



The strategy of a book publisher during the pandemic: A case study from Deepublish

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Abstract

This article provides a case study related to the strategy of the Deepublish publishing company in dealing with the Covid 19 Pandemic crisis that has entered Indonesia since March 2, 2020. We provide an explanation regarding the impact of the pandemic on the publishing world. This article uses a descriptive case study and a literature review using data from the Deepublish company. We found the company's marketing strategy, namely B2C, which was initially less superior than competing companies, actually became an advantage for Deepublish. The application of the flywheel marketing concept, adding title assets, and optimizing distribution channels encourage companies to continue to exist and increase company turnover. The results of this study are expected to be a benchmark for other publishing companies.

Keywords: Strategy, Publishing Company, Deepublish, Covid Pandemic

1. Introduction

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) is a large family of viruses that cause disease in humans and animals, which were first detected in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019. Humans generally range from the common cold to acute respiratory disorders (Kemenkes, 2021). Due to its rapid and global spread (Wu and McGoogan, 2020) until it was finally declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020 (Purwanto, 2021). Governments of various countries, including Indonesia, have taken actions to deal with this pandemic, from doing Work from Home (WFH) policies, online school systems, and implementing Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM Emergency) (Tysara, 2021).

Covid 19 was first officially announced to have reached Indonesia on March 2, 2020. At that time, President Joko Widodo announced that there were two Depok residents who were infected with the virus. Then the government tracked to find out who had been in close contact with the patient. After screening and further examinations were carried out, as a result, the number of Covid patients increased again. Through a similar method, COVID-19 patients continue to grow day by day. As of July 2020, the number of positive cases of covid-19 has reached 59,394 people, with details of 29,740 patients being treated, 26,667 patients declared cured, and 2,987 patients died. As of July 2, 2020, the World Health Organization recorded the number of COVID-19 cases globally reaching 10.5 million with deaths reaching 4.87%, at the world level, Indonesia was ranked 29th, at the ASEAN level, it was ranked

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1st and the end of March, the number of deaths of Covid-19 patients in Indonesia ranks first (Purwanto, 2021).

To deal with this pandemic, the government took steps to form a task force team to deal with COVID-19 by alerting 132 government hospitals, 109 TNI hospitals, 53 Polri hospitals, and 65 BUMN hospitals, tightening supervision of international routes to enter Indonesia by installing body temperature detection devices at 135 airports and international ports until the lockdown is enforced. The Ministry of Health issues guidelines for dealing with the Covid-19 virus adapted from the World Health Organization's directives and the implementation of a study from home policy for students (Gitiyarko, 2020).

To reduce the rate of spread of this pandemic, the implementation of various policies to limit the mobility of the community. Start from the efforts of lockdown, regional quarantine, and Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) and the Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions or PPKM levels 1-4 have resulted in community mobility being reduced limited. So that economic activity is limited (Tysara, 2021). As a result, all sectors are affected by this pandemic. The decline in economic activity and restrictions on the mobility of goods and services and people's movement space caused a world economic recession. The economy in 2020 in Indonesia experienced negative growth of 2.07 percent, the United States decreased to minus 3.5 percent, Singapore minus 5.4 percent, and Malaysia minus 5.6 percent (Purwanto, 2021).

The International Publisher Association notes how the pandemic rocked the world's publishing industry. One of the drivers is the decline in the book sales business. Several countries such as Mexico, Germany, China, and France experienced a decline in turnover. Book sales in Germany throughout 2020 across all distribution channels, both bookstores, and online sales, decreased by 2.3 percent from 2019 (Prasetyo, 2021). These distribution channels include sales through Amazon, bookstores at train stations, department stores, and pharmacies. The book market in Indonesia is also experiencing the same condition. A survey conducted by the Ikatan Penerbit Indonesia (IKAPI) stated that most publishers experienced a decline in sales. There was 58.2 percent of publishers who experienced a decline in turnover exceeding 50 percent. Another 29.6 percent of publishers experienced a decline in sales between 31-50 percent (Mediana, 2020).

The impact of Covid-19 and the current economic conditions have made the publishing industry experience problems. The fall in book sales figures is a reality that must be faced. The Director of PT Pustaka Abdi Bangsa even said that Republika's book sales plummeted because so far, most of the distribution was through conventional physical stores, including those with networks such as Gramedia (Saeno, 2020). Major book publishers began to make guerrilla changes to their business model. Seasoned publishers also began to apply a self-publishing system to survive. They began to adapt to selling books through the marketplace and social networks by major book publishers. On the other hand, several publishers can continue to grow. Some publishers take advantage of the growth in sales in online channels. So even though sales in offline stores decreased by 50% from the period March to November 2020, on the contrary, online sales increased by 130% (Wulandari, 2021).

