

Crowdfunding And Four-Wall: Promotion And Distribution Strategies Of Manuprojectpro Indonesia's Indie Films

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ABSTRACT: A film—whether mainstream film produced by a major production house or non-mainstream film produced by small-scale production houses—requires appropriate promotion and distribution strategies, so that the film can be enjoyed by audiences that are in line with their segments. Before stepping on the final stage, a producer or production house also needs to think of a good strategy in the context of funding the entire film production process. Crowdfunding and four-wall are techniques that can be used in the film production process. This study aims to reveal the use of crowdfunding and four-wall techniques by ManuProjectPro Indonesia as a strategy to promote and distribute the indie films they produce. The research in this article uses qualitative research methods, precisely descriptive-qualitative methods, and uses data collection techniques in the form of interviews and literature studies. The results show that ManuProjectPro Indonesia uses crowdfunding by persuasion techniques directly to potential investors/donors. Whereas in the distribution level of its films, they use a four-wall strategy by doing roadshows.

Keywords: crowdfunding; four-wall; indie films; ManuProjectPro Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Walter Benjamin explained that film is not just a representation of reality, but the film is a process of creating its own reality. Films contain events or phenomena, whether it is a reality that actually takes place in the real world or an imaginary image that occurs in the alternative realm of the filmmaker creation [1]. The film is not only seen as a message delivery media but is also seen as a business institution. According to Dominick, the film industry is a business industry. Although in reality, it is a form of art, the film industry is a business that provides benefits, sometimes a money machine that often, for the sake of money, comes out of the artistic rules of the film itself [2]. The film production management level consists of the major label and indie label concepts. Major labels focus on industrial aspects. They consider profit and loss, while indie labels concerned more with the idealism factor of the filmmaker. Major labels usually produce mainstream films, which are aimed at generating profits. Indie labels produce more idealistic films. Mainstream films are films that require large funding where their advantages and disadvantages are very calculated. Indie films are considered as films that are made not solely thinking of profit and loss, but rather prioritizing content from the film itself [3]. In relation to their distribution channels, indie films might (directly) be shown on commercial cinema networks, as they usually do not fit the tastes of a lay audience, and often offer special segmented themes that have an unusual audience. Films of this type need their own containers. With streaming or video-on-demand services, art and indie film lovers can freely watch specific films like that.

As opposed to major production house (PH) in Indonesia, i.e. Falcon Pictures, MD Entertainment, Miles Film, or Mizan Productions, an indie filmmaker, of course, not known widely. Limited budgets make these indie filmmakers rarely use big actors/actresses. With the lack of budget, indie filmmakers actually racked their brains and "forced" their creativity through the mainstream boundaries. The difference between major labels (commercial films) and indie labels in the context of investors was also conveyed by Tia Hasibuan (2017). Tia believes that the absence of film distributor companies in Indonesia has caused all films in Indonesia to become indie films. This is because the film distribution process has now become the responsibility of the producers. The difference between indie films and commercial films can be seen from the cost, the number of days of production and also the promotion. Investors also see the differences between commercial films and indie films. Commercial films have a large number of investors while indie films are usually only in the form of private investors or single investors [4]. The next important information from the world of indie films is regarding the availability of funds for the film production process, which includes pre-production, production, and post-production. Based on the interview with Immanuel Prasetya Gintings (founder and chairman of ManuProjectPro Indonesia foundation as well as a Medan filmmaker), as known as Manu (2018), one of the funding systems in film production is through crowdfunding (a funding system by gathering potential investors to make donations). Broadly speaking, crowdfunding is a crowd or joint venture funding. Crowdfunding allows tens and even hundreds of people to donate a portion of their assets to build a commercial project and fundraising for social purposes [5]. In the digital age, crowdfunding often takes the form of a web platform that is the meeting place for project owners and the public who provide funds. Later the project owner will provide a product or service in return. There are three parties involved in the crowdfunding platform, namely the project owner, supporters (donating public), and platform providers (in Indonesia some of them are *KitaBisa*, *Wujudkan*, *AyoPeduli*, *Crowdtivate*, *gandengtangan*, and *carincara*). These three parties have their own roles in creating an ecosystem that can support the needs of each party [5]. In

