

# Utilizing YouTube for The Local Film Culture Expansion

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## ABSTRACT

This article explore the role of YouTube in developing local film culture. The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted various local short film festivals and screenings. Local filmmakers are trying to find alternative channels to show their short films via YouTube. Using the media industries studies perspective, this research offers two cases, Tilik and Loz Jogjakartoz, to study the role of YouTube for local film the promotion and distribution. Based on in-depth interviews, Ravacana Films and Kebon Ijo Studio implement specific strategies such as film upload timing, social media promotion and audience attention management so that their films trend on YouTube. This research reveals that YouTube can play an important role in connecting local filmmakers with audiences and the national film industry.

Keywords: YouTube; Local Short Film; Media Industries Studies

## ABSTRAK

Tulisan ini mendeskripsikan peran Youtube dalam mengembangkan budaya film lokal. Pandemi Covid-19 mengagalkan berbagai festival dan pemutaran film pendek lokal. Para sineas lokal berusaha mencari saluran alternatif untuk memutar film pendeknya melalui YouTube. Dengan menggunakan perspektif kajian industri media, penelitian ini menawarkan dua kasus, Tilik dan Loz Jogjakartoz, untuk mempelajari peran YouTube dalam membantu promosi dan pemutaran film pendek lokal. Berdasarkan wawancara mendalam, diketahui bahwa kedua perusahaan film lokal, Ravacana Films dan Kebon Ijo Studio, menerapkan strategi khusus seperti waktu unggah film, promosi melalui sosial media dan pengelolaan atensi khalayak sehingga film mereka trending di YouTube. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa YouTube dapat berperan penting dalam menghubungkan pembuat film lokal dengan penonton dan industri film nasional.

Keywords: YouTube; Film Pendek Lokal; Kajian Industri Media

## INTRODUCTION

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After the 1998 Indonesian political reformation, the proliferation of freedom of expression and digital technology triggered the local film culture in many provinces (Van Heeren, 2012; Nugroho & Suwanto, 2015; Pasaribu et al., 2019). The sites mainly produced local short films that frequently only reach cinephiles through limited screenings and film festivals. The short filmmakers were primarily amateur and semi-professional, with limited resources.

One vibrant local film culture site was the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province. In the last decade, Yogyakarta witnessed a surge in local film production (Firdaus & Finesso, 2021; Tranggono, 2021). At least 43 film companies produced various audio-visual works, mostly low-budget short films that circulated in the national and international film festival circuit that were accessible only to the niche market (Suwanto et al., 2015).

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian government implemented measures to impose limitations on social and business activities. Consequently, movie theatres were compelled to cease operations, and the production of films was either halted or terminated, as stipulated by government regulation. The restrictions had a significant influence on mainstream film and the dissemination of short films, as numerous film festivals and screenings were prohibited.

YouTube provided another spotlight for local short films since the filmmakers chose the platform as their distribution channel. The short films that gained attention among Indonesian YouTube audiences during the pandemic were *Tilik* (2018) and *Loz Jogjakartoz* (2018), uploaded by Ravacana Film and Kebon Ijo Studio, respectively. *Tilik* was uploaded on Indonesian Independence Day, 17 August 2020. In five days, the short film had been watched by 3.9 million viewers and later increased to 28 million audience. In a week, dozens of articles and webinars discussed these short films from various perspectives. Later on, Ravacana promoted Kebon Ijo Studio's short film, *Loz Jogjakartoz*, on their social media. Following *Tilik*'s virality, *Loz Jogjakartoz* was also watched by thousands of viewers.

YouTube is a spectacular digital platform because it has expanded from ephemeral into mainstream media only in several years (Burgess & Green, 2018). Media industry scholars have been researching YouTube as a video-sharing and social networking platform (Lange, 2007; Cheng et al., 2008), identity expression, and educational media (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013; Morris & Anderson, 2015). At the same time, YouTube is also a popular cultural production site that streams various entertainment content such as games (Maharso & Irwansyah, 2019), music (Zhang & Negus, 2021), sports (Stauff, 2009) and celebrity channels (Hou, 2019; Garcia-Rapp, 2016).

