

## THE CHALLENGES OF THE PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND EXHIBITION OF “NOKEN RAHIM KEDUA” DOCUMENTARY FILM

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**Abstract:** As the result of a documentary film that highlights the meaning of Noken for the Papuan tribe, “Noken Rahim Kedua” experienced many challenges, both in the production, distribution and exhibition processes. This research aims to determine the challenges faced in the production, distribution and exhibition process of “Noken Rahim” Kedua documentary film. This research is a qualitative descriptive research with a case study research method that focuses on in-depth data collection interviews. In addition, the data analysis process in this research is using the Miles and Huberman model, which is divided by three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The research results show three important points. First, the production process of this film experienced various limitations, both in terms of time, costs, and personnel in the shooting process. Second, the distribution process of this film experienced many challenges because it could not be screened en masse because it was considered sensitive so there needed to be discussion during the screening. Third, the exhibition process is carried out through film festivals and screenings in alternative screening rooms.

**Keywords:** documentary; film; film production; noken rahim kedua

### Introduction

Film is a medium for preserving culture because it is considered capable of representing language, acts of communication, clothing, and cultural symbols (Permana, Lilis, & Indriani, 2019). One type of film that is often used to represent culture is a documentary film. In simple terms, documentaries can be defined as films about real-life—life is used as raw material, constructed by the filmmaker who then decides what to tell, to whom, and for what purpose (Aufderheide, 2007).

In the context of the mass media indus-

try, films cannot be separated from media economics—a study that combines economic studies and media studies (Komalawati, 2017; Doyle, 2002). Media economics combines economic studies with media studies, or more precisely, is a synergy of economic theory and application to media business (Doyle, 2002; Noor, 2010). As a science, media economics includes: journalistic activities, the news industry, film production, entertainment programs, printing, broadcasting, mobile communications, internet, advertising, public relations, media deregulation, media ownership, media market share, in-

lectual property rights, media competitiveness, media taxes, and other issues related to media (Noor, 2010). For every media company, total costs consist of two main elements, namely fixed costs and variable costs (Albarran, Mierzejewska, & Jung, 2018). For film production companies, fixed costs include equipment, sets, lighting, and other filmmaking needs, as well as costs for offices and business operations which can be said to tend to be expensive (Albarran, Mierzejewska, & Jung, 2018; Doyle, 2002). Meanwhile, variable costs include the labor involved in production, the cost of permits for filming on location, as well as the wages of different crews—related to talent (Albarran, Mierzejewska, & Jung, 2018).

Generally, the cost of producing a documentary film is lower than that of a fiction film. However, documentary films still require costs—which are certainly more expensive than producing other media, such as brochures or pamphlets—so documentary filmmakers often need investors or institutions to support them (Aufderheide, 2007).

The theory regarding documentary film funding is supported by the findings of a survey conducted by the Center for Media and Social Impact (CMSI) in 2018 regarding the documentary film industry which was attended by fourteen international documentary organizations, for example, the Documentary Producers Alliance, the International Documentary Association, and the Sundance Institute Documentary Program, whose total number of respondents reached approximately 550 professional documentary filmmakers (Chatto & Harder, 2018). The survey results show that the largest sources of funding for documentary films (Figure 1) come from grants (30%) and personal money from documentary filmmakers (22%) (Chatto & Harder, 2018).

On the other hand, getting production funds for documentary films is not easy, one reason is that documentary films have not been able to attract mass audiences like dramas or entertainment (Sorensen, 2012). Documentaries, despite their prominence, remain a minority taste—their audiences are relatively small (Winston, Vanstone, & Chi, 2017). Data in Indonesia in 2017 shows that documentary audiences that year only reached 110.6 thousand viewers - while horror films reached 14.8 million viewers, dramas reached 13.1 million viewers, and comedies reached 11.9 million viewers (Beritagar.id, 2017). However, the CMSI survey results also show hope—nearly half (around 48%) of documentary filmmakers believe that there are more opportunities for documentary makers now (from 2018 onwards) compared to the last two years (Chatto & Harder, 2018). In general, interest in documentaries in Asia is growing; for example, seen from the Doc World segment of the Hong Kong International Film & TV Market in 2018 which experienced significant growth—reaching 290 festival participants from 26 countries (Simanjuntak, 2020). In Indonesia, even though documentary films are not very familiar to Indonesian audiences, the documentary film industry is still growing (Pandangan Jogja Com, 2019).

Several previous studies have briefly discussed the economics of media and documentary films, including Komalawati (2017), Sorensen (2012), and Permana, Puspitasari, and Indriani (2019). Komalawati (2017) focused on the media economic of film in general, while this research mainly focused only on documentary film—specifically, the local one. Sorensen (2012) gives the perspective on how documentary films in England gained their funds, while this research specifically talks on how “Noken Rahim Kedua”

gained and used their funds. Permana, Puspitasari, and Indriani (2019) provide insights into local filmmakers, aside from those in Jakarta, sharing their hopes, doubts, and perspectives. In contrast, this study aims to offer a different viewpoint on Papuan filmmakers, who face more resource constraints.

