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Public Relations Strategy on Responding Environmental Issues to Sustain Corporate Image: A Descriptive Study of Danone-AQUA's #BijakBerplastik

Deborah Megan¹ and Mochammad Kresna Noer^{2*}

ABSTRACT

This study began with contamination problem that were often brought up when speaking about environmental issues in a larger scale. The most debatable aspect in environmental issues nowadays is about the marine plastic pollution that already contaminated world's ocean. This issue then motivated societies in the world to start reducing plastic usage, but unfortunately, there are only few companies that tried to support this movement. In Indonesia, Danone-AQUA is one of the companies that support the movement. In mid-2018, Danone-AQUA stated their commitment to engage in this said movement by making #BijakBerplastik commitment. This research was conducted using Cutlip and Center's strategic public relations phase in understanding social marketing effect that was done by Danone-AQUA in maintaining the positive image of the company as the pioneer of bottled drinking water in Indonesia. Using case study research method as its base with post-positivistic paradigm and qualitative approach in descriptive nature, data was gathered by doing in-depth interviews and literature review studies. There are five key informants, two public relation communication consultants, a representatives from Danone-AQUA, one public target, and one communications expert. This study found that the public relations strategy used by Danone-AQUA with the form of social marketing applied in #BijakBerplastik successfully maintain the corporate image in a positive way.

Keywords

Bottled drinking water, plastic pollution, social marketing, branding, plastic campaign

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INTRODUCTION

In the 20th century, technology and communication industry developed rapidly. However, environmental pollution problems start to emerge and disturb Earth's

environmental ecosystems. These environmental problems actually have been around for quite a long time. But it was only later in 2018 that the news of environmental degradation was simultaneously revealed and caught the public's attention.

One of the environmental issues that rose is marine plastic pollution (Wijaya, et al., 2020). Various parties from television media, radio, print, digital, non-governmental organizations, and scientist experts slowly began spreading the

¹Account Executive Mullenlowe Indonesia

²Department of Communication Science, Bakrie University, Jl. HR Rasuna Said Kav. C-22, Kuningan, Jakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: kresna.noer@bakrie.ac.id

urgency of marine plastic pollution and invite people taking part in action to tackle this problem. There are ways to take actions, such as being field volunteers who went down the beach collecting plastic waste, reuse plastic waste to other stuff, or even experimenting new materials to exchange the use of plastic (Wijaya, et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, not everyone can go down the field to be a volunteer due to their work, inadequate location, or lack of time. Therefore, they need someone who they can rely on bringing their voice to bring positive change to the environment; in this case, they need a corporate brand they can trust.

Based on Edelman Earned Brand 2017 research, majority of public currently carefully chooses products or services that they use or buy based on how the company's beliefs and action towards an issue. They want to use or buy brands that could represent their personal voice and commitment on certain issue.

In general, 1 out of 2 people in the world are belief-driven buyers, which are those who choose, change, avoid or boycott a brand based on their commitment to an issue. Public believes that corporate companies can act more effectively in providing solutions to existing issues. In relation with environment issues, Nielsen Global Survey on Corporate Social Responsibility showed that 52% of respondents made at least one purchase during the last six months from socially responsible companies. Also, 52% of respondents ensure they use products that have positive impact on environmental sustainability.

From the two researches above, it can be concluded that consumers now believe in companies that have vision and mission to improve the community and environment sustainability rather than company's own status and benefits. Marine plastic waste is one of environmental issues that attracts public attention. Plastic has indeed become a part of human life, but there are lots of data that shows the amount of plastic waste on Earth is

increasing day by day. This is become a concern for companies, particularly those who use plastic as food and beverage packaging materials, one of which is Danone-AQUA.

As a company that brings healthy hydration to Indonesian people every day, they use plastic cup, bottles and gallons as their packaging because of their practicality. However, Danone-AQUA aware that plastic bottled water has negative effects on the environment and is one of the biggest contributors of marine plastic waste. Based on 2017 International Coastal Cleanup Report data, plastic bottle is the fourth largest marine plastic waste in Indonesia, where 5,346 thousand plastic bottles were collected during beach clean-up day.