As an object of study, YouTube is very dynamic in its development (Burgess & Green, 2018). Apart from the textual analysis research, YouTube also analyses from the media industry's perspective. The studies consider at least two critical issues, such as new screen ecology (Cunningham, 2015; Cunningham et al., 2016; Mehta, 2023) and participation culture (Burgess & Green, 2018; Chau, 2010; Traynor, 2020), as described following.

YouTube plays a transformative role in reshaping the screen industry's ecology. It democratizes content creation, enabling individuals worldwide to become content producers and challenging the gatekeeping roles of traditional media (Cunningham et al., 2016). This platform's global reach and accessibility break down geographical barriers, fostering cross-cultural exchanges and redefining how content is created for diverse audiences (Burgess & Green, 2009). The diversity of content on YouTube, spanning from entertainment to niche interests, creates opportunities for specialized content ecosystems that might have yet to thrive in traditional media (Burgess & Green, 2018). Moreover, YouTube's monetization features, analytics, and data-driven insights provide content creators with sustainable revenue streams and the ability to effectively tailor their content to audiences (Holt & Sanson, 2013). As YouTube continues influencing and shaping the screen industries (Craig & Cunningham, 2019), it challenges traditional media entities to adapt to its dynamic and participatory landscape.

Following the 1998 Indonesian political reformation, the short film gained a more significant position because of the production and distribution liberalization. One of the most productive Provinces was the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The amateur and semi-professional filmmakers produced short films for many purposes, such as identity and creative expression, advocacy and campaign, education, and others (Suwanto et al., 2015). Most of them worked independently with minimal resources. They distributed the short films at local, national, and international festivals. In addition, they also collaborated with various communities to organize alternative screenings. Some

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short filmmakers who won awards got the opportunity to participate in Jakarta's feature film production. Nevertheless, the recruitment process was intricate and exclusive. Although, in many cases, short film production could be a stepping stone for amateur and semi-professional filmmakers to expand their careers to be more professional, joining the Jakarta film industry, their bargaining power was relatively low (Nugroho & Suwanto, 2015).

The previous research about local film culture consider some crucial issues such as promotion, exhibition, and networking to reach an audience (Buck, 1992; Van Hemert & Ellison, 2015). Most of the time, local filmmakers need more resources and capacities to promote and distribute their works. At the same time, they also need some help with networking because the investors and audience give more attention to the national and international film industries. Therefore, many local filmmakers provide supporting roles for national and international productions instead of developing their ideas (Turégano, 2004; Chua-Yen & Aquilia, 2006).

Digital technology and globalization accelerate the development of local film culture because these two factors generate infrastructure developments, commercial and financial resources, talent skill improvement, and geographical contours exposure (Kerrigan & McIntyre, 2017). As a digital and global platform, YouTube contributes to local screen production. It facilitates local talent to stretch their creativity and entrepreneurship skills by producing low-budget digital content of various types, such as short films (Cunningham et al., 2016). Consequently, as ephemeral, YouTube is raising its position as an important media (Grainge, 2017; Lobato, 2016).

Even though YouTube also streams short films, the study about them is relatively limited. The prior research about short films on YouTube tends to discuss their position as promotional (Grainge, 2017), advocacy (Askanikus, 2012), educational and instructional videos (Lam & Woo, 2020; Rospitasari, 2021; Febrero et al., 2021). At the same time, investigating fiction short films on YouTube under the lens of the media industry's framework is rare. Therefore, this research will explore how YouTube facilitates local short film production expansion, specifically toward promotion, exhibition, and networking.

## METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with the intrinsic case study introduced by Robert E. Stake (2013) to denote a thorough examination of a particular case within its natural context, devoid of the aim of drawing broader generalizations. The intrinsic case study is characterized by several attributes delineated by Yazan, encompassing a holistic, empirical, empathetic, and interpretive approach (Yazan, 2015).

