

Youtube as alternative media for digital activism in documentary film creative industry

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Abstract The development of the digital world provides ample scope to activists who are also engaged in Documentary Film Industry. In line with the democratic and deliberative spirit, YouTube, one of the social media platforms, has become an alternative media with a strategic positioning to be used by film activists to distribute their works. This research applied literature review and descriptive quantitative content analysis as a methodology. Based on alternative media theory, YouTube is alternative media that filmmakers utilise in the documentary film creative industry. Documentary films are products of the film industry and aspiration, identity struggle, and artistic expression. As a media representation of communication technology, YouTube provides ample opportunities for art activists to convey their critical ideas to voicing marginal groups' aspirations. Based on reviewing the Watchdoc YouTube account, this research findings that YouTube supports filmmakers to develop interactive documentary and collaborative actions with other strategic stakeholders, such as Production House, NGO, individual activists, social communities, and educational institutions. According to the practising of digital activism, this phenomenon gives another perspective about building an activist network. Activism through the creative documentary industry is not reflected as people mobilisations but building engagement through the product (documentary film).

Keywords: alternative media; creative industry; digital activism; documentary film; YouTube

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology in today's world is no longer perceived as mere symbolic progress. The new media era has presented a convergent, interactive, and time-space compression communication system (Cammaerts, 2015; Couldry, 2012). Digital media, since its inception, has opened up unlimited social networking, rendering humans

to be more capable of conveying ideas, creativity, and aspirations openly, making politics more deliberative, and having an opposed positioning against hegemonic mainstream media (Livingstone, 2010). Recently, social media platforms have been the most contributing internet usage in the world. Based on the Hootsuite survey in 2021, the global number of internet users peaked at 4.66 billion accounts, from which 4.22 billion accounts are social media users (Riadi, 2021).

Digital media as alternative media is positioned outside the frame of mainstream media, and its existence emit a new atmosphere for society members to proclaim varieties of identities, convey ideas and create artefacts, and construct a deliberative public sphere (Haas, 2004). Habermas (1989) conceptualises the notion of deliberation as follows: "*Deliberation as an interchange of rational-critical arguments among a group of individuals, triggered by a common or public problem, whose main focus or topic of discussion is to find a solution acceptable to all who have a stake in the issue*" (Habermas, 1989). The term "deliberation" as a noun, is closely related with an adjective, "deliberative," which refers to a communication process that entails an exchange of arguments/opinions in a critical rational manner between groups or individuals, to discuss public problems and to find a standard solution agreed upon by multiple interests' parties involved. In the context of CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication), media affordances mainly support social networks and information access to anyone enabling each individual to convey his/her ideas freely and thus constructing a more egalitarian climate to address social problems (Haas, 2004). Kaun & Uldam (2018) explains that social media can drive any given individual to become a participant media, namely to participate in discussions and campaigns of social issues, especially those related to their spheres of experiences and conscience. This is what some experts later call *digital activism* (Kaun & Uldam, 2018) or *online activism* (Ghobadi & Clegg, 2015), an umbrella term that points to activities that influence public opinion and mobilise activists to be directly involved (Nam, 2012) in certain *social movements* interpersonally (Greijdanus et al., 2020).

Social media is by and large a medium to channelling struggle for marginal groups and activists who voice their concern over social issues (Elliott & Earl, 2018), such as Islamic-professed Uyghur minority groups in China who adamantly resist the Chinese authoritarian government's policies using blogs (Clothey et al., 2016), Cambodian youth who challenge their government's policies using Facebook (Vong & Hok, 2018), and Canadian youth who prefer using Vlog YouTube to raise political consciousness (Raby et al., 2018). Abbot's (2011) research the impact of new ICT (Information Communication Technologies) and new social media in Southeast Asia. Economic development is broadly correlated with the use of new ICT's because the quantitative data shows that the middle class has more familiar to use the Internet. Indonesia did not reveal any significant improvements in political liberties. On the

other side, the growth of internet use in Malaysia and Singapore is increasingly supported by alternative media and critical blogging (Abbott, 2011).

In the recent Indonesian context, the "*Coin for Prita*" phenomenon exemplifies how repressive action towards women and poor people is consistently counteracted through online activism, resulting in almost 1 billion Rupiah's crowdfunding to redeem the alleged fine accused on her (Lim, 2017). Young Chinese-Indonesians created a video on YouTube titled "*Stereotypes of Indonesian Youths*" about nationalism discourse. They tried to battle the stigma that Chinese-Indonesians are not nationalist and truly Indonesian citizens. YouTube to be the alternative medium for content creators and activists to express their identity and raise their voices and thoughts (Susilo & Sugihartati, 2020), while mainstream media will not give the space for minorities (Atkinson, 2017a). Meanwhile, YouTube could be the medium to spread the values that give advantages to the upper class and oppress the lower class (Demeterio III & Liwanag, 2016). The variety of using YouTube shows that this new media gives everyone immense opportunities to speak up and influence people.

Still fresh in Indonesian collective memory, the rising tension of the 2019 General Election political climate reached a boiling point when an investigative and human rights activist, Dandhy Laksono, released a documentary film provocatively titled *Sexy Killers*, which address timely social problems and deconstruct corporate oligarch practises in the form of coal mining project whose primary impact is destroying the surrounding environment and rural community. Watchdoc (an independent house production) release has successfully translated the research-based "Blue Indonesia Expedition" project into a critical stance and positioning right in the middle of 2019 General Election campaigns from both contending parties, knowing that the coal mining project has become the hotbed of political elites. *Sexy Killer* documentary film has been watched offline by hundreds of viewers in 50 cities in Indonesia and has since become a trending wake-up call for society's political awareness. This film is grabbed the attention of 17 million viewers on the YouTube platform (Tuasikal, 2019). Up to the present, the YouTube version of *Sexy Killers* has garnered 35.819.129 viewers, 910 thousand likes, and 22 thousand dislikes since its premiere release on 13 April 2019 (Laksono, 2019). The data above imply that the Internet is a new medium to perform a social movement in a digital world by enhancing group cohesiveness.

Based on *Hootsuite* (We are Social) Digital Report 2020, 4.54 billion people worldwide use the Internet, and YouTube is the most used social platform after Facebook, accounting for 2 billion active user accounts. In Indonesia, the data is slightly different in terms of usage (Figure 1). YouTube is the first rank, based on 272,1 million Indonesian total populations, 175,4 million Internet users, and 160 million active

social media users. YouTube has successfully performed 88% market penetration from the total population (Hootsuite, 2020).