This is a challenge for Danone-AQUA, regarding their responsibility in dealing with plastic issues to maintain corporate image as an environmentally sustainable company. For this reason, Danone-AQUA launched the #BijakBerplastik commitment in mid-2018. This commitment is a cross-sectoral collaboration of Danone-AQUA which was began in 2018 and will continue until the year of 2025.

#BijakBerplastik commitment consists of three objectives, which are to collect much more plastic waste than the volumes that they produce in the Indonesia, leading national campaigns for recycling education in 20 major cities in Indonesia, and making all of their plastic packaging 100% recyclable by increasing the proportion of recycled plastic in its bottles by 50% in 2025.

This Danone-AQUA's commitment is a form of public relations strategy in responding to environmental issue to maintain corporate image. They applied PR strategy that belongs to Center & Cutlip and using social marketing tactics, which is an effort to change the attitudes and behavior of the target audience in order to overcome social problems (Pudjiastuti, 2016, p. 6). This social marketing combines communication techniques with marketing principles.

Therefore, authors thought that #BijakBerplastik Danone-AQUA is worth for research, as there are no other companies in Indonesia that are taking action in seeking environmental sustainability in marine plastic pollution. With this public relations strategy of #BijakBerplastik commitment, Danone-AQUA provides what the community needs and also getting support from the public to maintain company's positive image. This article describes in depth of public relations strategy used by Danone-AQUA for #BijakBerplastik in order to maintain their positive corporate image that they already have.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative approach due to explore a situation deeper with descriptive type because it can give an objective picture of a situation. The best research method for this objective is case study, which is an in-depth examination of an individual, place, setting or particular event in order to produce a well-organized and complete picture (Yin, 2014). The purpose of using case studies is to provide a detailed description of the background and process of the Danone-AQUA PR strategy through #BijakBerplastik.

Data from this study were obtained using in-depth interview techniques and literature review. In-depth interviews were conducted with 5 speakers, that are Mohammad Gustiasa (Sr. Client Executive Edelman Indonesia), Karyanto Wibowo (Sustainability Lead Danone-AQUA), Meiliana Agustine (Jr. Client Executive Edelman Indonesia), Myra Wirawan (BINUS Student), Kiki Soewarso (Lecturer LSPR Communication Studies). Whereas documentary information is obtained from news coverage articles with the tag #BijakBerplastik and other things relevant to the case study topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Defining the Public Relations Problem

#BijakBerplastik

The concept of public relations and corporate image strategies is a concept that has been discussed by many studies by other authors. For example, the research titled "Analysis of Marketing Strategy of Public Relations in Maintaining Corporate Image of TRANS TV" by Maria Zen Budiati. The result of Maria's research is that the communication strategy carried out by TRANS TV is defined as marketing public relations which using a two-way asymmetrical process, and it was found that the strategy succeeded in defending the corporate image of TRANS TV in front of its stakeholders, shareholders and audience.

In addition, there is also a research by Maria Jessica with the title "Implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility in Forming a Positive Image of the Company (Case Study: "Aku Dokter Cilik" program at OMNI Hospital Alam Sutera)". The results of this study are that CSR implementation is quite effective in maintaining a positive image of OMNI Hospital Alam Sutera. The results of this research also shown that the "Aku Dokter Cilik" Program succeeded in developing the health education in early childhood, and was quite effective in shaping the positive image of the OMNI Hospital Company.

There is also a research belongs to Bestaria, Deasy and Novi with the title "The Meaning of Green Marketing and Its Implementation in KFC Jember", which results are that community feels that it is important to have environmental-friendly products because it will bring a great impact to health and environmental sustainability. Based on the following exemplaries, authors define #BijakBerplastik with the concept of public relations, social marketing and corporate image strategies.

Strategy is a plan that is consciously carried out to form an action (Mintzberg et al in Oliver, 2015, p.2). Whereas public relations is

the art and social science that can be used to analyze trends, predict consequences, advise organizational leaders, and carry out planned programs regarding activities that serve, both for the benefit of the organization and for the public or public interest (Ruslan, 2012, p.17).

Public relations strategy management is a process that allows organizations, companies, associations, non-profits, or government agencies to identify long-term opportunities and threats, mobilize their assets, and carry out successful strategy implementation. According to Cutlip and Center (in Broom & Sha, 2013, p.264), there are 4 stages of the PR strategy management process.

