

Independent Film Production Management in the Making of the Miniseries *Ndalem Ageng*

Hari Suryanto¹, Christina Liem^{2*}
^{1,2} President University

*christinaliem2000@gmail.com

Abstract

Independent films are cinematic works produced outside major studio systems, typically characterized by limited budgets and full creative control in the hands of the filmmakers. These constraints ranging from financial limitations to restricted artistic and aesthetic resources often become the driving force behind the creativity and passion that shape indie film production. The ability of independent filmmakers to adapt to their circumstances generates innovative ideas and approaches, such as the use of non-professional equipment, the absence of star actors, flexible shooting locations, voluntary or low-paid performers, improvised art and set designs, and film themes that do not necessarily align with mainstream market demands. Beyond the creativity that emerges during production, the spirit of solidarity, collective militancy, and expressive freedom contributes to meaningful experiential learning for members of indie film communities. Despite their limitations, these productions still adhere to fundamental cinematic principles. In today's digital era, the growth of indie film communities is further supported by technological advancements. Accessible audiovisual devices, editing tools, and distribution platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok enable wider dissemination of independent films through the internet, strengthening their presence and visibility.

Keywords: *Management Awareness; Creativity; Ndalem Ageng Miniseries; Independent Film; Film Production.*

Introduction

Independent films are productions created outside the industrialized studio system, meaning they are frequently financed through personal funding or supported by small collectives such as independent investors, grants, or private capital. These films are generally produced under limited budgets. At its core, an "indie film" refers to a work made beyond the major studio framework, which is why it is often associated with low-budget production. It is also widely regarded as an institutional counterpart or even an opposition to the mainstream Hollywood system.

Over time, the indie genre has evolved into its own cultural entity. Although many independent films share recognizable traits, there is no singular or definitive definition of what constitutes an indie film. As noted by Ph.D (2011):

"Indie refers to films recognized as independent within the cultural institution of American cinema, regardless of the budget, producers, distributors, directors, actors, or even the genre, theme, style, or tone."

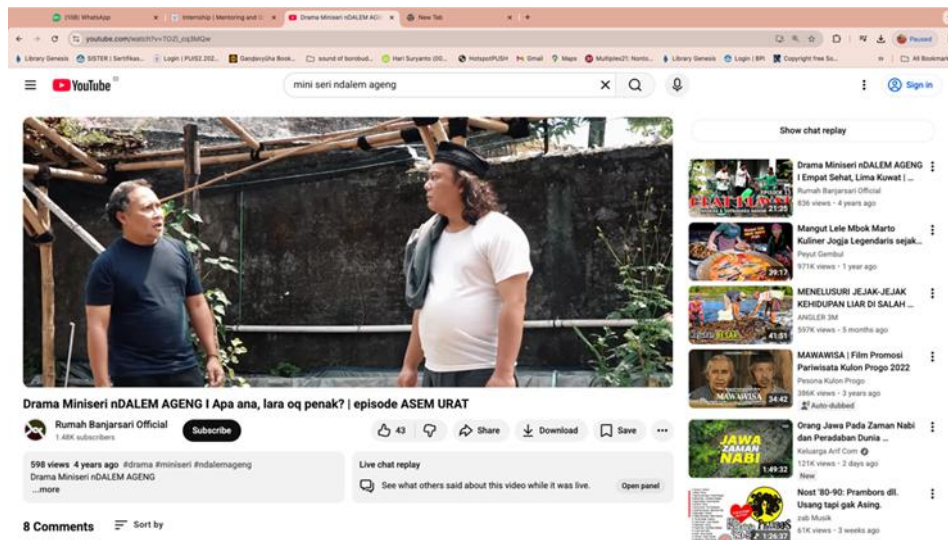


Figure 1.
Miniseries *Ndalem Ageng* at Youtube.

The Miniseries *Ndalem Ageng*, distributed through YouTube, represents this independent spirit and stands as an example of the creative and adaptive practices that characterize indie film production.