Deepublish is a publisher that carries a self-publishing business model. The company which was established on January 11, 2010 is located at Jalan Rajawali G. Elang 6 No. 3 RT/RW 005/033, Drono, Sardonoharjo, Ngaglik, Sleman, D.I Yogyakarta. Over time, this company grew until 2016, and the company switched from the Small Business class to the Medium Business class, which has received various awards. To fully support the policies that have been set by the Directorate General of Higher Education and make real efforts to improve the quality of higher education in Indonesia. Publisher Deepublish is here to provide book publishing and printing services to assist academics in implementing the Tri Dharma of Higher Education. Since its inception in 2010, Deepublish Publisher has focused on publishing college books. Collaborating with an independent publishing system, Deepublish has published more than 8000 book manuscripts, assisted more than 3,100 authors, and collaborated with

various public and private institutions. Along with the development of the digital world, Deepublish began to spread its wings in publishing books not only in print but also began to penetrate the publishing of e-books or digital books. In collaboration with various platforms such as Gramedia Digital, Aksaramaya, Google Books, and Kubuku, Deepublish has published more than 3,000 e-books. Deepublish has two departments as the spearhead of the company, namely the Sales Department (SD) and the Consulting Department (CD). The role of the Sales Department is to market books published by Deepublish Publisher authors through publisher marketing networks ranging from websites, marketplaces, and resellers and provide guidance to Deepublish resellers. The role of the consultant department is to market book publishing products to prospective writers, help any obstacles to writers or potential authors in writing books, and motivate authors or prospective authors to write books, and later each staff (Customer Service/ CS) will handle different authors, accompanying writers from the manuscript entry process to printed book.

This study used a descriptive method using secondary data based on data obtained from the company and literature review. Explanations based on research data and data collection are done by searching for information from companies and related articles. The purpose of this study is to find out how a publishing company carries out corporate strategies to overcome the company's difficulties in getting through the crisis, especially during the Covid 19 pandemic.

2. Pre-Pandemic Covid

The publishing system at Deepublish is Print on Demand, which prints books according to the author's needs. Authors from academic circles print books with a minimal number of copies. Before the pandemic, the company's operations were more focused on business to customer. B2B has also not gone unnoticed, but this has not become a special concern in the years before the pandemic. Funnel marketing is a marketing process that consists of four stages, namely awareness, consideration, purchase intention, and satisfaction (Colicev et al., 2019). Adapting the marketing funnel, Deepublish processes the incoming Sales Department, starting from the introduction process, offerings, and a purchase. The customer journey is the consumer's journey before finally deciding to buy. This travel process usually occurs because customers realize that they need the product being offered, so they purchase.



Figure 1. Funnel Marketing. Source: Kurniaditas (2021)

This marketing funnel can describe how every sale starts with a lot of potential customers, then ends with fewer customers making a purchase. In the Consulting Department, in practice, the core of this process is luring writers to use educational e-books to increase awareness and then getting their contacts, turning these contacts into business prospects, finally convincing them to submit manuscripts and dealing publishing.

During 2010-2020 Deepublish survives through a funneling system. The Sales Department, which focuses on selling books through the marketplace, digital content, advertisements, and social media, helps increase book sales. In contrast to several publications that directly target offline bookstores, from the beginning, Deepublish marketed books only through online media. The Sales Department prints books when there are orders from readers, thus minimizing wasted book printing.

The consumers of the Deepublish Publishing Consultant Department are academics, lecturers, researchers, and educators. So that the department's marketing targets are highly segmented. Each lecturer has different goals in publishing books. It starts from increasing credit scores, Lecturer workload reports, student handbooks, and self-branding. Because there are more and more publications of books, journals, and articles, this will be one of the benchmarks related to the level of credibility of the lecturer. Unfortunately, from 45 state universities and 1400 private universities in Indonesia, only one-eighth (0.125%) of lecturers write publications in journals, articles, and books. Meanwhile, it is estimated that the number of academics in Indonesia has reached 1,850,000 academics (Deepublish, 2021).