The data was collected from in-depth interviews with Ravacana (director and publicist) and Kebon Ijo (director). All of them are responsible for *Tilik* and *Loz Jogjakartoz* distribution on YouTube, respectively. The data from interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis to elucidate a theoretical framework for the contribution of YouTube to local film culture expansion.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Ravacana Film Case

Ravacana Film produced *Tilik* (2018) with the generous support of the Cultural Office of Yogyakarta Province. The local government conducted a film production support program to highlight the local culture and facilitate the semi-professional filmmakers' works. The narrative of *Tilik* was rooted in the customs of the Yogyakarta villagers. The director offered a unique visual style that usually combined camera angles and movement above the truck.

The short film set out in a truck that transports a group of women from a rural to an urban hospital to visit the village leader, *Ibu Lurah*. During the journey, they talked about the *Ibu Lurah* family affair involving the village's most beautiful girl, Dian. The short film was spoken in the local (Javanese) language. The *Tilik's* main character was Bu Tejo, who was a fussy and opinionated person who influenced others. Nevertheless, Tejo gave the audience the impression of being funny, exasperated, and annoying. Some women support Bu Tejo, while Yu Ning (Dian's aunt) is against her.

Before streaming on YouTube, Ravacana had distributed *Tilik* to two international film festivals and several domestic alternative screenings. The film gained an award in an internet-based

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competition, *Piala Maya* 2019. However, Ravacana Film did not get any significant financial and networking benefits from these distribution channels.

In 2020, Ravacana uploaded their film on YouTube since the pandemic has stopped short film distribution. YouTube was a new distribution platform for Ravacana, although they had produced several films before *Tilik*. The Ravacana decision aligns with Van Hemert and Ellison's (2015) findings, where filmmakers have recently considered various digital media to publish their works, including social media. However, what is different is that the filmmakers in this article use it to increase audiences outside the exhibition (Van Hemert & Ellison, 2015). In contrast, in Ravacana, pandemic factors encourage them to distribute their films more widely. Before being uploaded, they launched several promotional film strategies that followed the feature film promotions, such as influencer endorsement and character-driven mime. Ravacana Films emailed forty acquaintance influencers with more than 5,000 followers on Twitter and Instagram. Only twenty of them agreed to help. They sent promotional information such as film synopsis, achievements, and pictures. They asked for support rather than paid endorsements. After three days of viral, the other influencers who did not reply to the Ravacana email also endorsed *Tilik* followed the wave.

*"At that time, there were so many restrictions to distribute Tilik on a conventional platform. I was inspired by Antelope Studio who already had a YouTube channel to publish their short films. I think YouTube might be an effective platform during the pandemic. In social media platform influencers took important roles, we decided to ask some acquaintances who have more than five thousand followers in Twitter and Instagram. In addition, we contacted some friends who relatively have influence among cinephiles although their followers were less than five thousand. Since we did not have money, we could not pay them. Some of them supported while the others ignored us. I could not hope any better because the economic situation was insecure for many people including us. I gave them flexibility to spread out their opinion about the film, it could be critics, simple reviews, appreciations, anything. I think any discussion would lead to the audience attention to the film"* (Wahyu Agung, Director, 29 years old).

*"I informed them that we would launch the film on the 17th of August as part of Indonesia's independence celebration. I send them some information about Tilik such as synopsis, cast and crew list, character description two weeks before the launch date. I gave the influencers a link to watch the film, so they had plenty of time to settle on their opinion about the film"* (Vanis, Publicist, 23 years old).

Besides the influencer's reviews about *Tilik*, Ravacana also developed their Instagram account as a publication media. Ravacana Films optimized its Instagram account to publish about *TILIK* on YouTube by designing feeds about the main character, Bu Tejo. They detailed Bu Tejo characters that may relate to the mass audience experience. Nevertheless, Tejo was depicted as a fussy woman who liked gossiping and spreading sensational messages as Ravacana uploaded Bu Tejo mime on their Instagram, and the images spread on social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp.

Visual content tends to capture the attention of social media audiences more effectively than text (Schamuells et al., 2021). Ravacana's efforts to share images from "Tilik" enhance the film's cultural consumption, as prior studies reveal that images facilitate a stronger connection with its audience (Trier-Bieniek, 2015). The condition is achieved by actively engaging the audience, enabling them to craft their own experiences, and expanding the interest of a broader viewership in the film. In the modern age of social media, the attention economy centers around the audience as a valuable asset, with the primary emphasis placed on how the audience perceives the material rather than the content itself (Ramirez, 2021; Smythe, 2006).