The first is defining public relations problems, which is the stage in determining the problem at hand, monitoring opinions, attitudes, or internal and external public behaviour that intersects with company activities and rules. Research needs to be done in every public relations strategy planning so that information gathering will be more systematic to describe and understand the situation and reduce uncertainties in making decisions and give a comprehensive assessment (Broom & Sha, 2013, p. 263).

There are two methods of conducting research, namely informal research, such as conducting observations, interviewing key informants, conducting focus group discussions, community forums, committee recommendations, searching data from social media or other online sources, and formal research, namely secondary analysis, online databases, content analysis, and surveys.

Second, planning the program, where research results are used to determine the public relations goals achieved must reflect the problems and opportunities that are defined at the research's stages. The objectives must also be aligned with the broad context of the company's vision, mission and operational objectives.

After the goals are determined, public relations planning can begin to be prepared by

determining the specific public targets of the activity, mapping stakeholders, namely those who have a relationship with the business activities of an organization or company, seeing the existence or decision in influencing the organization and vice versa (Freeman, 2010 , p.24). Then determine the objectives that represent knowledge, opinions, and behavioural results that must be achieved from each public target that has been set, the strategy and tactics of the program to be used.

Third, taking action and communicating the communication strategy that has been designed. This stage constructs the message so that any information that is to be communicated can be conveyed properly, clearly, and effectively. There are several strategies in designing communication messages (Broom & Sha, 2013, p.315), namely Compliance-gaining strategies, Power and fear appeals, One-sided and two-sided arguments.

In this case, Danone AQUA uses Compliance-gaining strategies, communication messages that are often persuasive which are designed to shape or change the behaviour of others. After constructing communication messages, it is important to determine how to convey the message through several channels that can be used (Broom & Sha, 2013, p.323), namely mass media, Opinion leaders, Special events, and new media.

The fourth is evaluating the program which summarizes the results of the activity. Evaluation is important to measure the impact and development of activities. Measuring the evaluation phase using the pyramid model of PR Research. The basic stage of the pyramid is represented by the strategic planning and preparation process, while the middle stage represents the process obtained when the activity takes place, and the peak stage represents the output of the PR activity that has been carried out. The evaluation results obtained will be used as a basic standard for preparing the next phase of activities.

Danone-Aqua, as a healthy hydration company, all of this time uses PET bottles for their packaging because it is the most practical and easy material that they can get. However, further research shows that PET bottles badly impact the environment because they are hard and take years to be recycled naturally. And because of that, data shows that plastic bottles are the 3rd most found plastic debris in international marine and the 4th most found plastic debris in Indonesian marine. Acknowledging the issue of marine plastic waste, Danone-AQUA feels the urge that they need to be responsible and start searching for solutions to this issue. The first thing that Danone-AQUA do is finding information by conducting researches (Broom & Sha, 2013, p.263). Research conducted by Danone-AQUA is divided into two, formal and informal researches.

The formal research carried out by Danone-AQUA includes secondary analysis, online databases and surveys. One of the studies found by Danone-AQUA during secondary analysis research is Ellen MacArthur's report on the New Plastic Economy that invites companies, governments and organizations to ward off plastic pollution together.

The New Plastic Economy Initiative applies circular economics principles and devises solutions to redesign and change their packaging with reused, recycled or composted plastic. Danone-AQUA also conducts field survey to get to know their consumers in Indonesia better. The result of the research shows that though consumers are lack of education about plastics, they have the desire to think of solutions to reduce the negative impact of plastic.

While informal research that was conducted are focus group discussions (FGD), community forums, and key informants.

The FGD and community forum were held together by Danone-AQUA in an activity called workshop, this is for Danone-AQUA to understand the objectives of communities that they might help to achieve, and to discuss what

communities that could be counted as allies to communicate environmentally sustainable commitment. From the results of these researches, there was a strong desire by Danone-AQUA to have a commitment, which was then realized as a #BijakBerplastik commitment. #BijakBerplastik focuses on marine plastic bottle debris and on bringing innovation on recycling plastic waste to be a viable material.