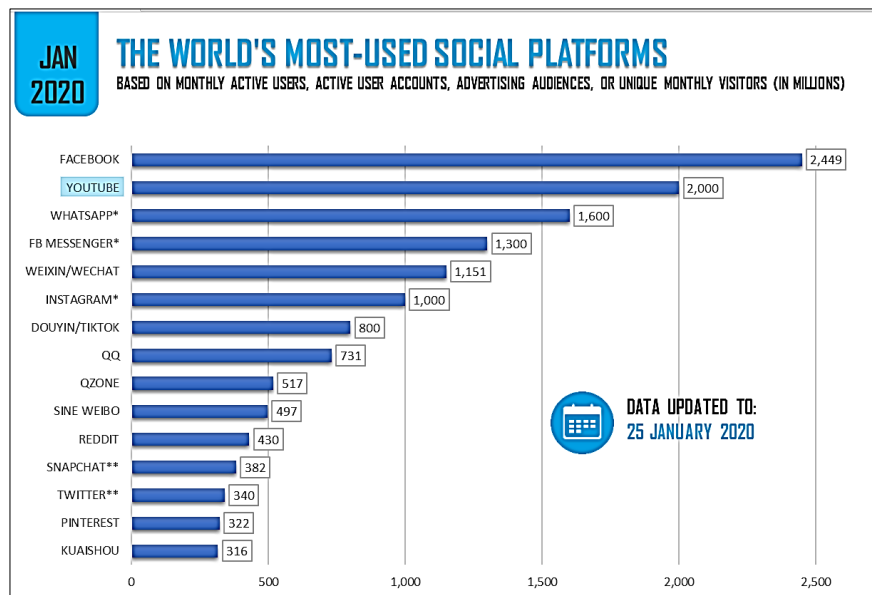


Figure 1. The world most-used social platforms
Source: (Hootsuite, 2020)

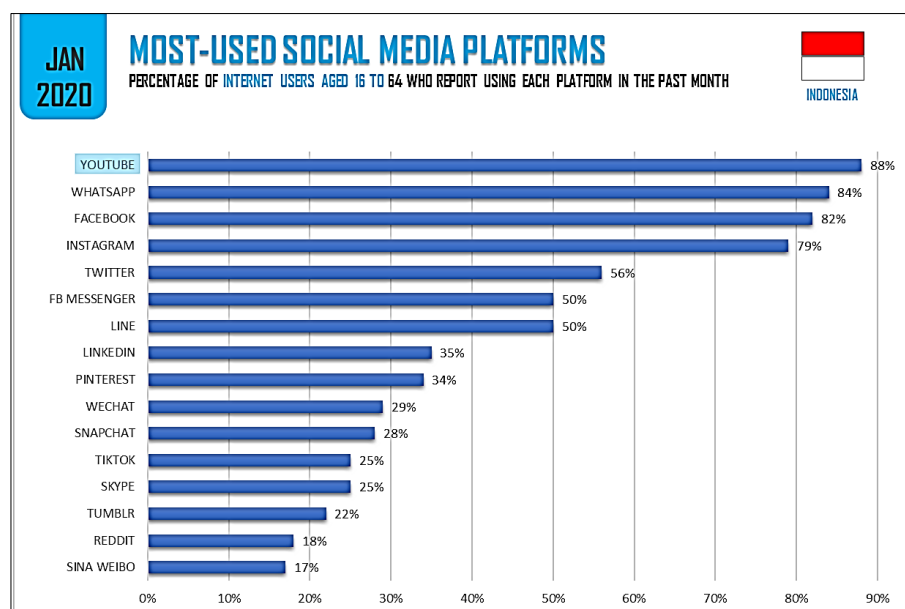


Figure 2. The most-used social media platforms in Indonesia
Source: (Hootsuite, 2020)

The statistic data in Figure 2 shows that YouTube has large social networking potentialities, high user preferences, and high strategic values to perform digital activism in Indonesia. In *YouTube, Critical Pedagogy, and Media Activism*, Kellner and Kim (2010) argues that YouTube is a new media platform to enhance dialogical learning for community/society, enlarging informative space for transformative critical pedagogy, thus optimising internet potentialities for democratisation (Kellner & Kim, 2010). In the political context, a new

term, *YouTubification*, emerges, portraying a peculiar political phenomenon in the USA in which a political candidate is deliberately creating a specific YouTube channel to perform his/her political campaign and the means of self-promotion (Blitvich, 2010). YouTube is also frequently used by environmental activists to address climate change issues by uploading relevant videos and monitoring the debate progress of the topical issue in the YouTube comment section/forum (Uldam & Askanius, 2013). Religion issues are also addressed and hotly contested by users in YouTube channels upon the release of the short film, *Fitna*, by Dutch-politician Geert Wilders (van Zoonen et al., 2010), as well as violence towards women issues (Núñez Puente et al., 2015)

Based upon data and media observation above, Thorson et al. (2010) construct three frameworks of thinking that are proposed to analyse activism-imbued videos in YouTube as a social media platform, namely: a) Video as *a persuasive and awareness-raising political advertising* to urge members of society to participate politically. If any political institutions release the videos, the political movement is categorised as a top-down approach, while if released by civil society, the video is commonly perceived as a grassroots campaign, b) Video as *witnessing*. It means that viewership is not limited to grasping the content of the video but instead conveying an idea or thought. In reality, activists or human-rights-based organisations create videos and compose scripts to document and show the world about certain injustices and trespassing of human rights. c) Video as *self-expression*. When an individual or a certain group wants to communicate their thoughts to the public in the form of video, if seen from a democratic perspective, it is the tangible manifestation of citizens' freedom of expression principle who cares about the socio-political issues. (Thorson et al., 2010)

Sonza's study (2010) shows the relationship between video activism, documentary film, and YouTube by arguing that documentary film and video activism can become 'media participation' channels to express aspiration, identity, and political position of a minority or repressed groups in society against the hegemony of dominant groups or existing status quo. Her research context draws from the experience of the underdeveloped indigenous American people because of the emergence and expansion of the popular culture of majority settlers in the United States. Film and video activism are produced to resist stereotyping and ideology propagated by mainstream media, covering the bias assumption that Whites are inherently more superior in carrying the banner of noble religious quest and thus making them an elite class above the black native Americans. In the early stage of their struggle, the native Americans used traditional printing media, resulting in their being sidelined. Their use of film production and video activism follows the same pattern of being marginalised, unable to get the chance to penetrate Hollywood, the fourth cinema. In a symposium titled "*The Indigenous New Media*", Adrienne Keene, a notable professor and

activist of indigenous rights, addresses the filmmaker and creative activist' participants about the emancipatory nature of new media to educate, organise, advocate and voice the aspiration of indigenous and marginalised Americans. Digital media is perceived as an enabler to distributing and representing identity, selfhood, community, and political structure of the marginalised and under-represented indigenous Americans. The film is then portrayed as representing the fate of indigenous Americans and has been dubbed as "video activism" distributed through websites www.1491s.com and YouTube. Two goals are established in the next project. First, to change the negative stereotyping of Native Americans, mostly called Indian tribes, as the underdeveloped groups. Second, by employing documentary film and video activism, they want to convey their belief through new media to counter the dominant image of *Hollywood Indians*. (Sonza, 2018)

Based on history, a documentary film was introduced by John Grierson, a journalist from the New York newspaper, in 1926. He mentioned 'A Creative Treatment Of Actuality' for what we now recognise as a documentary. The definition of 'documentary' has since been dynamic and entangled with socio-political, state-ideological, and technological contexts. The documentary film serves multi-purposes and interests. In line with the advancement of audio-visual communication technology, documentary films production is booming. Nazi-Germany regime propaganda was screened through a documentary film titled "*Triumph des Willens*" (1934), directed by Leni Riefenstahl. The USA took the tide of producing documentary films on a large scale when the Great Depression era's stroke to accurately portray the economic situation at the moment for society's benefit. *Why we fight* (1942-1945), a series of seven documentary films is the most well-known documentary the USA has ever produced in times of war. As communication technology advanced rapidly, the USA film industry, dubbed *Hollywood*, has become the cornerstone of the country (Eagle Institute Indonesia, 2016).