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a way, the distribution of indie films in Indonesia depends on the creativity, willingness, and foresight of the indie film producer. Producers should be able to see opportunities and should be able to get as much information as possible. In today's era of technology and the internet, information on film festivals can be easily obtained. In fact, not all indie films get the chance to perform at film festivals. Indeed, there are some indie films that are distributed via home video, cable TV, or the internet (e.g. using video-based play sites such as *YouTube*). One of the film communities active in developing films in North Sumatra, Indonesia, is Manu Project Pictures Production or ManuProjectPro Indonesia. According to Manu, ManuProjectPro Indonesia was found in 2005 and incorporated as a foundation since 2016, under the name "Yayasan Penggiat Perfilman". Indonesian Film Development Center (Pusbang Film) has verified the members of this foundation. The aim of ManuProjectPro Indonesia is "to complement the film ecosystem in Medan". In the digital aspect, ManuProjectPro Indonesia has a website at the *filmmedan.com* address. Manu targets short films and animated films. ManuProjectPro Indonesia has a 5-year vision and mission and has an initial target of participating in the *Festival Film Indonesia* (FFI). Manu has an interesting view of the condition of the film community in North Sumatra, as stated in the following interview excerpt: *"... in the context of the film community, North Sumatra filmmakers have good enthusiasm, but the community cannot last long, because usually, the community depends on one person. If the person is not active or even if he dies, the community also dies. This is because the basis of motivation is personal enthusiasm. What we should have done is to build the spirit in the community, so it will not depend on just one person,"* [6]. Based on the explanation above, the author was interested in conducting a study relating to the promotion and distribution strategies of indie films carried out by ManuProjectPro Indonesia. In connection with the topic, the author also wants to reveal how crowdfunding and four-wall techniques are carried out by ManuProjectPro Indonesia as a promotional and distribution medium for their films specifically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Far back, before a film reaches the audience, a producer needs money for the production of the film. One of the things that can be done by a film producer is to do crowdfunding techniques. Gregory Bernstein (2015) expressed his thoughts about crowdfunding. Bernstein revealed that many websites provided crowdfunding. In this regard, donors who invest can also get some benefits related to the film that they fund, for example, getting gifts in the form of film merchandise, or even having the opportunity to meet directly with the production team of the film, depending on how much the donation is [7]. Regarding Bernstein's statement above, Suzanne Lyons (2012) expressed the same thing. She stated that investors, or donors, should be more "involved" in film projects. The term she expressed is "give investors a chance to play" [8]. Crowdfunding is a significant element before a producer starts film production activities. The process starts even before entering the pre-production stage, precisely in the development stage. Then, after the film has finished the producing stage and the finishing stage, a film will enter the next phase: distribution. Elliot Kanbar (2013) revealed that

there were at least 3 choices for distributing films independently: (1) using sales agent services to market films; (2) offer films directly to exhibitors; and/or (3) do a four-wall technique [9]. An indie film must be able to take advantage of the "gaps" that exist to be able to compete with mainstream films. It could be, the gap is to create a film with a new genre variant, or a film that has a special audience segment. This was revealed by Bradley J. Schauer (2015) in his research, where he stressed that indie filmmakers must have certain tactics in the production and marketing of their films [10]. One of the academics who examined the distribution of films with a special segment was Bryan Wuest (2018). He focused his research on the distribution and categorization of LGBT films. There are several distribution companies in the United States that focus on the distribution of LGBT films, i.e. Wolfe Video, Ariztical Entertainment, and Strand Releasing. Maria Lynn, in Wuest (2018) - former President of Wolfe Video - has realized that LGBT films have become independent genres, and have their own audience [11]. Regarding film distribution, Ramon Lobato (2007) provides an interesting view. He considered that the distribution of films can be studied from several aspects, especially from the economic-political aspects of the media, audiences, and culture. Lobato said that: (1) Distribution means dollars, because distribution is the most profitable segment of the film industry. Vast sums of money flow through distributors, and a large portion of these sums is retained in the form of fees, interest charges and profits; (2) Distribution frames reception, means that distribution determines who gets to watch films, under what circumstances, and why; and (3) Distribution inscribes cultural difference, because it has the power to fragment audiences along age, class, gender and ethnic lines, reinforcing certain differentials of power and creating new ones along the way [12]. Schauer explained that films with special segments must have the right distribution channels to convey it to the audience. Lobato has stated that film distribution is closely related to the economic and political aspects of the media and culture. Connecting the two results of the study, Nyasha Mboti and Keyan Tomaselli (2015) found an interesting fact through the results of their research, in which they revealed that there was a concept for distributing South African national films called *ReaGilè*. [13]. Thus, Gregory Bernstein (2015) lays out interesting opinions about the distribution of indie films. Bernstein says that the first step in distributing indie films is by self-distribution with the "four-wall" technique. The filmmaker can rent a home theater and open a kind of "mini cinema" to attract audiences. The audiences are the marketing tools of the film; if the film is interesting and gives a strong impression to the audience, usually the audience will pass it through status in their social media account. If the film becomes viral, and if the filmmaker is lucky, the film will be noticed by the film reviewers, who will invite the interest of the film distributors [7].