In its development, every lecturer in Indonesia now gets the opportunity for lecturer certification, which the State funds through the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education. Lecturer certificates serve as formal evidence given to lecturers as professionals by fulfilling the required requirements, such as having a minimum academic level of expert assistant, teaching experience of at least two years, and a self-declaration of the contribution of the lecturer concerned in the implementation and development of the Tridharma of Higher Education. Lecturer certification requires every lecturer to report the Higher Education Tri Dharma activities every semester in 1 teaching year (Deepublish, 2021).

The increasing awareness of academics in writing books and the demands that exist is an opportunity that Deepublish Publisher has well grasped. This is supported by an increase in the number of authors from year to year, as shown in Figure 2. So that by maintaining his idealism to continue to dwell on educational books, it has brought fresh air to this company.

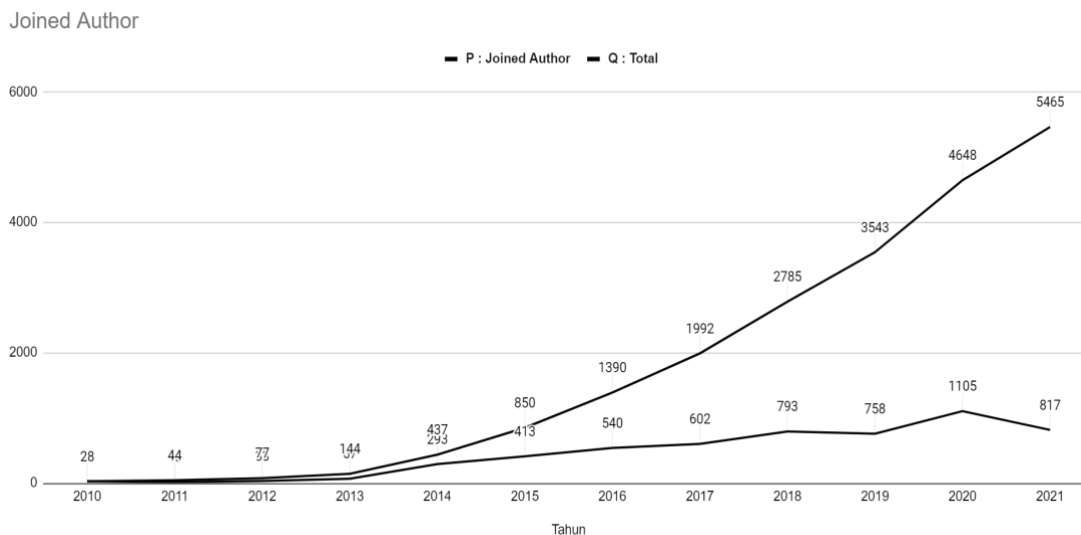


Figure 2. Graph of the Increase in the Number of Authors. Source: Processed data from Deepublish

Along with the continuous increase in the number of authors, the company's turnover has increased every year, although not significantly. Based on the data table above, it can be seen that the turnover achieved from 2014 - February 2019 was always below 50%. This low achievement is caused by several things as follows: (1) Consumer perceptions of independent or indie publishers, whereas writers usually

have to invest in printing costs in independent or indie. In addition, the author's book content will not be reviewed or edited by the publisher. All content in the book is the responsibility of the author. The author will also carry out the marketing of the book. This is what the author usually considers, so he will prefer to publish his book to a major publisher where all costs are the responsibility of the major publisher. (2) The number of prints is minimal, which is 5-10 copies, so that the company inevitably has to lure more consumers. (3) Still concentrated on the B2C system, the author's strategy is concentrated on the direct marketing system and has not collaborated with agencies or universities. (4) There are hit and run incidents from consumers because they have not been able to maintain consumer loyalty because there is no good maintenance or service for old writers. The author's database is still not well recorded. The author came, and then a few returned because there was no follow-up from the Customer Service team. (5) A funneling system that focuses on finding writers so that there is less maintenance on old writers. (6) Competition in the publishing world is very competitive. Moreover, each publication adopts a different system. Consumers have varied choices to determine where the manuscript should be published. (7) Limited publishers do book marketing only in online stores.