Literature Study

Independent cinema is distinguished by its strong emphasis on artistic exploration and a greater degree of creative freedom compared with industrial film production (Utami, 2025). Independent films serve as a medium through which filmmakers express their ideals (Paksiutov, 2021). Based on an analysis of independent film practices, several characteristics differentiate indie films from industry-based productions:

1. Themes Not Bound by Industrial Market Demands

Narrative themes in independent films do not need to align with prevailing commercial trends. Instead, they reflect the filmmakers' ideals, often rooted in intimate, culturally grounded perspectives that offer unique narrative insights. This closeness to everyday life and local culture produces strong expressive depth within the storytelling.

2. Production System

Independent film production typically adjusts to the technical and financial capabilities of its community. Funding is limited and generally derived from internal resources, resulting in what is commonly known as "low-budget" production. Actors in independent films are not required to be celebrities; they may be drawn from the community or selected individuals capable of authentically representing characters in the script. Equipment used in indie production does not need to be professional; filmmakers maximize available tools, borrow from peers, or rent equipment within their means. Despite resource constraints, the production process follows the same essential stages as industrial filmmaking: pre-production, production, and post-production. These stages remain crucial for achieving the intended cinematic outcome.

3. *Spirit and Creativity*

The spirit of collaboration and creativity is foundational in independent filmmaking. Shared ideals, collective commitment, and non-economic motivations foster strong group cohesion. These elements often encourage filmmakers to pursue highly idealistic themes. The resulting works may function as counter-narratives, critiques, alternative viewpoints, or expressive outlets made available through digital platforms. Indie films thus offer alternative entertainment and critical discourse beyond industrial productions.

Independent production is carried out autonomously without financial support from major studios or the commercial sector (Vlassis et al., 2025). Communities optimize their economic resources and facilities, transforming limitations into sources of creativity and solidarity (Olavarria et al., 2021). Challenges are experienced not as burdens but as drivers of innovation (Singh & Asthana, 2025). Alternative distribution channels: film festivals, community screenings, theme-based networks, and digital platforms play a central role. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook have become essential avenues for reaching diverse audiences in Indonesia.

Research Methodology

This study employs in-depth interviews and qualitative research methods to examine the social, cultural, and behavioral dynamics underlying the production management of the *Ndalem Ageng* miniseries. Qualitative inquiry enables the researcher to capture rich personal experiences, including emotions, motivations, values, identities, perceptions, and consciousness.



Figure 2.
Research Framework

Field observation was conducted through participant observation, allowing the researcher to obtain primary data directly from individuals involved in the production. This method provides an opportunity to generate new concepts or methodological insights by developing hybrid forms of knowledge through rigorous qualitative data analysis.

Results and Discussions

Independent film production management represents an adaptive strategy that empowers filmmakers to continue creating and sustaining their artistic creativity. Indie film production does not arise from economic or industrial pressures; rather, it emerges from the desire for creative expression and the pursuit of artistic existence. As stated in the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 33 of 2009, Chapter 3 Article 5, film activities must uphold freedom of creativity, innovation, and artistic expression while honoring religious, ethical, moral, and cultural values.

The growing number of indie film productions today is supported by the accessibility of the

internet and social media platforms such as YouTube, which function as distribution channels for filmmakers. Indie films are also disseminated through film festivals and community-based discussion events. Because indie filmmakers are not required to follow market-driven themes, the ideas presented in their works are often highly personal.



Figure 3.
Scene of Hesti and Yukus at the stall

Indie films also serve as cultural representations of the local identities of their creators and communities. They offer nuanced perspectives on social issues through narratives rooted in local wisdom and contextual sensitivity. The diversity of indie films available on YouTube and other media platforms reveals a wide range of viewpoints, showcasing different approaches to resolving issues based on local cultural contexts.

Cultural identity is inherently fluid. Artistic expressions, as cultural products, adapt to social and geographical environments. Consequently, indie films become dynamic cultural artifacts that reflect the evolving nature of local creativity.

Miniseries *Ndalem Ageng*

The term “miniseries” refers to a serialized audiovisual program consisting of interconnected dramatic episodes, either sequential or thematically varied. Initially broadcast through television, miniseries have evolved enabled by advancements in technology, media, and knowledge to reach audiences through digital platforms such as YouTube. Many creative communities have embraced this format, enriching Indonesia’s entertainment landscape through social media.