METHOD

The research in this article uses qualitative research methods, precisely descriptive-qualitative methods. The descriptive-qualitative method was chosen because the authors gathered facts about crowdfunding and four-wall; then afterwards researchers described the facts in a model that represented the situation in the field. Bajari (2015)

states that one of the criteria for descriptive research is developing concepts and gathering facts, describing precisely the characteristics of an individual, circumstances, symptoms, or certain groups [14]. In this research, the author uses data collection techniques in the form of interviews and literature study. The primary data source from this research is the result of an interview with Immanuel Prasetya Gintings, better known as Manu, founder and chairman of the Manu Project Pictures Production (ManuProjectPro Indonesia) or Production House (PH) Foundation as well as one of the filmmakers from Medan, North Sumatra. While secondary data sources come from books, journals, and websites that discuss crowdfunding, four-wall, promotion and distribution of indie films, and indie films itself. Purposive procedures are used in the context of selecting informant samples in research. A purposive procedure is carried out by determining groups of participants who become informants according to selected criteria that are relevant to a particular research problem [15]. A purposive procedure was chosen because of the suitability of the informants with the focus of the research. The criteria for the informants chosen were: (1) Film practitioners; (2) Knowing the management concepts of film production; (3) Ever or is currently a film producer; and (4) Ever or are using crowdfunding and four-wall as a film promotion and distribution technique. Because this research tried to uncover promotion and distribution strategies in crowdfunding and four-wall activities conducted by ManuProjectPro Indonesia, the key informant interviewed was Manu, the founder and chairman of ManuProjectPro Indonesia, at once a North Sumatra filmmaker who was also active in crowdfunding to finance the production of his films and four-wall as the distribution media of his films.