The development of documentary films and video activism in Indonesia has progressed through several stages, commonly categorised according to the existing regime purpose of documentary film making, namely as the government's propaganda in the service of nation-building or enhancing the spirit of nationalism. Documentary films are identical to historical narrative films, nature exploration, and political propaganda of the post-independence Indonesian regime of the Old and the New Order (Eagle Institute Indonesia, 2016). In the Old Order regime, the propaganda dealt primarily with representing Bung Karno as The Great Leader, "*The Father of the People*". In The New Order regime, the government's political propaganda was applied through the regular screening of The Thirtieth of September Movement (G30S) in the Government's National Television (TVRI) annually every 30 September (Alkhajar et al., 2013).

During the post-authoritarian regime up to the present, the rapid development of the Indonesian film industry goes hand in hand with a more open-oriented political system/regime and democratisation, especially after the resignation of Suharto from his longest-term Presidency. In this aspect, documentary films are also expanding in scope, themes, viewership, and production-distribution cycle. The topics/issues covered are socio-political advocacy, art and experimentation, journey and adventure, and community-oriented films. Documentary films have been transformed into a specific genre in audio-visual artistry, carrying its individual and democratic character, and giving space for individuals to explore and express their social principles in the form of original, unique, and distinctive art (Eagle Institute Indonesia, 2016). In 2019, before the pandemic hit, The Creative Economy Agency (*Badan Ekonomi Kreatif: BEKRAF*) registered that drama, comedy, and horror genres have dominated the domestic distribution of widescreen films (*bioskop*) (Yustriani & Rahman, 2019).

Nevertheless, the documentary genre for independent films is lagging and lacking viewership. BEKRAF then initiated an international workshop, *Docs by The Sea*, to support documentary filmmakers to improve the quality of producing, managing, funding, and distributing films internationally (Surya et al., 2017). Indonesian documentary filmmakers, for example, Dandhy Laksono, one of the founders of *Watchdoc Documentary*, released several critical (activism) documentaries, such as "Sexy Killer," "Tenggelam Dalam Diam," "Pulau Plastik" (Laksono, 2019). In collaboration with Dhandhy Laksono, *Visi Sinema* managed to release an environmental documentary titled "Pulau Plastik" (Laksono & Nasution, 2021). In-Docs, led by Amelia Hapsari, initiated the *Good Pitch Southeast Asia* programme aimed at producing activism documentaries, one of them is titled *Dare to Dream*, a storey about the hope and reality of youth in Asia (Surya et al., 2017). *Yayasan Rekam Nusantara* also released several short documentaries about environmental and biodiversity issues (Rekam, 2020).

Based on some conceptual and practical explications on YouTube as alternative media within the context of digital activism above, the glimpse of hope appears for a minority group(s) to express their societal concern and to struggle against the dominant discourse through video activism in the form of documentary films (Sonza, 2018). The research about social activism and digitally mediated documentary films are barely researched in Indonesia. Kukuh Yudha Karnanta (2012), in his "Political Economy of Indonesian Documentary Films," highlights the funding aspect and documentary film producers' integrity because of the presence of foreign-based funding. The nature of his research paradigm is critical, and he elaborates more on the internal aspect of the film industry (Karnanta, 2012). Idola P. Putri (2013), in her article titled "Redefining Indie Film: The Description of Indonesia Independent Cinematic Development," is more descriptive towards finding the actual definition of independent film or documentary film. She uses a

constructivist approach because of her emphasis on historical contingencies and socio-historical contexts to explain the development of Indie films in Indonesia (Putri, 2017). Aan Ratmanto's article focuses on historical documentary films that potentially become an alternative reference to understand historiography in Indonesia. His approach is more exploratory on documentary films with their various typologies (Ratmanto, 2018). Previous studies mainly discussed some definitional problems and the internal aspect of the film industry, but Irawanto and Octastefani (2019) go one step further to relate documentary films and social activism.

Irawanto and Octastefani (2019) identify how documentary films' mechanism to produce in film communities outside Java (Ambon, Aceh, and Bali) has become a catalyst for social change. Documentary films whose content includes the dynamics of social issues in a local setting that touch people's hearts and bring their collective consciousness on the socio-political problems in their surroundings to the foreground, such as economic inequality, injustice, etc. (Irawanto & Octastefani, 2019). The research highlights more on the role of documentary films from a social perspective, attuned with a previous study by Stover (2012), who address social activism and collective identity expressed through artistic form, called documentary film (Stover III, 2012).

Based on several studies addressing the topic of documentary films in Indonesia, the author attempts to conceptualise in a slightly different angle by adding digital technology perspective whose primary characterisation is open and deliberative towards contemporary social issues by referring to the work of Sonza (2018), who uses digital media variable as alternative media for documentary films in the form of video activism in YouTube. This research novelty lies in the documentary films' epistemic standing. It is a definitional and typological characterisation and the product of the creative film industry in Indonesia. Therefore, the research question for the current study runs as follows: "How does the documentary film creative industry in using YouTube as an alternative media for doing digital activism?"

Watchdoc is an audio-visual production house from Indonesia. Established in 2009, Watchdoc independent house has produced 165 episodes of documentaries, 715 titles feature for national television, and no less than 45 titles of commercial and non-commercial videos that won various awards. Watchdoc joined YouTube on 5 February 2011, with 361,000 subscribers, and 26,808,708 of his works uploaded on the YouTube channel have been watched (Laksono, 2011b). Watchdoc has won many prestigious awards such as the Special Prize of Gwangju Prize for Human Rights in 2021, and the film "Sexy Killers" made it into the "Top 5 Investigative Reporting Documentaries" in Films for Transparency (F4T) in South Korea 2020 (Laksono, 2011a). The credibility of Watchdoc documentary films has been appropriately acknowledged by several communication researchers, such as some critical research on environmental issues in the film Sexy Killers

(Hanum, 2019; Murfianti, 2020), narrative analysis in the film *Alkinemokiye* (Zein, 2020), and *Rayuan Pulau Palsu* (Fadli, 2017), advocacy journalist in the film *Jakarta Unfair* (Mulyawati, 2018) and analysis of the form and function of speech in the film *The Mahuzes* (Izar et al., 2020).

While most previous studies on Watchdoc documentary films deal with its critical content, this study offers novelty in seeing its broader perspective, namely how the production of documentary films by Watchdoc is connected with the perspective of the creative industry that uses YouTube as an alternative media. The research will develop the specific conceptual level about digital activism in the documentary film creative industry utilising YouTube as alternative media. Analysing the operational concept is applied by reviewing the Watchdoc Documentary YouTube account. The findings of this research potentially impact filmmakers' practice to optimise YouTube to be deliberative media and arrange the strategy to increase the visibility of social issues through documentary film.

METHODOLOGY

The assumption of current research is founded on the context of digital activism, which is limited to its political dimension. Digital activism is a digitally mediated social movement or activism (George & Leidner, 2019). Here, the author assumes that digital media affordances do not limit themselves to the power of click and hashtags for activism but reach out to video activism shared on the YouTube platform (Sonza, 2018). Video activism in the form of documentary film posits a distinctive genre. Documentary films are more ideological, based on values, and probing deeper into social fact, in contrast with fiction, comedy, or even horror genre whose primary purpose is entertaining the audience (Putri, 2017). Based on the research question "How does the documentary film creative industry in using YouTube as an alternative media for doing digital activism?" the current analysis sees the alternative role of YouTube in the production, distribution, and consumption moments of documentary film products. Atkinson (2017) explains that in activism studies related to alternative media, researchers can use qualitative methods to examine how activists convey their ideas that are contrary to mainstream media issues through alternative media (Atkinson, 2017b).