After achieving research outcomes, a strategic plan is designed to make decisions and objectives of the program, identifies key publics, and determines strategies and tactics to be applied (Broom & Sha, 2013, p.288). The goal of the #BijakBerplastik strategy is to become a commitment and movement with three objective points, which are to collect much more plastic waste than the volumes that they produce in the Indonesia, leading national campaigns for recycling education in 20 major cities in Indonesia, and making all of their plastic packaging 100% recyclable by increasing the proportion of recycled plastic in its bottles by 50% in 2025.

To achieve those objectives, #BijakBerplastik focuses on three main pillars. The first is collection, this is due to poor waste collecting system in Indonesia. Lacks of waste management infrastructure can be seen from the absence of an entire waste recycling process. Second is innovation to find plastic replacement materials as packaging. For now, Danone-AQUA creates 100% recycled plastic bottle, this innovation is the first in Indonesia.

Lastly, to educate Indonesian public about plastic knowledge and the bad effects of excessive plastic waste. Danone-AQUA seeks to educate the public by tapping into schools and public areas. Danone-AQUA fully understands that educational activities cannot succeed in a blink of an eye, but by a gradual and continuous process. Therefore, #BijakBerplastik is planned as a long-term activity targeted up until 2025. The targeted public is Indonesian public at large.

Implementation and Communication #BijakBerplastik

In designing communication messages, Danone-AQUA uses compliance-gaining strategies, which are message delivery strategies aimed at changing or shaping the behavior of others (Broom & Sha, 2013, p.315). The message designed by #BijakBerplastik is intended to inform Indonesian publics of plastic waste pollution and invites them to start using plastics wisely by reducing plastic usage, also to find innovative solutions for this problem. In addition, the communication message was framed by contextualizing the message in order to facilitate agreements focused on Bali, where the #BijakBerplastik launch was held.

The channel in conveying the message is done through several channels. First, mass media, the most common channel for delivering messages, especially to second or third areas of Indonesia that are still unreachable by the internet, because mass media is effective reaching broad area. The mass media used in delivering #BijakBerplastik messages is mostly newspaper.

Journalists from the first-tier media, such as Kompas, Jawa Pos, Jakarta Newspapers, Sindo and local Balinese media such as What's in Bali, expatriate media in Bali media are invited to attend the #BijakBerplastik activities. Then, there are opinion leaders, those people whose voices and views have great influence on the public (Ningrum et al., 2018). Opinion leaders who are invited to work together are environmentally friendly communities such as ADUPI, INAPLAS, Potato Head restaurant, and others. These parties were chosen because they have the same vision and mission as #BijakBerplastik and considered to have power to influence the public.

Third are special events which are launching, community gathering, Beach Clean Up, and Circular Detour. Launching activities are divided into two phases, namely government launch and consumer launch. The government launch is the first step taken by Danone-AQUA

to introduce its commitment to the government and stakeholders in order to get legitimate attention and support. Then, the consumer launch was conducted to introduce and invite majority of public to take commitment and join #BijakBerplastik movement.

Meanwhile, Beach Clean Up and Circular Detour invited volunteers to clean up Bali beach, collecting plastic waste, to be used as recycled material. Then go on a school roadshow campaign to educate and socialize knowledge about plastics, the current state of plastic waste issues, and the importance of overcoming plastic waste issue.

In between the government launch and consumer launch, Danone-AQUA introduced #BijakBerplastik to communities who also paid attention on plastic waste issue to establish cooperation to discuss the sustainability of Bali's environment. With "Embracing Cleaner Bali" as topic, Melati Wijisen (Founder Bye Bye Plastic), Scott Farren-Price (Head of Sustainability Potato Head), and Karyanto Wibowo (Head of Sustainability of Danone-AQUA) share their thoughts with other communities that attends. Moderated by Rory Asyari, the community gathering is done openly with two-way communication style, where Danone-AQUA and the communities look for the best way to find solutions to the plastic waste issue in Bali.

Lastly, the use of new media, a tool that can be used to spread messages quickly. This new type of media is used to spread #BijakBerplastik commitment through online media news portals because most mass media readers have switched to online media. Meanwhile, information center on #BijakBerplastik Danone-AQUA are distributed on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, especially to reach young Indonesian. In addition, there's also #BijakBerplastik website that explains Danone-AQUA commitment update, reviews, news on activities photos carried out, and also basic information about other plastics.