Table 1. Company Turnover Achievement

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
January	89%	38%	38%	29%	21%	17%	13%	8%
February	97%	48%	39%	30%	31%	17%	11%	8%
March	76%	58%	36%	40%	28%	21%	14%	10%
April	60%	53%	34%	29%	18%	18%	10%	4%
May	64%	34%	31%	25%	24%	17%	8%	2%
June	85%	46%	18%	14%	12%	12%	10%	5%
July	61%	62%	53%	27%	22%	10%	7%	3%
August	67%	73%	49%	26%	21%	13%	14%	9%
September	106%	74%	45%	48%	29%	16%	17%	11%
October		83%	66%	45%	32%	18%	17%	22%
November		71%	57%	28%	32%	23%	16%	25%
December		44%	43%	17%	24%	15%	16%	21%

Data source: Deepublish

The other cause is as follows. (8) Lack of institutional collaboration between the issuer and the agency/institution of the target market. The focus of consumer management is dominated by managing incoming contacts compared to its portion for audiences with agencies. This target cannot be carried out optimally because the focus of the consultant team is still working on incoming contact data, not yet focused on managing the cooperation—lack of formal collaboration between the publisher and the agency/institution of the target market. (9) Lack of facilities and resources that can answer or address complete needs from upstream to downstream, especially for education. In general, the publishing process is divided into three main processes: (a) Precast (language processing, layout work, content processing, work on graphic design) (b) Publishing includes ISBN submission (c) Printing (Book Printing Process). In the three main processes, publishers can generally handle it, but there are certain moments when publishers don't have the resources to fulfill custom author requests. For example, in publishing, the client asks to work with software outside the publishing standard, the author asks to

publish an official translation of an outside book. In addition to publishing, there is also a need for custom printing using certain materials that require machines that are not currently owned. The periodic work pattern of 22 working days and distribution between the addition of assets (title) and conversion (turnover) is still not maximized. Also, the lead time for the publishing process sometimes needs a longer time when there is a revision. Last, the revision communication process still relies on e-mail and uses answer sheets which create the impression of passive communication between publishers and authors.

3. Post Pandemic

The mass media voiced that many businesses had faltered due to the pandemic. The company was forced to go out of business due to circumstances. Thousands of employees have had to leave their status due to company policy. The pandemic has undermined all aspects of life. Small organizations and even large organizations also have to let their business slowly erode due to the impact of the pandemic. But some companies can survive. They resist, not willing to be subdued by circumstances. The publishing industry was badly beaten; based on data surveyed by IKAPI, 58.2 percent of publishers in Indonesia experienced a decline in turnover (Prasetyo, 2021).

The decline of sales market, that every country experiences the same thing in its publishing industry for example Germany until minus 8,7 percent, France minus 2 percent, China until 7,27 percent and Indonesia until minus 50 percent (Prasetyo, 2021). However, this is exactly the opposite of what happened to Deepublish Publisher. After the pandemic emerged, the company's turnover increased quite high. In September 2021, the company has reached a record high by achieving 106% of the monthly target (Table 1). This achievement can, of course, be realized because the management is able to adapt well. Of course, what happened to Deepublish is an anomaly, but that doesn't mean it can't happen. The business model and publishing system that was initially underestimated turned out only to require "Perfect Timing" to show its fangs.

In carrying out its strategy, the management of Deepublish has made changes, reforms, and innovations. Starting from:

Cooperating With The Funnel Marketing System

Starting in early 2021, Deepublish has followed Amazon's lead to implement the Flywheel Marketing system. Flywheel provides a more holistic approach by placing the customer at the center. In fact, customers become the driving force of the business because they are expected to be able to recommend Deepublish to colleagues in their network. If the funnel is described in the form of a funnel (Siu, 2021), the flywheel is depicted in the form of a wheel (Kurniaditas, 2021). The main focus of this system is to increase engagement with writers. Deepublish's real effort is to reduce customer hits and runs and retain old writers to do repeat orders. Structural reshuffle occurred in the consulting department. If initially, each Customer Service had a dual role, namely handling both old writers, new writers, and net prom (Netpromoter), then currently the Consulting Department consists of Customer Service, Customer Relation Management (CRM), and Customer Service Netprom. Customer Service is concentrated on new writers, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) focuses on maintaining old writers, and Customer Service Netprom focuses on collaborating with writers who have a network in their environment to help introduce, offer, invite fellow writers in their environment to publish books on their website. Deepublish Publisher Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is diligent in communicating with old writers, such as asking how the book is selling, problems, what the author needs, and inviting writers to experience the experience of visiting publishing, seeing the process of printing books, and trying various printing tools.