One such work is *Ndalem Ageng*, produced by the Wong Sorot Community under the Rumah Seni Banjarsari arts collective in Surakarta. The miniseries explores the lives of individuals who play significant roles in everyday society yet remain socially unrecognized. Characters such as:

- Sukir (parking attendant)
 - Lek Bon (gardener)
 - Noto (manager)
 - Yu Kus (manager)
 - Tyson (street vendor)
-

- Tinton (laborer)
- Rina (garment worker)
- Jogo (night guard)
- Lisa (Tinton's partner)

represent ordinary people whose essential contributions are often overlooked despite their profound human value.

The miniseries emerged in response to mobility restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Government Regulation No. 21 of 2020 mandated large-scale social restrictions to prevent viral spread across social, economic, cultural, and political sectors (Indonesia, 2020). In this constrained environment, artists from various disciplines, including literature, theatre, dance, music, visual arts, and film—joined together to sustain their creative activities. They agreed to produce a dramatic miniseries while adhering to health protocols, employing a limited crew and a single centralized location. This collaborative effort resulted in the production of 23 episodes of the *Ndalem Ageng* miniseries.

***Ndalem Ageng* Miniseries and Management Awareness**

Ndalem Ageng emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022, bringing together artists from theatre, visual arts, music, audiovisual production, dance, event organizing, and literature. Amid widespread disruption, the community formed *Ndalem Ageng* as a conscious act of resilience—to sustain creativity and prevent psychological decline during the crisis.

The series reflects marginalized everyday figures whose contributions sustain society but are socially undervalued. Its production relied on a “consciousness-based management” model, meaning that participation was driven by personal awareness, collective responsibility, and voluntary contribution. Members provided food, equipment, labour, and ideas according to individual capacity. *Rumah Seni Banjarsari* played a key role as both creative hub and logistical support.

This management system illustrates how production processes can be adapted to available resources while maintaining artistic integrity. Referring to Wattimena (2023), individuals with immersive awareness demonstrate empathy, compassion, and a deep sense of humanity. Thus, consciousness-based management in *Ndalem Ageng* extends beyond technical coordination that it fosters humanistic values, enabling artists to confront hardship and remain productive despite the constraints of the pandemic.

Conclusions

The production of the *Ndalem Ageng* miniseries adopts a consciousness-based management approach, in which each member clearly understands the collective circumstances and their individual capacities during the filmmaking process. This management model emerges from a shared sense of solidarity and a mutual commitment to sustaining artistic practices despite challenging conditions. The professionalism embedded in this production system is grounded not merely in technical competence, but in the collective awareness that guides members to respect, support, and collaborate with one another throughout the creative process. Professionalism in creative work is not solely defined by managerial proficiency; it is strengthened when accompanied by humanistic awareness, enabling balanced and thoughtful decision-making that enriches both the production process and its outcomes.

References

- Indonesia, P. R. (2009). Undang-Undang Nomer 3 tahun 2009 tentang perfilman. Jakarta: Republik Indonesia.
- Indonesia, R. (2020). Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia No 21 Tahun 2020. Jakarta: Republik Indonesia.
- Olavarria, D., Luzardo, A., & Díaz, M. M. M. B. (2021). Behind the camera: Creativity and investment for Latin America and the Caribbean: Learnings from conversations with key players in the audiovisual sector.
- Paksiutov, G. D. (2021). Transformation of the global film industry: Prospects for Asian countries. Transformation.
- Ph.D, M. Z. (2011). Indie: An American Film Culture (Film and Culture Series) . Wisconsin-Milwaukee: Columbia University Press.
- Wattimena, R. A. (2023). TEORI TRANSFORMASI KESADARAN . bekasi: Rumah filsafat.
- Singh, P. K., & Asthana, S. (2025). Financial Sustainability in the Film Industry: Challenges, Strategies, and Future Directions. IJSAT-International Journal on Science and Technology, 16(3).
- Utami, P. W. (2025). From a contracted market to an expanding horizon: an analysis of Indonesia's film production chain and accessibility. International Journal of Cultural Policy, 31(3), 284-299.
- Vlassis, A., Psychogiopoulou, E., Kandyla, A., & Sarikakis, K. (2025). Final report on the mapping and EU law of institutional models for the international promotion of the European Film Industry.
-