On the other hand, the study of documentary films in the Watchdoc YouTube account uses a descriptive quantitative content analysis method to measure the frequencies of social issues that appear (Ahmad, 2018). This quantification reflects the interest of filmmakers and the concerns of alternative issues visibility. It is necessary to examine the activism which is using alternative mediums (Atkinson, 2017a).

The unit of analysis includes the collection of sample data (sampling units) taken from the Watchdoc Documentary YouTube

account, whose 63 videos were uploaded from 1 March 2020 to 22 July 2021 during the pandemic situation, which describes the actual situation that will have implications for the analysis of documentary film issues. Data reduction is performed by identifying videos with the same opportunity in 4 movie trailers and 1 Open House video. This step is necessary to reduce bias due to double recording. There are 58 video units in the Watchdoc YouTube account to be taken as sampling units. Recording unit refers to the thematic that often appears in Watchdoc documentaries. Krippendorff explained that the determination of the theme could be seen from the structural definition of the story's content that is explored through the words and ideas in the text. The identification must be clear so that there is no overlap (Eriyanto, 2011). The coder consists of 2 people who will analyse social issues to identify thematic recording units on the coding sheet. Thematic consists of various issues such as environmental, political, health, gender, economic, socio-cultural, education, transportation, religion, law, sports, food security, and security.

The content analysis of documentary films is one of the variables in alternative media that shows the producer's discourse with mainstream media (Atkinson, 2017a). It can be concluded that this study combines qualitative methods and descriptive quantitative content analysis by using literature studies in building a conceptual grounding. Alternative media terminology refers to media producers (YouTube), users (Watchdoc as a filmmaker in the creative industry), content (documentary films as products), and their positioning against the dominant power structure (Atkinson, 2017a).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Activism and Digital Activism as Grassroots Movement

'Activism' refers to a collective action performed by a group of people as part of society, who voluntarily gather to change situations or conditions they perceive as unjust and unacceptable. They use the existing political sphere structure to influence institutions (government) or officials to stop a certain practice or push policies-based agenda according to people's will. The scope of activists' goals is extensive, from protecting civil society democratic rights to reformist purposes such as preventing a certain crime or discriminatory acts towards some (minority) groups in society or even to a more radical purpose such as toppling down the government and taking over the status quo (Takahashi, 2020). With the advancement of digital technology, activism is no longer performed offline and online, thanks to digital communication technology availability. Social media has become a counter-public sphere where activists challenge the dominant discourse and offer to compete and sometimes contradictory perspectives (Ciszek, 2016; Takahashi, 2020).

Michael Hardt (2017) links *"the emergence of digital activism to what seems like a speeding up of the protest cycles where a focus on*

media and communication aspects of social movement organisation and an increasingly swift rate of technological change gives an impression of accelerated rhythms of political shifts" (Hardt, 2017). Digital activism development cannot be separated from the digital revolution, where the progress of communication technology gave birth to social media in early 2010. Seen from a technology determinism perspective, the role of digital communication is fundamental in shaping the contours of current digital activism (Wolfson, 2014), such as the phenomenon of Arab Spring in early 2010, where virtual space is an enabler for a mass protest in trans-national public space of the Middle East and North African to demand the power transition from authoritarian to democratic (Kim & Lim, 2019; Mateos & Erro, 2020; Postill, 2014). The Arab Spring phenomenon primarily uses Facebook to organise the schedule of protests, Twitter to coordinate the locations of movements, and YouTube to show their actions to the world (Kim & Lim, 2019). Digital or online activism also happens in Bahrain, post-Arab Spring casualties. Youth protest targeted Al-Khalifa monarch rule through Facebook (Moore-Gilbert, 2019). The 2013 *Shahbag movement* in Bahrain was also mobilised by digitally aware youth to express their protest (Roy, 2019). *The Obamachine* phenomenon is another stellar example where Barack Obama used digital media to boost his political campaign, which resulted in his glorious victory during the USA 2008 General Election (Carpenter, 2010). In Indonesia, the *#Gejayanmemanggil* hashtag movement has garnered a trending topic on Twitter and consequently mobilises a mass of people to reject the weakening of The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and to push the agenda of legislating the sexual violence eradication bill (RUU PKS) (Fuadi, 2020).

Avoiding the trap of technology determinism, we need to broaden our horizon with a larger analytical framework because digital activism is closely related to its various contexts, such as political economy that deals with practices of technology use and the complexity of local-global networking in terms of social movements. The analysis of digital activism should also elaborate on the role of the human agency behind the technology factor (Treré et al., 2017). The terminology of digital activism is not limited to its political movement application, but rather, more ontologically, as long as humans use the digital medium to voice concern over social change and solidarity through online communities (Hartoyo & Supriadi, 2015), or as individual/influencer about feminism issue (Schuster, 2013), to raise a concern about justice for LGBT (Schmitz et al., 2020), and social movement to protect civil rights (Nugroho & Syarief, 2012). In Serbia, activism involves both social activists and artists who combine artistic material of digital display and anti-war political issues by creating symbols in posters (Mihaljinac & Mevorah, 2019).

McCaughey & Ayers (2003) propose an online activism term to refer to pro-active activism that uses digital media as a strategy to mobilise mass, called "*hacktivism*." To understand the form, impact, and

goals of online activism, some experts propose three types of internet activism, namely (1) awareness/advocacy, the type of online activism whose purpose is to raise awareness by giving relevant and persuasive information (*lobbying*) to ruling parties, to gain sympathy from society, or to challenge authoritarian ruler. (2) organisation/mobilisation, the type of online activism which technically optimises digital media, namely to perform mass communication effectively by mobilising mass to do demonstration offline. (3) action/reaction, the type of online activism which is radical because of hacking other opposite groups/institutions (McCaughey & Ayers, 2003; Neumayer & Svensson, 2016). Digital activism is then defined as a social movement/grassroots that optimise social media to impact and mobilise people to stand up against injustice and protect humanity (Aouragh, 2016).

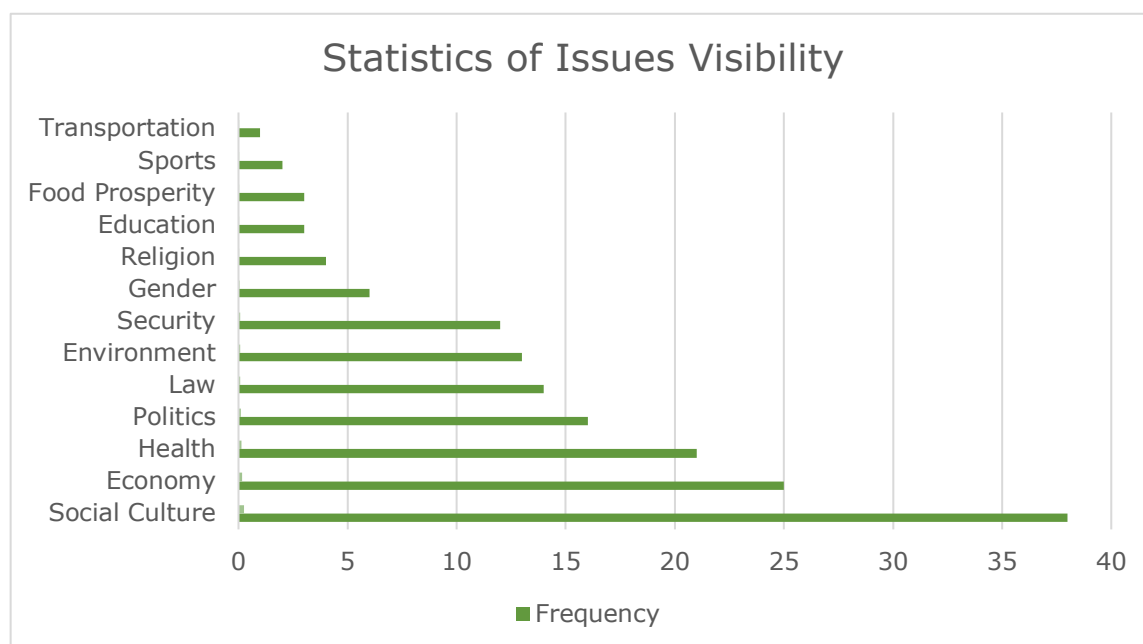


Figure 3. Statistics of The Frequency Issues of Documentary Films on Watchdoc YouTube Account. Source: (Laksono, 2011b).