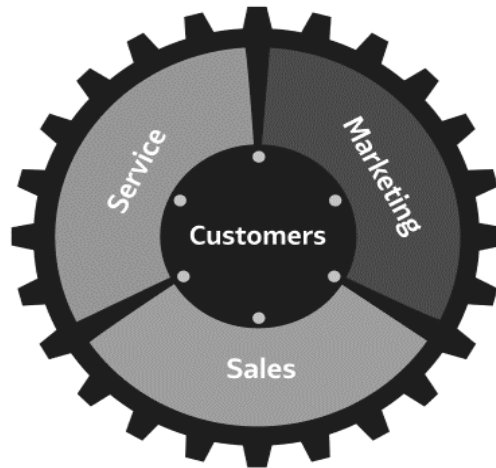


Figure 4. Flywheel Marketing. Source: Kurniaditas (2021)

The business that was originally only limited to B2C (Business to Consumer) is now starting to actively expand its wings to B2B (Business to Business). Andri Agus Fabianto stated this as CEO of Loveable Group stated that the unique thing they found was that many publishers who initially ran their business with a B2B system had to work hard to change to a B2C strategy during the pandemic (Wulandari, 2021). To be able to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, publishers or book distributors must be able to immediately change their marketing strategy from B2B to B2C. Because not many publishing companies have immediately changed their strategy, many publishing companies have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 2. Product Demand (Copies)

	2018		2021	
	CD	SD	CD	SD
January	4108	359	10053	3089
February	3787	456	5286	4411
March	5050	510	8447	4855
April	3996	349	4123	3911
May	4515	1029	6464	2443
June	1619	241	7243	3011
July	3781	707	7306	3349
August	3098	638	6624	4463
September	3399	1138	9525	6202
October	6476	860		
November	3089	517		
December	3798	693		

Data source: Processed from Deepublish data

Note: CD (Consulting Department), SD (Sales Department)

While Deepublish, in its marketing strategy, has a digital marketing foundation that has been nurtured from year to year, this has actually become Deepublish's weapon in overcoming this crisis. The Consulting Department and the Sales Department are in tight competition, as seen from the comparison of product demand growth in table 2. Deepublish increases awareness by cooperating with

Dunia Dosen.com to hold various webinars related to book writing, book publication, and other topics regarding lecturers. The Consulting Department has collaborated with at least 200 public, private and educational institutions (Deepublish, 2021).

The soaring demand for books, especially digital books or e-books, is an opportunity that Deepublish captures. Different from promo programs in previous years. During 2020-2021 Deepublish created various programs to encourage authors to publish their books through free e-book creation for writers who are members of the promo program. The promos issued also have a unique name, namely the work from the home promo. Deepublish invites writers to stay productive in the midst of a pandemic.

Title Asset Addition and Book Marketing Distribution Channel Optimization

The Sales Department growth from year to year experienced rapid growth from 2018 to reach 500% in 2021. This was due to various factors, including the addition of the number of titles each year and the management of marketing distribution channels both offline and online. The growth of the Consulting Department from year to year has grown to 200% demand for copies in 2021. The growth of the Consulting Department is directly proportional to the growth of the Sales Department because every additional title asset in the Consulting Department will automatically manage the sales channel by the Sales Department team by optimizing the absorption potential product of each title.

With the support of writers who come from academia, the titles produced by Deepublish have become diverse and increasingly cover all fields of study in Indonesia. The growth in the number of titles each month automatically becomes an asset that is ready to be channeled into various marketing channels. This is one of the competitive advantages that is one of the unique selling points of Deepublish.

Changes in Consumer Behavior

The study of consumer behavior is a study of how an individual makes decisions to allocate available resources (time, money, effort, and energy) (G. Leon and Kanuk, 2008). Therefore, it is very important to study how consumers behave and what factors influence this behavior. Understanding consumer behavior is not an easy thing to do. Many factors influence and are integrated with each other so that what is done by a company with a marketing approach must be ensured that it is designed as well as possible. In addition, marketers must be able to understand consumers, and try to learn how they behave, act and think. Although consumers have many differences, they also have a lot in common.

There are several approaches that explain behavior change (Valaskova et al., 2015) explain that there are three groups, namely psychological-based approaches (the relationship between the soul and consumer behavior), sociological approaches (consumer reactions in situations, influenced by opportunities, different social leaders). , the economic approach (consumers determine their needs). Thus encouraging people have to make behavioral changes, especially in consuming goods/services. Therefore, the Covid pandemic is a disturbing event/change that causes major changes for society (Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2021).