Ravacana publicists learned that the mass and cinephile audiences pay different attention to the film promotion messages. The cinephiles usually emphasize director authorship, while the mass audience is more interested in the phenomenal film characters. The Cinephiles consider the director of a film to be an essential factor because each director has a different approach to visual style, storytelling, and overall message (Sturges, 1998). Watching films from certain directors is also a form of appreciation and support from Cinephiles (Kinik, 2019). Meanwhile, mass audiences tend to consider virality as a factor that encourages them to watch certain films (Tefertiller et al., 2020).

Therefore, they created promotional messages that relied on Bu Tejo instead of Wahyu Agung glorification.

*“All of us (Ravacana crews) are autodidact; we learned many things in filmmaking by producing films. For many years, Indonesia’s short film audience was extremely limited among young film enthusiasts. We did not want to lose their attention, but at the same time, we wanted to grab a larger audience. I think Bu Tejo character is a bridge between the two segments. The film lovers may be curious how a short film has an icon while the mass audience may relate with the character because we can find Bu Tejo traits in our daily life”* (Vanis, Publicist, 23 years old).

A week after its launch, *Tilik* went viral as viewed by more than 5 million viewers. As a consequence, many internet influencers rode the wave by endorsing *Tilik* in social media; various websites wrote about *Tilik* from various perspectives, and the attention was streamed to Ravacana Films, *Tilik* director, and Bu Tejo cast, mainly through Instagram and Twitter. Many corporations and institutions use Bu Tejo mimes to promote their brands and programs. Some conversations about *Tilik* on the internet influenced cinematography, natural and persuasive acting, short film revival, women stereotypes and empowerment, and hoax/gossip.

Two weeks after *Tilik* went viral, some critics related to the film spread out. Some feminists wrote articles about *Tilik* that considered degraded women as they depicted them as cattle transported in a truck, gossip, hoax spreading, and digital illiteracy (Aini, 2020; Suryakusuma, 2020). Some writers with an Islamic perspective criticized the depiction of women who choose not to wear the hijab in the film *Tilik*, viewing them as objects of public gossip (fitna’) and examining related stereotypes (Kholifah, 2020).

The success of the *Tilik* film did not only drew attention to its content but also placed a spotlight on and brought pressure on Ravacana Films’ members. They experienced a surge in demands for their attention, ranging from simple message replies to project offers. This influx of attention created stress and internal conflicts within the team.

In the contemporary era of interactive and immersive experiences, the mere production or exchange of goods is insufficient to meet market demands. Consequently, the significance of digital media transcends the tangible content it produces. In the context of the attention economy, there is a clear emphasis on capturing individuals’ attention, highlighting the need to identify the entities responsible for generating such content. This necessity arises from the link between users’ engagement on social media platforms and their sense of forming meaningful connections (Abidin, 2020). An interview with Ravacana’s crew revealed that their social media platforms consistently attract attention and inquiries, fostering an ongoing desire for interpersonal interactions and dialogue between the audience and content creators. This phenomenon is likely attributed to the extensive use of digital platforms, which fosters a perception of close and personalized connections among individuals engaged in social media.

*“We did not have any energy to respond to all the negative messages, plagiarism and IP violation about Tilik. I think managing all the attention to a broader issue such as the short film ecosystem, was better. Therefore, we shared about Piala Maya and other worthy short films. Fortunately, Piala Maya and other film companies responded to the twitter thread into a wide conversation about short film existence in Indonesia. Somehow, the strategy hinders us from unnecessary conflicts with many parties”* (Vanis, Publicist, 23 years old).

After going viral, many institutions would like to work with Ravacana. Dozens of film studios and publishers wanted to buy the *Tilik* story and Intellectual Property, and some intimidated the director and producer. Many institutions offered audio-visual projects (advertisement, social media content, web series, and others). Many brands wanted to publish their endorsement on Ravacana’s social media.

