channels and formats of health communication presenting new practitioners and non-experts have emerged, and relationships between practitioners and patients have been re-negotiated.

Table 6 shows that all three media outlets agree that COVID-19 threatens PMPL because a tournament of a national scale can lead to large public gatherings, which can compromise all efforts of social distancing to suppress the COVID-19 transmission. They also highlighted that the PMPL tournament itself will focus on safety and health protocols. Further, the outlets also highlighted that the usual physical tournament has been changed to an online event and fans can watch it through online streaming services such as Facebook or YouTube.

The power of media spin

The spin used by Indosport.com, as illustrated in Table 6, shows the perspective of the PMPL tournament committee suffering drawbacks from the cancelled event. The committee released an apology letter for the inconvenience caused by the cancellation and also to inform fans about the official livestreaming platforms for the tournament.

Table 7. Analysis of spin used by media

Online new outlet	Spin	Finding
Indosport.com	“We apologise for the inconvenience, but you can still enjoy PMPL ID 2020 season 1 through exclusive streaming on the official PUBG Mobile Indonesia Facebook page.”	The three news outlets presented their respective perspectives. Indosport.com highlighted the impact of the cancellation of the physical event. Detik.com promoted watching livestream via Facebook. Viva.co.id reported that if the audience watched the tournament online, they can help prevent COVID-19 transmission and their support can help the purchase of hand sanitisers made by the committee to hospitals that require them.
Detik.com	PUBG Mobile Indonesia also confirmed on its Instagram account that the competition would be transferred to online streaming.	
Viva.co.id	Interestingly, [...] 30,000 spectators watched the livestream of the Grand Final round for three days, [...] this donation from esports fans can help with the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, especially for hospitals [...] handling COVID-19, which have noted a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE).	

In summary, Detik.com presented a neutral perspective of the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact, even if the traditionally held physical tournament had to be shifted to online streaming. A substantial part of everyday communication occurs in social networks through instant messaging services using electronic communication media (Thiel & John, 2018), including esports that utilises electronic communication to broadcast competitions.

In regard to Viva.co.id, it had advocated that by watching the tournament online, widespread COVID-19 transmission can be avoided. Further, the total number of viewers will be converted into donations for personal protective equipment (PPE) for doctors and medical personnel working in hospitals.

Based on Fairhurst and Sarr’s seven framing devices, the findings reveal that all three media outlets (Indosport.com, Detik.com, and Viva.co.id) adopted a neutral stance in their reporting, advocating the livestreaming of the tournament for the duration of the lockdown period. However, they also presented other perspectives which allude to the consequences of public support. The constructive perspective presented by Viva.co.id refers to the stimulation of public excitement and awareness to help overcome the pandemic through donations. On the other hand, Indosport.com highlighted the unfulfilled expectations from fans to the organizers as a deconstructive perspective.

CONCLUSION

With the COVID-19 pandemic gripping the whole world, esports has become the only sport that remains unaffected. Using ICT to interact with each other, players do not have to be physically present to play a match, which bodes well for the physical distancing protocol required to stem COVID-19 transmission. In this regard, the findings of the present study has shed some light on the perspectives and reporting frames used by online news portals to sustain public interest in esports tournaments.

In light of the ongoing pandemic and potential similar pandemics in the future, research on optimal human movement agility is regarded as vital. Specifically, in situations which social distancing is inevitable, esports is the most appropriate and sensible alternative to normal sports. Esports has entered into the mainstream as it gains popularity in the

region. The projected growth of the esports industry also reflects various perspectives for systematic reviews.

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