Evaluation #BijakBerplastik

The final step is the evaluation to assess whether the objectives are achieved. In the #BijakBerplastik PR strategy, a total evaluation has not been carried out because the program is still ongoing until 2025. However, a small evaluation can already be done by calculating how many media are present, the amount of media coverage, the feedback of a targeted audiences and invited parties during an event.

Until now, the activities of government launches, community gatherings, and consumer launches have tonality which was welcomed positively by the public. Meanwhile, based on the pyramid model of PR research evaluation system, the evaluation that has been carried out has reached the input and output stages. Evaluation of the input phase that has been carried out by Danone-AQUA is to get feedback from participants, interviews, research on #BijakBerplastik, and others. Then, at the outputs stage, Danone-AQUA has conducted an evaluation by counting the attendance of the participants during the activities, media monitoring, number of page visitors, and others.

One of the results was that there were 20 media present and the activity received 53 coverage, which consisted of 5 telecommunication media, 5 print media, and 43 online media at the consumer launch. Based on the five media coverage criteria by Brendan Hodgson (Watson, 2007, p.123), these online media were concluded to provide positive coverage of #BijakBerplastik.

They have an average mention of Danone-AQUA companies of 11 times in each article, spokesperson Karyanto Wibowo from Danone-AQUA was mentioned in half the results of media coverage, which generally reported the purpose of #BijakBerplastik Danone-AQUA to collect plastic waste, innovating products from recycled plastics, and educate the public with a total PR Value of Rp. 3.382.500.000,-.

However, the evaluation carried out only reached these two stages, which is not considered as a complete evaluation phase. This

is considering that #BijakBerplastik is still in the process of implementation until 2025.

#BijakBerplastik as a Social Marketing to Sustain Corporate Image

The very first formal definition of social marketing was that offered by Kotler and Zaltman in 1971. Social marketing is the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research (Andreasen, 1994, p.109).

Further studies Kotler & Armstrong said that marketing is a process in which a company creates value for its customers and builds strong relationships with its customers in order to get value from them. One of many forms of the marketing process is social marketing, which is a strategy that is used to change public attitudes and behaviour in order to overcome social problems by combining communication techniques and also by considering marketing principles (Pudjiastuti, 2016, p.2).

A non-commercial marketing concept related to community awareness, people's welfare and social learning is a form of public relations strategy (Kotler in Pudjiastuti, 2016, p.6). Thus, the goal is to get public support in overcoming these social problems, to be labelled social marketing, a program must apply commercial marketing technology, have as its bottom line the influencing of voluntary behaviour and primarily seek to benefit individuals/ families or the broader society and not the marketing organization itself (Andreasen, 1994, p.112).

Meanwhile, image is a picture or idea produced by imagination or personality that a company presents to its public (Oliver, 2015, p.71). According to Jefkins in Soemirat and Ardianto (2007, p.117), there are several types of images in the world of public relations, one of them called Corporate Image, which is the image that become the company's goal to be

known based on the good and positive values by the public.

A good and positive company image in the public will certainly have a positive impact on companies (Suharyanti, 2017), e.g. competitiveness, a company's shield during crisis, attractive assets of the company, the effectiveness of marketing strategies, and operational cost saving.

Danone-AQUA strives to maintain their corporate image to always be well-known and positive to the public through the #BijakBerplastik commitment, in becoming responsible for the plastic waste issue. This is also due to the needs of the community for companies that can be a voice to provide solutions to the issue of plastic waste in Indonesia. #BijakBerplastik has been done as a corporate public relations strategy by doing social marketing to maintain the company's image.

Social marketing is an effort to change public attitudes and behavior in order to overcome social problems (Pudjiastuti, 2016, p.6), while based on this case, the problem of the marine environment is with the issue of plastic waste. As discussed by Chattanon, et al. (2007, p.231), social marketing has been proven to be used to create benefits for a company in building brand awareness, creating brand credibility, maintaining corporate image, and stimulating consumer purchase intentions.

Polonsky (2017, p. 8), using the term corporate social marketing, also explains the direct correlation between company success, which is maintaining the company's image, and social profit. In this case, Danone-AQUA addresses the issue of plastic waste.

#BijakBerplastik is classified as a form of social marketing because the goal of the commitment is to become a movement that changes the attitude of the Indonesian people at large to raise an awareness to care about plastic waste and participate in reducing and finding solutions to it.