Instead of exploiting all the financial benefit opportunities from various projects, Ravacana prefers to protect its vision as an independent film company. They managed all their projects as collaboration work rather than clientelism. For that reason, they had an equal position with the funding and slowly upgraded their bargaining power in the industry. Ravacana systematically formulated a strategic plan to enhance human resources quality and improve organization solidity and system operational procedure.

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Ravacana learned to transform the attention of the audience and the audio-visual industry into various audio-visual projects for the company's sustainability. As a result, after two years, the film company produced four short films, two digital advertisements, a streaming series, and a full-length film project. They managed the viral momentum into capital that benefits their future career.

### **Kebon Ijo Studio Case**

Sidharta Tata directed a short film, *Loz Jogjakartoz* (2018), representing a story about criminals' lives in Yogyakarta. The film accentuated unique storytelling and emotional resonance. His film narrative combined action and comedy genres. The director asked the audience to follow a one-night situation related to a stolen bird that represents the prominent actors in the criminal scene. Despite the tension, Sidharta used comedic scenes to describe the criminals' foolishness.

Sidharta and his teammates in Kebon Ijo Studio projected that the short film bridged their path into the film industry. However, they could not reach mass audiences. The film only circulated among cinephiles through special screenings. The niche market responded to their film positively and triggered word-of-mouth promotion among cinephiles. However, the film was not accessible to a mass audience because Kebon Ijo Studio did not have any resources to promote the film.

After Kebon Ijo Studio launched *Loz Jogjakartoz*, Ifa Isfansyah (an established local director and producer) helped Sidharta engage the film industry. Ifa allowed Sidharta to become a co-director in a series, *Tunnel* (2020). Furthermore, he allowed Sidharta and some of his friends in Penakawan to develop a miniseries production, *Hitam* (2021). Despite his role as a director in two series productions, Tata felt his bargaining power needed to be improved since he could not point out his film style and relied on a producer-driven script. He decided to establish a script-writing company, Penakawan, to improve the quality of his directed series. The strategy was challenging to implement because the reputations of Sidharta, Kebon Ijo Studio, and Penakawan were all relatively minor. Sidharta was concerned about raising his position in the film industry before the pandemic hit his life.

As *Tilik* went viral, Kebon Ijo Studio followed Ravacana's strategy to attract mass audience attention for their short film. Gradually, *Loz Jogjakartoz* gained attention because of the YouTube algorithm. Ultimately, the short film viewers multiplied when Ravacana spread a Twitter thread about some recommended short films, including *Loz Jogjakartoz*. Although *Loz Jogjakartoz* did not attract viewers as much as *Tilik*, the audience and many film practitioners noticed that the short film had a fascinating style. The promotion carried out by Ravacana placed *Loz Jogjakartoz* with an audience outside the film audience. Because of that, the audience becomes aware of the film (Barnwell, 2018). The promotion carried out by Ravacana shows a need for a local film community that supports each other. By promoting other films, local filmmakers can attract wider attention.

*"Loz Jogjakarta is viral because of Tilik. When Ravacana uploaded Tilik in YouTube and went viral, I learned their strategy was effective therefore I also uploaded my film. Furthermore, when Ravacana twitter thread about short films also went viral, I took advantage of the moment as an opportunity to promote my short film. My film viewers were only less than a million compared to Tilik, who reached 27 million viewers, however many of my viewers are film practitioners who recognize my talent and film style. The virality raised my bargaining power in the film industry"* (Sidharta Tata, Director, 27 years old).

As the film practitioners recognized *Loz Jogjakartoz's* film style, many contacted Sidharta and offered job opportunities. Sidharta was overwhelmed with the impact of his short film virality. However, he believed every project brought a consequence for his future career, Kebon Ijo Studio and Penakawan sustainability. He carefully selected the film project to ensure his vision as director was respected. Furthermore, he wanted to ensure every film contract would be under a company-to-company agreement to develop Kebon Ijo and Penakawan.