Activism in the digital era provides a vast space for individuals, organisations, and political institutions to convey ideas, respond to societal issues, or mobilise the masses (Atkinson, 2017a; C. Mateos & Gaona, 2015). Watchdoc Documentary is a community organisation that contributes to the visibility of critical community issues studied and conveyed through art in documentary films. They do not have any purpose of doing online activism like mobilisation the mass for demonstration or hacking the opposite group. Watchdoc expresses their voice through documentary films to give awareness/advocacy to society about crucial issues that harm human rights. Dandhy Laksono as the initiator of Watchdoc, has a solid background and concern in the field of investigative journalism. His book, titled "*Investigative Journalism: Tricks and experiences of Indonesian journalists in making investigative coverage in print, radio and television media*" (Laksono, 2010), has

become a way of thinking for the director, renowned for his critical and sensitivity to social issues. The documentary films produced by Watchdoc YouTube account take the form of journalistic advocacy, which aims to provide critical insight and growing awareness for the public on the issue of social inequality and also influenced the government as the dominant power to address the problems (Aldred, 2012; Mulyawati, 2018). The Figure 3 results from the issues that frequently appeared in the documentaries shown on the Watchdoc YouTube account.

Issues of Social Culture (24%), economy (16%), and health (13%) are the most concerned field that Watchdoc focuses on. Based on the data mining, not all films are created by Watchdoc. A programme named "Watchdoc Kolaborasi" allows the independent filmmakers, social community, students, or journalism video to publish their documentary film through Watchdoc's channel. Their team will choose the video in line with the vision, values, and spirit of Watchdoc (Laksono, 2011a). Fifty-eight films as sample units consist of 35 films produced by Watchdoc Kolaborasi and 23 by Watchdoc originally. The Figure 4 describes the different frequency issues that both of the parties are concerned about.

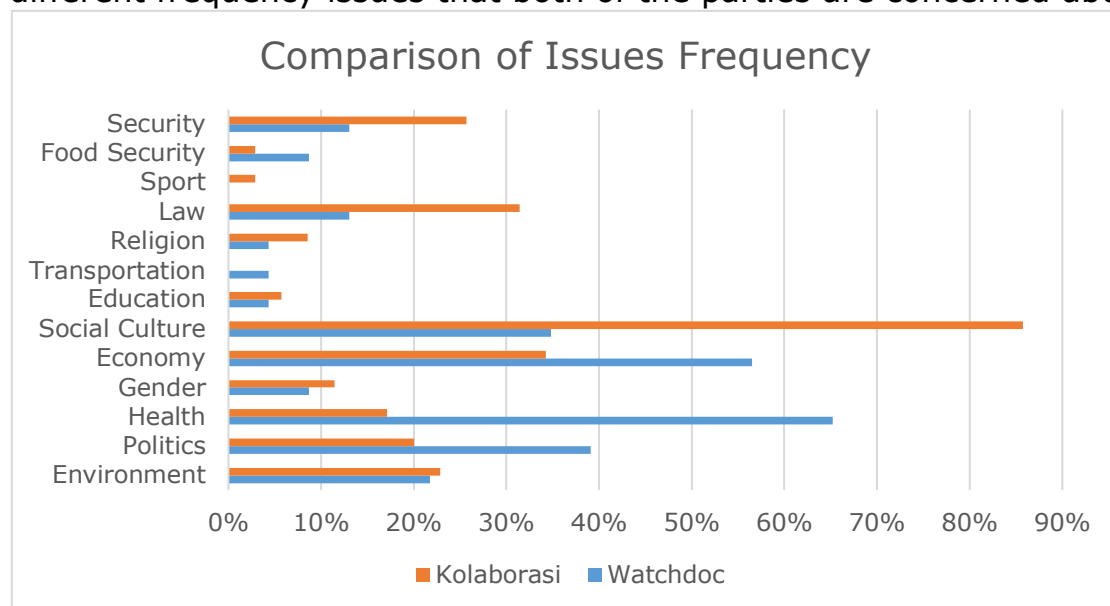


Figure 4. Statistics of the Percentage Issues between Watchdoc and Kolaborasi Programme. Source: (Laksono, 2011b).

Issues comparison shows that Watchdoc is more concerned about health issues (65%), economy (57%), and politics (39%). On the other side, social-cultural issues (86%), economic issues (34%), and law (31%) most appear on Kolaborasi Programme. The basic questions to identify the issues are found by examining whether there is any social inequality phenomenon in each field that shows the discourse between dominant and oppressive/marginal structures. Since the beginning of the historic Second World War, Documentary film has been the most appropriate way for spreading ideas and ideologies, either for or against mainstream positions. There is 'discourse sobriety' in documentary film

as vehicles of domination and conscience, power and knowledge, desire and will (Sapino & Hoenisch, 2011). The Table 1 explained the identification of the structure of 58 documentary films on the Watchdoc YouTube account.

Table 1. The Dominant and Marginal Structures identification on Watchdoc Films

Dominant Structures	Marginal Structures
Government	Society / Indigenous People
Industry	Social Activist
Pandemic	Labour / Worker
Majority of religions/beliefs	Family
Military	Minority religions/beliefs
Modernity	Young people/students
Colonialist	Organisation/Community
Man	Oppressed gender
Social Conflict	MSMEs (UMKM)
Natural Disasters	Covid-19 patient
	Transportation

Source: (Laksono, 2011b).

Based on the explanation above, we can conclude that documentary film production involves grassroots participation in promoting human rights and social issues through audio-visual video activism (Hinegardner, 2009). Even though filmmakers cannot take action on the streets to agitate for political representation, they participate in social activism by creating documentary films (Marchetti, 2016). In the context of developing ICT (Internet and Communication Technology), the digital documentary can extend the audience and build collaborative engagement. Watchdoc reveals as I-Doc (interactive documentary) where filmmaker and audience have a space to communicate online. This factor could be very potential to maintain the consciousness and advocacy to society (Terry, 2020). This contribution is crucial against the obstacles of democracy in Indonesia because the post-colonial culture is still existing where the dominant structure uses its power to oppress the marginal structure (Paul, 2010).

Activism in Documentary Film Creative Industry

The birth and growth of the creative industry are highly related to rapid economic growth, production-consumption culture, knowledge access, and individuals and groups' creative force supported by the digital media content industry, both in its production, consumption, and distribution aspects. The core definition of Creative Industries is tied with its political economy context. The United Kingdom Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) defines Creative Industry as clusters of activities with economic potentials, which open up a new workforce by regenerating and exploiting intellectual property, creativity, skills, and individual talents. Some sectors of the creative industry include advertising, architecture, arts, and antique markets, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, and video, interactive leisure software (electronic games), music, performing arts, publishing arts,

publishing, software, and computer service, television, and radio (Flew, 2012, 2014). Meanwhile, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) define Creative Industry as *"the cycles of creation, production, and distribution of goods and services that use creativity and intellectual capital as primary inputs,"* where (1) *"their production requires some input of human creativity,"* (2) *"media are vehicles for symbolic messages to those who consume them or to serve some larger, communicative purpose,"* and (3) they contain some intellectual property that is attributable to the individual or group producing the good or service. (Flew, 2014).

The Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia defines creative industry as an industry that uses individuals' creativity, skills, and talents to create prosperity and a workforce by producing and exploiting creative force and intellectual property. The same Ministry also addresses the creative industry formula towards a sustainable economy by merging individuals' creativity with the competitive economic climate and renewable energy resources. There are fourteen sub-sectors of Creative Industry in Indonesia, namely *"advertising services, architecture, art, and antique market, craft, design, fashion, video, film and photography, interactive games, music, performing arts, publishing and printing, computer and software services, television and radio, and research and development."* (Pangestu, 2008).

From these definitional elaborations, we may infer that the creative industry holds three key aspects: part of the creative economy, related to the development of cultural industry in society, and advanced technology, especially digital technology. The creative industry also has three essential ingredients to stimulate its growth: information, knowledge, and creativity. The progress of digital technology is very influential for Creative Industry to create products (Flew, 2002). It takes creativity to produce goods in the creative industry milieu, and the endless creativity is infused with novelty and values. (Jong et al., 2012) Therefore, socio-economic conditions and orders of policies are two pillars that support the development of the creative industry (Flew, 2014).

The film is an integral part of creative industry products. The film delivers to the audience a combination of visual, aural, and verbal signifiers. Films are delivered through vocal dialogue, subtitle, narrative voice, credits, and words in scripts. The film portrays narrative in characters, plot, diction, setting, and creative visualisations to attract the audience (Elliot, 2004). The film does not only for entertainment, narrative, or cultural purpose. The film is a social practice, a continuous, not final, product, part of larger picture and thoughts or arguments; the film represents reality *par excellence*. The film translates social processes into vivacious images, sounds, and signs based on justified principles (Turner, 2006).

A documentary film is a non-fiction film in which the content is trying to visualise the reality or phenomenon. There is no imaginary

interpretation of producers. Instead, they do observational directly to gain the facts and record the true witness or actors related to the issues (Ayawaila, 2008). Based on Bill Nichols' theory, there are six kinds of documentary film; (a) Poetic is enabled visualisation and not using text or narrative, (b) Expository is the conventional mode which is still using narrative and logical argumentation to understand the storyline, (c) Observational concerned on the direct involvement of filmmaker to dialogue and observe the field, (d) Participatory describes filmmaker as a participant who involves in interview or interaction with the subject, (e) Reflexive is pointing out the process of film production itself, and (f) Performative is closest to fiction movie because of the narrative, plot-twist, and subjects' characterisation (Ratmanto, 2018; Terry, 2020). Research reveals that Watchdoc mainly uses observational and expository modes of documentary films based on the table below. Watchdoc is trying to engage the audience to understand the storey's substance through narrative and logical argumentation (expository) and convince the audience that the visualisation is accurate happens as an objective condition because the filmmaker is taking part in gaining the facts and observing the field (observational).

Table 2. The mode of documentary film identification on Watchdoc Films

Mode of Documentary Film	Frequency	Percentage
Poetic	3	5%
Expository	19	33%
Observational	31	53%
Participatory	5	9%
Reflexive	0	0%
Performative	0	0%

Source: (Laksono, 2011b)

Based on UK film history in 1890, The Lumiere brothers introduced the film with social propaganda but still maintained its aesthetic values, later called documentary film. The film has become the means for producers to reflect and represent their ideologies through the naturalising process. Naturalisation has ideological functions to cultivate the seemingly natural goods and values in society through the film as its medium. Naturalisation is a dominant class's ideology strategy to divide society based on class, race, and gender inequality (Hayward, 2000). Documentary films are classified as a hybrid genre that attempts to represent both the real and the imagined in creative and critical art. Narrative in documentary filmmaking portrays the tension between social facts (the given) and the struggle and critique towards them (the possible or the ideals). Documentary producers should possess idealism, critical consciousness, and proper self-reflexivity to explore the big ideas behind the film (Jong et al., 2012; Silverblatt, 2007).

Based on Figure 5 research finding the dominant structures most appeared are government (30%), industry or company (20%), and the pandemic Covid-19 as the context (16%). The filmmakers use the term 'Oligarchy' to describe how the government itself abuses democracy

because instead of improving the life quality of society, government surprisingly be the active actor. The latter establishes an advantage in the public policy for industries or companies (Laksono, 2011b).

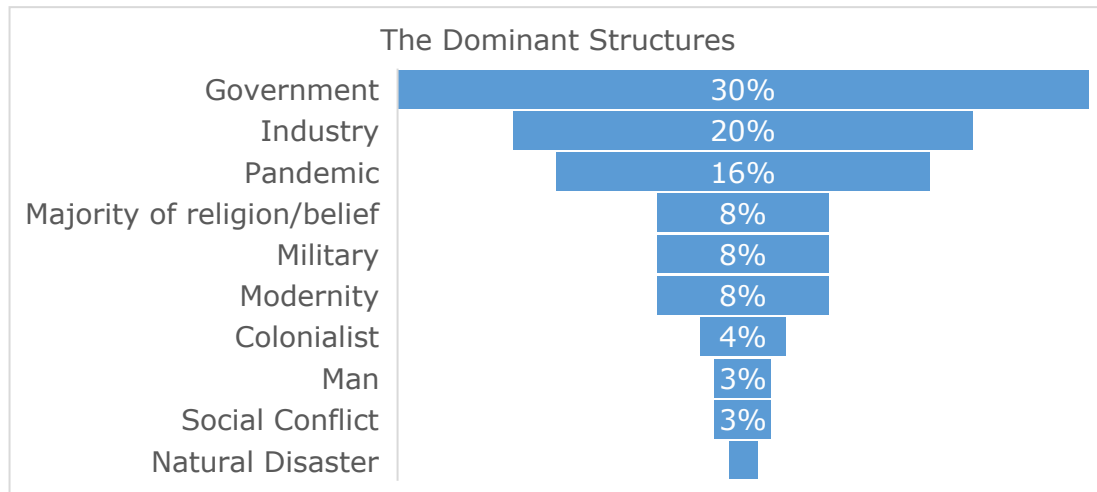


Figure 5. The statistics of dominant structures identification on Watchdoc Films (Laksono, 2011b).

The marginal structures most appeared are a society or indigenous people (40%), social activist (11%), and labour/worker (10%). The results align with the impact of an "oligarchy" that did not take sides of the people to get a better quality of life. The films' titled "*Lakardowo mencari keadilan*", "*Kinipan*", "*Kabut di Tahura*", "*Kesaksian Dari Priok*", "*The EndGame (KPK)*" are some of the facts that indigenous people, activists, and labour become the oppressed structures by government and industry because they fight for justice of land, environment, and human rights (Laksono, 2011b).