In accordance with the most recent definition of social marketing, namely the implementation of a controlled program to provide changes in the attitude of each individual and community for good social good (Wood, 2016, p.2). Danone-AQUA runs social marketing with a #BijakBerplastik commitment whose three pillars clearly focus on caring for the community's welfare, people's welfare and the environment.

Although Danone-AQUA already has a positive image in the community, efforts are still made to maintain that image. With this #BijakBerplastik, Danone-AQUA is taking preventive steps in dealing with environmental issues, especially plastic waste.

Danone-AQUA's efforts to create and use recycled packaging and voicing the commitment of #BijakBerplastik is the right step to maintain his positive image. As a result, the public supports and believes that the steps of waste collection, innovation, and education taken by Danone-AQUA are good exemplary to start reducing plastic waste.

CONCLUSION

From the results of "Public Relations Strategy on Responding Environmental Issues to Sustain Corporate Image (a Descriptive Study of Danone-AQUA's #Bijakberastik)", authors conclude that #BijakBerplastik commitment by Danone-AQUA is a form of public relations strategy that uses social marketing as one their efforts in maintaining positive corporate image, especially as a bottled drinking water pioneer in Indonesia.

The public relations strategy applied by Danone-AQUA is Cutlip and Center's. The first phase of the strategy is defining the problem, Danone-AQUA conducts research, formally and informally, with the aim of gaining fundamental knowledge of the company's internal and environmental external issues regarding marine plastic waste in Indonesia.

Then, second phase is planning the program, where research results are used for designing #BijakBerplastik objective as an internal commitment of Danone-AQUA and a movement that drives Indonesian public to reduce plastic waste. #BijakBerplastik is a form of social marketing with an aim to change people's behavior through three main pillars that are collection, innovation and education. The third phase is taking action and communicating, where #BijakBasplastik strategy is implemented by dividing launch activities into government launches, community gatherings, and consumer launches.

The last phase is evaluating #BijakBerplastik program which has been carried out, assessing how the program have achieved goals and objectives determined. However, the evaluation that was conducted was still in the form of audience feedback, media monitoring and media coverage because #BijakBerplastik continued until 2025. And in the end, the authors concluded that Danone-AQUA public relations strategy, #BijakBerplastik commitment, had maintained its corporate image well.

Meanwhile, authors hope this research can be a stimulus for other studies that raise the topic of public relations strategy. Public relations strategy is needed mostly nowadays because communities and companies increasingly pay attention to environmental sustainability.

Authors also expect Danone-AQUA to evaluate or measure their activity routinely so that they can know the results of each one of those activities. #BijakBerplastik can also collaborate with the Refill My Bottle community, as an effort to provide clean water hydration to the community without producing plastic. Apart from that, authors hope that Danone-AQUA can consistently maintain the #BijakBerplastik commitment and achieve all of its targets in 2025.

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Notes on Authors

Deborah Megan is an account executive in Mullenlowe Indonesia who supports various advertising projects for big companies. She focuses on bringing the right communication to be delivered in time. Besides that, she volunteered for non-profit organizations, doing social work to help educating children in need. She also spent time to study the impact of marine plastic pollution on Indonesian waters. Outside of work, Deborah likes to go around Jakarta looking for art galleries and museums to visit. She also loves reading any kind of books and frequently writes creative writing and short essay on her own blogsite. Deborah holds a BA in Strategic Communication from Multimedia Nusantara University. **E-mail:** deborah.megan@student.umn.ac.id

Mochammad Kresna Noer is a lecturer at the Department of Communication Science, Bakrie University, Jakarta, Indonesia. Started career as a PR Officer in multinational company and also involved in the rebranding project, collaboration with DM ID Holland. In 2013, he continued to pursue higher education in Communication Science Doctoral program, Universitas Indonesia. Graduated in 2017 with dissertation titled "Factors of Enjoyment When Playing Video Games to Experience Entertainment effect". He also support community response projects about the policy of limiting the use of plastic. Others research projects that he have been led are Brand Equity Kompas Gramedia, some events such as the 2016-2018 Indonesia International Motor Show, Ministry Public Transportation Communication Campaign and many others. **E-mail:** kresna.noer@bakrie.ac.id