*"I believe a film project is a collaboration process, but I would like to have bargaining power as a director who has the aesthetic vision of my work instead of being entirely driven by producers or investors. In addition, Kebon Ijo Studio as a production house is also improving along with my career progress. I have been working with my team for a long time, I can neglect them. Some of them are waifs who are self-taught about film production. At the same time, I want to raise Penakawan as a script development company that will have an excellent writing system and*

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*intellectual property. I would only like to direct a series whose script was written by Penakawan. I hope we can make a significant progress in the industry individually and collectively.”* (Sidharta Tata, Director, 27 years old).

Sidharta secured some projects funded by digital platforms and an established film studio following the virality of *Loz Jogjakartoz*. He involved Kebon Ijo Studio for production services and Penakawan for script development. Vidio funded and streamed *Pertaruhan*, a series that successfully drew subscribers' attention. He also signed a contract with MD Entertainment for a horror film production. The attention given by YouTube viewers assisted Sidharta in convincing many film funders that he possessed a distinct talent and style. When his bargaining position improved, he was able to develop Kebon Ijo Studio and Penakawan.

*“The Loz Jogjakartoz virality strengthened my path to the film industry. As many film practitioners recognized me as a director who directed Hitam and Loz Jogjakartoz, they came to a conclusion that I have audience based. When Vidio (a streaming platform) watched Loz Jogjakartoz, they trusted me to direct my latest series, Pertaruhan. Kebon Ijo Studio handled the production service while Penakawan responsible for the script writing. I believe Loz Jogjakartoz effect opened my chance to join the industry to the higher level.”* (Sidharta Tata, Director, 27 years old).

### Discussion

As discussed before, local short films such as *Tilik* and *Loz Jogjakartoz* have penetrated a niche market, especially among cinephiles who attend film festivals and alternative screenings. However, they only reached the mass market once streamed on YouTube. The conventional movie theatre was not accessible for the short films because the gatekeeper chose national and international feature films rather than local ones. While YouTube gave space for any filmmakers regardless of their film quality.

YouTube's profound impact on the screen industry stems from its role as a catalyst for participation culture (Niebler, 2020) involving amateur and semi-professional content creators. The platform's user-friendly interface and accessibility have democratized content creation, empowering individuals to become content producers and fostering a vibrant community of creators. In this context, local filmmakers who may have traditionally faced barriers due to limited resources and industry connections have found YouTube a powerful promotion and distribution platform for their work. They can now share their films freely and directly to a broader audience.

According to Ravacana Films and Kebon Ijo Studio cases, their short film audience was regular practitioners. Initially, Ravacana Films aimed at regular viewers to promote *Tilik*. Therefore, they created a series of digital buzz marketing campaigns through social media influencers before *Tilik* streamed. They pointed out the main character, Bu Tejo, to relate the short film to the viewers. In contrast, Kebon Ijo Studio did not conduct any significant promotional efforts. *Tilik*'s algorithm helped *Loz Jogjakartoz* reach YouTube viewers.

When YouTube regular viewers paid attention to the short films *Tilik* and *Loz Jogjakartoz*, the film practitioners were stimulated to pay attention. They started curiously finding out the filmmaker's profile and other works. Ravacana Films and Kebon Ijo Studio cleverly used the momentum to upload their previous works to their YouTube channels. The film practitioners expressed their interest in these two local film companies based on the film companies' portfolios.

At this point, YouTube has successfully facilitated the two film companies to promote one short film and their previous works because of algorithm recommendations. Ravacana Film intentionally uploaded their work, created engaging descriptions, and used keywords to reach a broad audience. As the *Tilik*'s viewers flooded, they also uploaded more films to get more viewers. When the YouTube algorithm recognized *Loz Jogjakartoz* as similar content to *Tilik*'s, the platform recommended the short film to its viewers with relevant interests. YouTube provides an accessible and cost-effective means of promoting popular culture content (Joemono & Oktavianti, 2022). In addition, the platform's recommendation algorithm enhances the visibility of popular content, drawing a continuous stream of viewers towards relevant material (Li et al., 2019).