The link between documentary films and the creative industry lies between the conceptual descriptive and the practical normative sides. Creative spirits in arts (stemming from individuals' talents) are merged with cultural industry demands (mass-produced) in the context of new media technologies within the new knowledge economy to build newly interactive citizens-consumers (Hartley, 2005). The lack of commercial values in documentary films is balanced with their high artistic ones because the role of art in documentaries is to entertain and raise consciousness and promote humanity for the audience (Jong et al., 2012). The targeted audience for documentaries is different in market discourse compared with the broadcasting field. Documentary filmmakers do not create the programmes but products in the form of documentary films. Because of its foundation on the product, the segmented market is more specific on ideology 'market,' namely, those with a social conscience and socio-political sensitivity. Nevertheless, despite its predominantly informative and public-raising conscientization content, the entertainment aspect is within the documentary filmmakers' consideration. It is precisely on this point that the strategic positioning *niche* of the documentary film industry is manifested, rather

than following the commercial tendency of the modern broadcasting industry (Jong et al., 2012).

Documentary Film Industry (DFI) has a different economic pattern in Creative Industry big scheme because DFI depends on film festival(s) to do commissioning, funding, and distribution. Generally speaking, distribution channels of DFI is also more flexible compared with commercial film screenings (*bioskop*) because documentary filmmakers have a licence for their products. Therefore they have considerable power to determine the business plan and their products' distribution. DFI usually employs freelance and more flexible skilled workers (Jong et al., 2012). Hartley (2005) expounds three characteristics of DFI as a "*new independent industry*", namely (1) Technology: media producers grow and expand their business by optimising digital technology, (2) Values upheld by DFI producers are more moderate, anti-traditionalist, following respective individual's principles and instinct, appreciative for independence, full of creativity, and labouring based on their social networking (family, colleagues, friends, etc.) who share similar values, (3) A new vision to pursue while working namely independence (not quickly gets pressures from external factors/parties) and a strong sense of self-entrepreneurship because documentary filmmakers limit as little intervention as possible for their products (Hartley, 2005).

The Watchdoc YouTube account is evidence that the digital era supports filmmakers or production houses to publish the documentary film through social media platforms, called I-Docs (interactive documentary) (Raijmakers et al., 2006). The digitalisation of documentary film gives the real implications of their business models. Not only gaining and engaging a larger audience but also opened the huge potential of collaborations. There is a very significant factor to pursue the purpose of documentary films (Florin, 2008). The following table describes stakeholders who have collaborative engagement with Watchdoc because their films are chosen to be published in Watchdoc's YouTube account. They are sixteen independent production houses (20%), eleven Non-Governmental Organisations (15%), eight individual producers (12%), and seven social communities (10%). This is (Refer Figure 6) the tangible evidence that shows collaborative of producing documentary film strongly motivated by the resemblance of ideologies, values, concerning issues, and positioning as the part of society who bravely organised and create a documentary film to reveal inequality of justice and pursue the prosperity of people and environments (Silbey, 2006).

Documentary films are products of creative citizenship as part of participatory democracy (Canella, 2017). Hartley (2016) coins the term 'creative citizenship' as a token of creative potentialities inherent in each citizen as an individual or part of a community, to get involved in cultural activism and public sphere participation by social media engagement (Hargreaves & Hartley, 2016; Mainsah, 2017). In line with the idea, Fuchs (2014) explains that "participatory democracy is a society in which

all decisions are made by those who are concerned by them, and all organisations (workplaces, schools, cities, politics, etc.) are controlled by those who are affected by them". The society Fuchs refers to here does not always belong exclusively to grassroots components but rather from all contributing elements that care enough to monitor the running of all systems, including politics and economy. The advancement of digital technology and the Internet is co-extensive with participatory democracy because it extends the democratic power of grassroots concern, enhancing individuals' capacity and distributed power in the democratic lives of citizens (Fuchs, 2014). From this perspective, despite their ideological leanings and highly resistance towards dominant groups, documentary films are both emancipatory and participatory within the context of democracy. Documentary films, therefore, become a certain kind of activism communication from creative industry agencies based on research and art. Digital technology plays a significant part in this matter because social media is an open and deliberative medium. (Canella, 2017; Couldry, 2012).

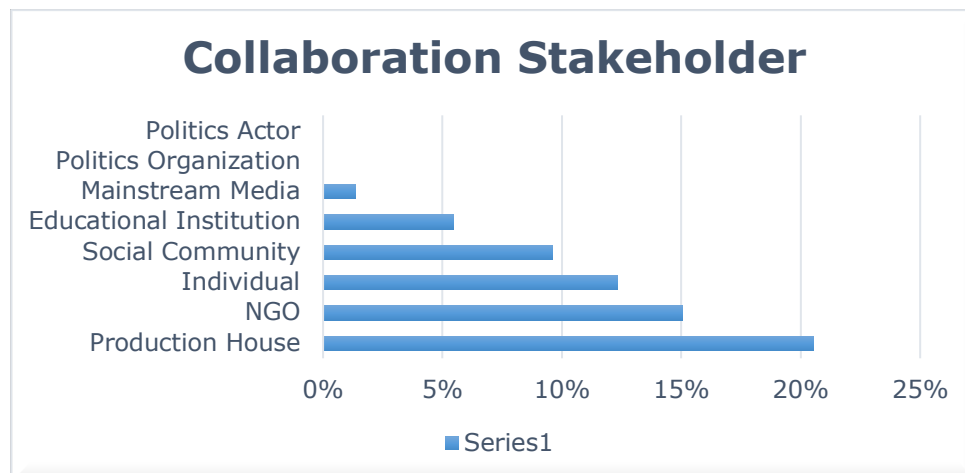


Figure 6. The statistic of collaboration stakeholders' identification on Watchdoc YouTube account (Laksono, 2011b).

YouTube as Alternative Media in Digital Activism

Web 2.0 was initially recognised in 2003 when its core concept of new media or social media emerged. Web 2.0 as a communication infrastructure has several distinctive features such as interaction, participation, collaboration, and social networking that led to the formation of collective intelligence. Firstly, coined by Steven Levy (1997), collective intelligence is based on the assumption that the broader and more frequent the level of user engagement through social networking, the more participation from new users it will become. For example, online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*, online user-generated content in *YouTube*, writings on *Web-blog*, pictures shared on *Instagram* & *Pinterest*, social networking on *Facebook* & *Google+*, and short tweets on *Twitter* (Flew, 2014)

Burgess and Green (2018) define YouTube as "a site of *participatory culture*" where it opens the most comprehensive space for

communities, institutions, artists, activists, *media literate fans*, non-professional and amateurish producers, up to mainstream and professional producers such as television channels, sports apparel factories, and advertising agencies, as well as small-scale to medium companies (start-ups) who search and find affordable alternative distribution media. YouTube appeals lie in their media affordances which combine user-friendly technology (facilitating users to upload, transcode, and online video sharing) with community formation function (YouTube will guarantee that millions of viewers will watch the content produced and uploaded by consumers). YouTube will perform encoding, converting, and users' video uploading process in the form of Flash Video, and then YouTube will construct a community by linking those videos to users, users to users, and video to video (Burgees & Green, 2018), employing YouTube Analytics which access Google Data Studio. Google Data Studio uses *Big Data Analytics*-based Artificial Intelligence enabling the machine algorithm to read end users' preferences (Anantharamaiah, 2020).

What Google did for the Web, Google Video, aims to do for television. This preview release demonstrates how searching television can work today. Users can search the content of TV programmes for anything, see relevant thumbnails, and discover where and when to watch matching television programmes. We are working with content owners to improve this service by providing additional enhancements such as playback.