When the analysis was carried out, we found an interesting thing: a change in the proportion of Deepublish company's revenue sources. Starting from the Consulting Department, which dominates the company's revenue, since the covid pandemic the company's income, both from the Consulting Department and the Sales Department are almost equal. This is because the department experienced a very significant increase in revenue. Of course, this happens because of several things, one of which is a change in consumer behavior.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced people to stay at home. Thus, some people spend time reading books. As revealed by the Surabaya City Library and Archives Service that the increase in reading interest has reached an index of 67.41 percent (Frizal, 2021). The average borrowing of books every day reaches a thousand there. The World Reading Habits 2020 research conducted by Global

English Editing shows that the reading activity of the world community increased by 35 percent during the pandemic (Editin, 2021). This activity was carried out by many citizens of the world in the early days of regional quarantine. There were 1.51 billion website visits selling books and reading materials online in March 2020. The number of visits was up 16 percent compared to January 2020, before the lockdown was imposed. In addition, government policies also prohibit activities on campus, libraries, and all other forms of mobilization activities. Deepublish sees this as an opportunity to distribute books through marketplace channels and digital channels in the form of e-books. Changes in people's behavior accelerated by the pandemic and health protocols, making a consumer behavior change from offline shopping.

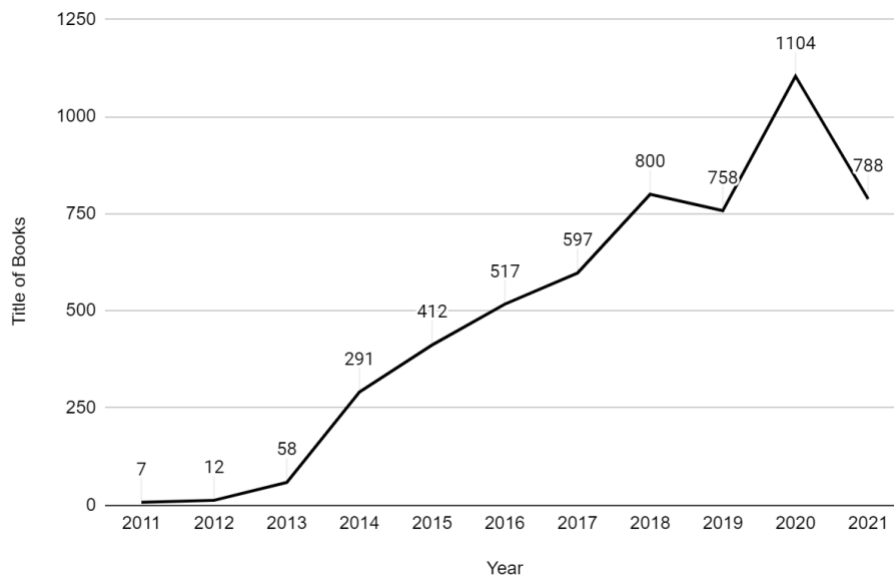


Figure 5. Addition of Deepublish Book Title. Source: Processed data from Deepublish

The Consulting Department has a target for title acquisition, both of which will later deal in the form of printed books and digital books. Before the pandemic was seen every year, there was an increase in title acquisitions. However, after the pandemic occurred in the period 2019-2021, title acquisitions were detected to be volatile. At the beginning of the pandemic, the title acquisition experienced a decline after we conducted interviews with the relevant managers. This happened because some writers were infected with covid-19, so there was a time delay in finishing the script.

Deepublish is a publisher that implements a self-publishing system, where authors do have to invest in the cost of producing books. Writers who incidentally are academics usually do get funding from DIKTI grants and funding from the institutions that oversee them. However, during the pandemic, DIKTI grants were abolished, so the dealing process with writers required special treatment. The Consulting Department, almost every month, collaborates with writers, lecturers, Sevima, and other agencies to hold webinars regarding the importance of writing books. Taking advantage of the pandemic opportunity, where lecturers' teaching activities are mostly done at home, Deepublish increases their engagement and awareness.

According to the Consultant Department Manager, the demand for institutional cooperation during the pandemic has increased. The Consulting Department innovates in creating innovative programs and well-conceived monthly promos. Each promo has a different target market and benefits.

4. Conclusion

In the face of the Covid 19 pandemic, Deepublish has carried out various strategies, from continuing the old strategy of staying focused on publishing educational books and carrying out the Business to Consumer (B2C) marketing strategy, which is now starting to expand to the Business to Business (B2B) concept. Then implement a new system, namely Flywheel Marketing, adding title assets and optimizing distribution channels. In addition, adjustments to field conditions, changes in consumer behavior, and target market have become the main keys of this company. Therefore, it is hoped that in the future, the company can continue to grow rapidly and can become a benchmark for other publishing companies. For academics, this research can be used as a learning medium related to how a company can get through a crisis well.

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