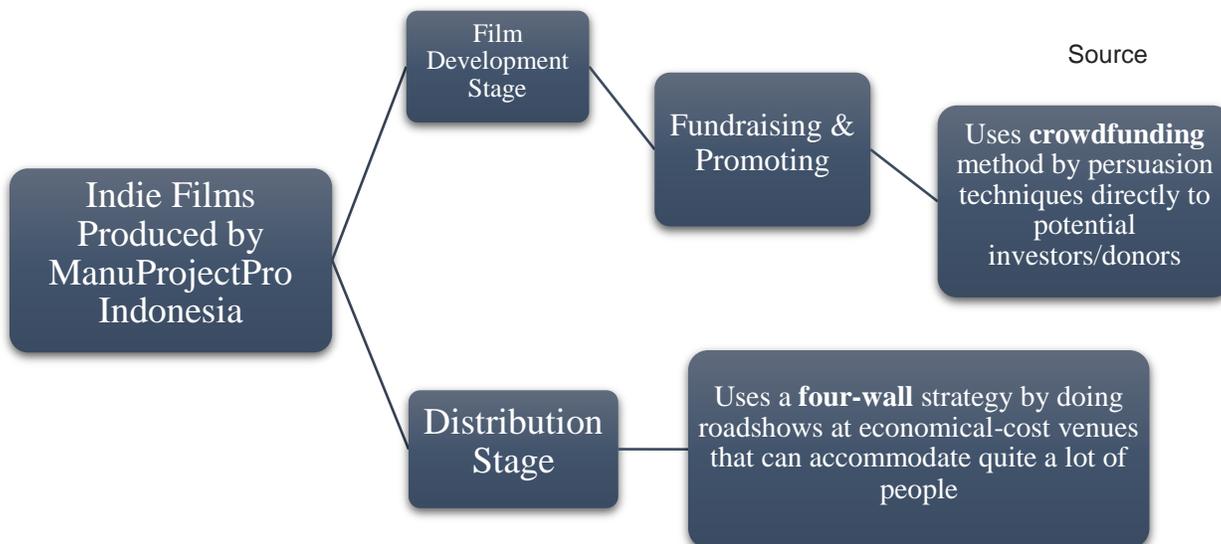
RESULT&DISCUSSION

Crowdfunding as a Strategy for Fundraising and Promoting ManuProjectPro Indonesia's Indie Films in their Film Development Stage Searching investors or donors for a film production project is a common thing done by film producers or production houses (PH). One method of fundraising is usually done through crowdfunding. Manu is one of the filmmakers who routinely uses crowdfunding methods for the film production cost. Crowdfunding activities conducted by Manu is mentioned in the following interview excerpt: *"If I want to make films, I usually do it by self-financing or crowdfunding. The cost of producing a film is from crowdfunding. There is no standardization on how much money there should be. I do it spontaneously if I meet people who can be invited, I offer the chance. If a person wants to donate, he can be a producer. I shall write his name as a producer, or at least, becoming one of the associate producers,"* [6]. One of Manu's latest projects that uses crowdfunding is his latest project on children's films. Manu is making a project for the production of child-themed films, and choosing producers and directors is all female. Manu also conceptualized film from culture, and he tried to implement culture in film. He promoted his project to several prospective investors in Medan and surrounding areas in the stages of pre-film production. Related to description above, James Moore (2011) state that one of the important things to know by an indie film producer is to whom he will offer the film project he will work on; or when

the film is finished, he must know, to whom he will "sell" the film, in other words, he will need knowledge of the audience [16]. Manu continued his statement regarding film financing and crowdfunding which he did. According to him, the cost of production (shooting in the field) was indeed a top priority in financing a film, because it usually costs the most. Furthermore, he revealed that in Medan in particular and generally in North Sumatra, prospective donors were more interested in contributing to long film projects. But again, there is no clear standardization regarding the number of donations given. As stated in the following interview quote: *"... money that comes out on average is for the cost of production. We borrow the camera, we borrow the editing tools, right? The fund is mostly for the crew to eat when we are shooting. The shooting time differs. If they are working on short films, we only need 3 days, but if they are in long films, then it is time to talk more seriously. Here it's hard to determine the rate for making a film. It depends on the guest. We can do it for 100 thousand or 1 million (rupiah) come on. There is no standard because they don't have standardization. Medan is still like that, generally, the case is still the same in North Sumatra,"* [6]. As seen in the interview quoted above, dialogue between donor seekers and potential donors in crowdfunding certainly involves a negotiation process. According to Bernstein (2015), the negotiation process (both initial negotiations and contract negotiations) in the entertainment industry, including films, often has end results that are difficult to predict. Furthermore, he revealed that deals in the entertainment world are often negotiated in a two-stage process, namely the initial stage (deal memo) then continued with the drafting stage; and money will always be a top priority in the dialogue [7]. A film producer must have good persuasion skills when he enters promotional activities which includes the negotiation stage in crowdfunding. Persuasion is defined as the use of symbols (sometimes accompanied by images) by one social actor in order to change or defend the opinions or behavior of other social actors [17]. Giles (2010) describes 5 stages of behavior change in the context of advertising, based on the concept of the 5 stages of behavior change from Carl I. Hovland (exposure, attention, comprehension, acceptance, and retention). Giles also stated about the credibility of the source which has a big role in changing someone's behavior in the context of promotion [18]. Related to Giles' statement, Joseph A. DeVito (2011) revealed that we can identify three main quality aspects of credibility. Competency refers to the knowledge and expertise that the speaker has in mind. Character refers to the speaker's intention and attention to the audience. Charisma refers to the personality and dynamics of the speaker [19]. So, a film producer or entrepreneur in a production house should have competence in communication skills. He also must be able to build himself into a professional with high credibility in his field, so that prospective donors or even investors can be "moved" to donate and/or invest their financial resources. Four-Wall as an Indie Films Distribution Strategy of ManuProjectPro Indonesia As state above, Gregory Bernstein (2015) presented an interesting opinion about the distribution of indie films. Bernstein said that the first step in distributing indie films was by self-distribution with the "four-wall" technique [7]. The four-wall technique can make a film to be viral. Related to "viral campaigns" or "viral strategies",