Besides the promotion role, YouTube was an exhibition space for Ravacana Films and Kebon Ijo Studio. The platform showcased local film companies to a vast and diverse audience. The *Tilik* exhibition on YouTube stimulated further discussion on the internet. Ravacana Films noted that *Tilik* was stimulated by 171 internet articles and 32 online discussions. In addition, more than 40

influencers provoked natural conversation on social media, and 40 brands used *Tilik's* image without permission riding the wave. The *Tilik's* exhibition stimulated topics such as women stereotyping, the short film ecosystem in Indonesia, hoaxes and digital illiteracy, cinematography style, and others. All the conversations eventually improved the short film's virality.

YouTube improved *Loz Jogjakartoz's* visibility for extensive and multifarious viewers compared to traditional distribution channels such as film festivals and screenings. Although their viewers were far lower behind *Tilik's*, the number of viewers exceeded their two years offline screening circulation. The algorithm also dragged the viewers to watch Kebon Ijo Studio's previous short film, *Natalan*, and other Sidharta Tata trailer works, such as *Tunnel* and *Hitam*, on YouTube. Hence, the audience recognized the director's film style, talent, and capability.

As a platform that supports participatory culture, YouTube allows exhibition spaces that provide exposure that leads to recognition, feedback, and opportunities for collaboration (Chau, 2010). According to Chau (2010), this is because YouTube has the characteristics to provide strong support for creating and sharing projects. Therefore, the short films' virality invited new opportunities for the local filmmakers to participate in establishing the more significant film industry, in this case, the Indonesia capital city, Jakarta, production. Ravacana Films and Kebon Ijo Studio engage with fellow creators, industry professionals, and potential collaborators through the platform, transcending geographical boundaries. As the opportunities came, they quickly uplifted their negotiation and production skills, bridging the gap between semi-professional and professional filmmaking.

From the perspective of Ravacana Films, we can discern that virality can have dual implications. Some entities view it as an opportunity for exploitation or collaboration. Conversely, based on the experiences of Kebon Ijo Studio, virality can serve as a valuable asset, enhancing their bargaining power within the established film industry. The audience's enthusiasm for a filmmaker's short film could persuade film producers and investors to back projects with a similar genre or style.

Apart from the success stories of Ravacana Films and Kebon Ijo Studio, it is important to consider that *the local government funded Tilik and Loz Jogjakartoz's production cost*. Therefore, they should have considered the advertising revenue from YouTube when they decided to produce and upload their short films. In other words, their short film costs were not adjusted to the profits that might be obtained from YouTube.

From these cases, it is clear that to harness the full potential of YouTube, local filmmakers must possess the capacity to create content of a high standard. They must also devise effective promotional and networking tactics. The function is possible if the local filmmakers attentively manage the promotional efforts through other social media platforms, choose the appropriate time to stream their work, and facilitate the audience with continuous algorithm recommendations.

Based on the media industry's perspective, YouTube emerges as an essential platform to support the local film industry regarding exposure, marketing, distribution, networking, and education (Cunningham et al., 2016). The platform has been transformed from amateur-based video into professionalized and institutionalized media (Marshall, 2021). The Ravacana Film and Kebon Ijo Studio case represents YouTube's important role in exposing, promoting, and distributing local short films to a broader audience. However, film companies should equip themselves with some skills beyond the YouTube video production capacity to enter and enhance their bargaining power in the film industry.

## CONCLUSION

The short film *Tilik* and *Loz Jogjakartoz* on YouTube showcases its popularity primarily due to its captivating narrative, unique production attributes, and social media promotion effort, which draw viewers to share, comment, and generate further content. This engagement boosted the film's exposure and generated organic traffic. The success story demonstrates the importance of captivating viewers and fostering communal involvement in the digital realm. The audience attention is a valuable currency for local filmmakers to attract the interest of professionals in the industry, enabling these filmmakers to secure substantial projects and partnerships.

In essence, YouTube emerges as a transformative force, levelling the playing field for local filmmakers to promote, exhibit, and connect their work with a broader audience and the film industry. This democratization of content distribution reshapes the screen industry's landscape, opening up new opportunities for creativity, recognition, collaboration while allowing diverse voices and narratives.



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