—Larry Page, Google co-founder and president of products, January 2005 (McCarty, 2005)

The algorithmic development progressed rapidly when Google acquired YouTube from PayPal with an estimated 1,65 billion US Dollars. YouTube's presence has offered distinction in comparison with the mainstream media, especially television. The user-generated content (UGC) as the main feature in YouTube, part of Web 2.0 distinctive feature, has transformed YouTube into the specialist video platform, which opens the gates of access to every layer of professionals, both amateurish and content professional alike. The basic difference lies in the video uploading capabilities shared by YouTube consumers and users. They can produce any given content and give comments from their internal perspectives without worrying about the gate-keeping process or intervention from circulation's editorial at the global level. This strong potentiality of open access benefits marginalised groups and activists' communities to build a social network through YouTube (Arthurs et al., 2018). In the final instance, YouTube is no longer used and recognised merely as a communication technology platform, but alternative media to create a new media sphere for any social groups to voice their concerns and hopes in the context of democracy (Haas, 2004; van Dijck, 2013).

Atkinson (2017) explores the main primary trends of alternative media researches by scholars, (1) the content that uses language to challenge the power structures or pursue social change, (2) production of media including the content creator background and practice to make marginal voice being visible. The alternative media is created by the struggling to go outside from the mainstream media monopolisation, (3) consumptions of the media means how the audiences use and interact with the contents. Digital space puts the producer and consumer in a blurred area because all people could be both (4) intersections with mainstream media means that alternative media's discourse to the mainstream media is mostly controlled by dominant structures (Atkinson, 2017a).

Table 3. The audiences' response on Watchdoc YouTube account

Documentary Films Title	Viewers	Like	Dislike	Comments
Kinipan (Full Movie)	2,461,100	58,000	1,800	7,080
The EndGame (Full Movie)	2,427,596	155,000	1,700	15,973
THE BAJAU (full movie)	812,859	7,400	345	899
Kerja, Prakerja, Dikerjai	716,528	33,000	553	6,194
Tenggelam dalam Diam	551,146	18,000	228	1,737
Kesaksian dari Priok : Perjuangan Menjaga Pintu Gerbang Ekonomi Nasional	524,520	10,000	261	1,294
Maret 2020: Jalanan Jakarta saat Wabah Corona	358,330	8,000	178	2,382
Kesetrum Listrik Negara	342,043	14,000	180	3,013
Aprilia Manganang : Akhir Polemik Gender	242,045	2,100	59	445

Source: (Laksono, 2011b).

Based on previous analysis, this research already examines how YouTube to be the alternative medium for a documentary filmmaker to do digital activism. Documentary films put the discourse issues between dominant and marginal structures in the centre (Figure 5). The films' production demonstrates the collaborative actions between Watchdoc and the other stakeholder like Production House, NGO, social community, or individuals. Based on the content and its productions, YouTube is the medium where documentary films to be social practises and stimulate interaction between audiences through its affordances. The table 3 show the most viewed films and the metadata of the audience response. Kinipan, The EndGame, and Bajau are the most viewed film.

Watchdoc uses YouTube as the alternative media against dominant structures through the documentary films that challenged government and industry to consider public policies to accommodate the justice and human rights for indigenous society, activists, and labour. On the other side, Hutchinson (2021) sees the absence of digital activism within its visual culture. He proposes the activist adopt micro-platformization on YouTube to highlight the content production and

publishing strategies because visibility is not enough. The platformization of YouTube is applied by vloggers or YouTubers who have cyber-popularity on the mechanism of algorithms and datafication on YouTube (Hutchinson, 2021). YouTube is a deliberative medium for activist documentary filmmakers and offers market capitalisation by linking the content and commercial advertising like mainstream media (J. Kim, 2012). This dualism principle could not be justified in dichotomy because social media has huge potential to be critical media (Fuchs, 2014), which has already been shown by filmmakers who tried to counter the public sphere through documentary film discourse (Coskan, 2016; Terry, 2020). Watchdoc as a Production House has succeeded in producing documentary films based on social phenomena and involving grassroots components involved in the characterisation of the film. The pattern of digital activism through documentary film bridging the concepts about social discourse and creative industry. Watchdoc also supports the online petition movement to participate in mobilising the aspirations of the wider community to fight discrimination acted by the coal industry to people in Lakardowo (Nursanti, 2021) and the issues of KPK-Endgame (SAKTI, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Using the above conceptual strands, the author can answer the research question "How does the documentary film creative business use YouTube as an alternative channel for undertaking digital activism?". Documentary films are not just a film industry product. Documentary films are considered activist products because they have ideological, aesthetic, objective, aspirational, and group identification symbolic values. With documentary, they convey a more enlightened message, not just for commercial or entertainment goals. Documentary films also have democratic, even heroic, qualities. Documentary films affirm their position as action products in democratic contexts through creative participation.

Digital media is a strategic distribution channel to consider for all documentary filmmakers and producers because digital media opens up a more expansive space for aspirations, more accessible, and more affordable. The notion of the documentary film industry (DFI) as a distinct economic and political positioning vis-à-vis mainstream film industry. Artistic, ethical, and ideological values are emblematic of documentary films. The product and not vice versa determine the market. Therefore, documentary film industry segmentation is precise and primarily emotional with the core of the film concept. DFI does not run only in an economic lane but also a democratic path. It becomes the channel or alternative media for the repressed and marginalised groups to freely express themselves against the discriminatory social classes and dominant groups' intervention and claim the recognition they deserve.

From the media affordances perspective, YouTube has proven itself available for user-generated content features that drive more public participation. YouTube as alternative media has consolidated itself against the big giant of mainstream broadcasting media, television. The sophisticated google analytics in YouTube has opened up new horizons to think that today's democracy and activism are no longer restrained on the narrow path of the offline world. Digital media has mediated many groups in society and industry to drive their critical notions forward. YouTube as alternative media outside the belt of the mainstream media industry has metamorphosed to become the distribution channel for the creative industry agencies to sell their conceptual products in the form of documentary films, being accessible for anyone with an Internet connection. Nevertheless, we should also remember that real activism employs some catalyst factors to succeed, namely how social values, decision making, economic struggle, and collective conscience are co-constructive in accomplishing reformist goals. Research findings that Watchdoc is utilising YouTube as alternative media to publish documentary films that expose the issues about Social Culture (24%), economy (16%), and health (13%). Based on quantitative content analysis on 58 films, there are intense discourses between government and industry (dominant structures) and indigenous people, activists, and labour (marginalised structure). This is evidence that digital activism formed as clicktivism or hacktivism and produced video activism such as documentary film.

Watchdoc chooses the expository and observational mode of delivering documentary films to enhance narrative and visualisation. This is the strategy to bring awareness and convince the audience about the issues. Watchdoc is practising a new form of digital activism that brings collaboration between art, creativity, activism, and advocacy. YouTube supports filmmakers to develop interactive documentary and collaborative actions with other strategic stakeholders, such as Production House, NGOs, individual activists, social communities, and educational institutions. According to digital activism, this phenomenon gives another perspective about the strategy to building an activist network. Activism through the creative documentary industry is not reflected as people mobilisations but building engagement through the product (documentary film). The creative documentary industry is supported by YouTube affordances to get viewers, likes, dislikes, and comments to push the visibility of the issues. This research already examines YouTube as alternative media for the documentary film creative industry from the content, production, and consumptions perspective. Scholars have an opportunity to research more about the intersections with the mainstream media. Filmmakers of the creative documentary industry are standing in dualism positions as activist and commercial sectors. In developing micro-platformisations on YouTube, scholars can explore more research about the actual positioning between alternative media and mainstream media.

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