Jeffery C. Ulin (2014) has an interesting review. According to Ulin, in the digital era like now, viral strategies are increasingly popular because of the presence of the internet. This can be used as one of the low-budget promotional strategies. This can be done using websites, blogs, and teasers. A real example of the success of using viral strategies is the film *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) [20]. ManuProjectPro Indonesia used a four-wall media and roadshow to distribute films of their work to the audience. As a community that has just recently been formally established, its films have not focused on gaining profits, but only limited to introducing their works, searching and approaching potential investors. Manu stated that he still prioritized the production of short-duration indie films or a combination of several short films (omnibus). Therefore, ManuProjectPro Indonesia used the four-wall strategy and roadshow in their film screening activities. As he revealed in the following interview excerpt: *"From the written report yesterday, if I'm not mistaken, it cost around 12.5 million (rupiah) because of its location that was far from each other. We went up to Karo, Binjai with a one-month production. There are six film groups because it's not an omnibus. So there are six stories put together. Thailand has its film which is called Phobia, therefore Indonesia has Recto Verso. We actually took the pattern yesterday and the editing was like the Recto Verso movie. So, this piece of film is combined with other film pieces, so it's not ready one by one. So it's all combined. Even when people are watching, they get confused at first, right? "How come the characters keep on changing?" Well, I said, "watch first after that you can comment, typically a basic habit". I do think that people do not come to watch and appreciate a film but they come just to nag and criticize. Yes, it is all right, because we are used to it. We are fine at being nagged about our films. We actually want to find the one who does it deliberately. So that's our strategy when we play a film. Indeed, the best-selling places at the Taman Budaya because of the capacity of 300-400 people,"* [6]. Regarding the selection of the Taman Budaya venue, the recent distribution strategy chosen by ManuProjectPro Indonesia was by doing a four-wall strategy in cafes on roadshows. In addition to affordable prices and complicated procedures, cafes can also capture the masses and their capacity can be adjusted to the target. As illustrated in the following interview excerpt: *"...yeah, because the Taman Budaya cost cheap. All-in, if I am not mistaken for a whole day it only costs 2.5 million (rupiah). Cheap places are still our favorites. If there is another strategy, we usually ride in cafes. It is free, we only buy drinks at their place. Besides that, it's also easier to find the right segment in cafes,"* [6]. According to Ulin (2014), this "roadshow" technique was included as one of the niche campaigns techniques. Ulin argued that this type of promotion could be done as a follow-up effort in marketing a film in order to stimulate a more specific audience [20]. Based on the explanation above, the distribution strategy of the film used by ManuProjectPro Indonesia was fairly precise. First, they overcame the limitations of funds by choosing a place that could accommodate many people at an economical cost. Secondly, they also chose to do a film screening by going around from cafes to cafes. These cafes can be a place to find a specific segment for their films, even one day he might be able to get a permanent audience from their films.

It is also possible that in every film screening session that ManuProjectPro Indonesia does, whether it is the at Taman Budaya, in a café, or in another place, they will meet potential donors or even investors who are willing to participate in funding the projects they plan next. So, with this four-wall strategy with the roadshow method, ManuProjectPro Indonesia implemented the term "once rowing, two-three islands were exceeded". In brief, if described in a model, then the strategy carried out by ManuProjectPro Indonesia in promoting and distributing their indie films is as follows:



: Authors, 2019

Diagram 1. The model of promotion and distribution strategies of ManuProjectPro Indonesia's indie films

CONCLUSION

Indie films are films that concern more in the content and the filmmakers' expression rather than the profits gained. However, it does not mean that indie films do not require production costs or effective and efficient promotion and distribution strategies to get to the right segment; because indie films also have a special "space" for the audience. ManuProjectPro Indonesia, which is initiated by Immanuel Prasetya Gintings (Manu), is one of the indie film communities that uses these strategies. ManuProjectPro Indonesia uses crowdfunding as a fundraising method for the production costs of their films, as well as a means of promoting films in the stages of film development. They use crowdfunding by persuasion techniques directly to potential investors/donors. Whereas in the distribution level of its films, ManuProjectPro Indonesia uses a four-wall strategy by doing roadshows. They choose economical-cost venues that can accommodate quite a lot of people. They also conduct screening films by going to cafes. This is a way to introduce their films to the public. Theoretically, authors hope that the results of this research can contribute to the field of media studies, especially in film studies and film management studies. In addition, authors hope this research can be one of the references for broader and more comprehensive studies. Practically, authors hope the results of this study can be used as a recommendation for indie filmmakers in considering communication strategies that will be used in the context of the promotion and distribution of their films.

LIMITATIONS AND STUDY FORWARD

This study focuses on the use of crowdfunding and four-wall in the context of indie film promotion and distribution. Actually, far from that, both of these techniques can be used in the context of mainstream films too. If we look at a broader perspective, in the context of fundraising, promotion, and distribution of a film, there are a lot of techniques and methods that can be used by a film producer/production house, not just crowdfunding and four-wall. This research is expected to be able to spur researchers and other academics to explore and reveal

more about the topic of the promotion and distribution of films, whether mainstream films or non-mainstream films (alternative films). Further research can also take a broader context, for example about the use of conventional and digital media to promote and distribute films. From the results of these studies, we will find out the development of film promotion and distribution trends in one place, so that the results of their research can be utilized by film practitioners as a basis and reference in making their promotional and distribution strategies for their films.

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