Komalawati (2017) researched the economic harmony of film media and the quality of Indonesian film content based on Law Number 33 of 2009 concerning Film. In this law, films are stated to have a strategic role in increasing the nation's cultural resilience and social welfare; the film is a means of educating the nation's life, developing personal potential, fostering noble morals, advancing the welfare of society, as well as a vehicle for promoting Indonesia internationally; and as a tool for cultural penetration that needs to be protected from negative influences. The government has a responsibility to advance the film industry; One of the efforts made by the government is to hold national film festivals, namely the Indonesian Film Appreciation (AFI) and the Indonesian Film Festival (FFI). Films that are successfully nominated for film festivals are considered to have quality content. Related films can also still enter the commercial film industry by paying attention to the economic aspects of media, where films do not only rely on income from cinema ticket sales but also through other supporting businesses such as sales of merchandise, music, and product placement. So, what about the economics of documentary film media?

Revenue from documentary films is different from fiction films which tend to be more flexible. Sorensen (2012) researched the documentary film industry in England. It can be said that collecting and earning money from documentary films is not easy, one of the reasons

is that documentary films have not been able to attract mass audiences for dramas or entertainment. Apart from cinemas and festivals, Sorensen (2012) said that one platform that allows documentaries to find new audiences globally is the internet, either through film rental sites, subscription-based sites, or sites where viewers can stream and download films. The internet has also given rise to a new way of getting funding for making documentary films, namely crowdfunding, which is the micro-financing of individual projects and is served online by sites such as crowdfunder.co.uk, indiegogo.com, and so on. Crowdfunding sites are used by filmmakers to finance production and distribution.

The film industry is not only supported by big production houses. Several nominations at national and even international film festivals also come from the work of the local film community. Permana, Puspitasari, and Indriani (2019) researched the Indonesian film industry from the perspective of filmmakers from the film community in the cities of Medan and Berastagi, North Sumatra. The research results show that filmmakers in North Sumatra are motivated and enthusiastic about producing film.

On the other hand, filmmakers are doubtful about being able to compete in the national film industry with perceptions that are categorized as Jakarta-centric; partnerships with major production houses; implementation of broadcasting regulations that are not yet good; and film content that should have a more Indonesian nuance. From the Jakarta-centric category, national films generally only show the language and lifestyle of people in Jakarta. Apart from that, most of the film actors and film crew only come from Jakarta (or other areas in Java) even though the film in question tells about

non-Jakarta (or non-Java) areas. From the category of partnerships with large production houses, local filmmakers find it difficult to establish partnerships because they feel they need to have an “inside person” from the relevant large production house. Establishing partnerships with large production houses also means that local filmmakers need to agree on certain interests so they can challenge idealism.

In the category of implementing broadcasting regulations, filmmakers feel that national film distribution is quite complicated, especially if they want to be shown on the big screen (cinema). Apart from that, there are not many big screens in the area. Finally, in the category of content with Indonesian nuances, the filmmaker feels that Indonesia has a variety of cultures from various regions that are unique to Indonesia. For this reason, local wisdom (culture, folklore, and stories of daily life) needs to be explored further in filmmaking.

The documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua” produced by the Imaji Papua community is one of the local documentaries that can compete at the national film festival. The Imaji Papua Community was incorporated as a legal entity on November 10, 2020 (Imaji Papua, n.d.). Amid limited resources—crew, equipment, and financing—several documentary films by the Imaji Papua community have succeeded in entering national festivals, including “Noken Rahim Kedua” produced in 2019 to 2020 which passed the curation of the 2021 Indonesian Film Festival and was included in the nomination category “Best Short Documentary Film” (Anastasia, 2022; Imaji Papua, 2021).

The conversion of limited resources into a work that can compete on a national scale makes the author interested in

researching the production, distribution, and exhibition process of the documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua”. From an academic perspective, this research is important to carry out to develop the study of media economics, especially the economics of documentary film media. From a practical perspective, this research is important to carry out as an effort to elevate Papuan cinema and be a reflection that making Indonesian films that can compete can be done even with limited equipment and available funding. Apart from that, it can be a reflection of local documentary filmmakers in producing cultural-related documentaries in the future.

This research then seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How is the challenge in the production process of the “Noken Rahim Kedua” documentary film?
2. How is the challenge in the distribution process of the “Noken Rahim Kedua” documentary film?
3. How is the challenge in the exhibition process of the “Noken Rahim Kedua” documentary film?

## **Methodology**

This research is descriptive qualitative research with a case study research method. A case study is an empirical method that investigates contemporary phenomena in depth and in a real-world context; in other words, case studies are used to understand cases that occur in the real world (Yin, 2018). Contemporary phenomena (cases) that can be studied can be instances, incidents, units of something, or anything—people, organizations, events, decisions, actions, locations, or even nation-states (Denzim & Lincoln,



2018). So, documentary films are one of the units that can be researched using the case study method. In this research, the documentary film that is the case study is the documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua”—the economic aspects of the media will be examined.

The producer, director, and assistant director of the documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua” are the subjects of this research because the producer, director, and assistant director were involved in the production process up to the exhibition of the documentary film. Meanwhile, the object of this research is the production, distribution, and exhibition process of the film “Noken Rahim Kedua”.

Data collection was carried out by watching the documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua”, semi-structured interviews, and a literature study. Semi-structured interviews are included in the in-depth interview category which aims to find problems more openly (Sugiyono, 2019). In this research, those who will be interviewed are the producer, director, and assistant director. Literature studies come from news, books, and previous research on documentary films and media economics.

The data that has been obtained is then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model of data analysis—data analysis is carried out interactively and continuously until the data reaches saturation—with stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (verification). Data reduction involves summarizing, selecting essential elements, prioritizing what is significant, identifying themes and patterns (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). This process includes summarizing and creating memos. Initially, the researcher gathered information on the production, distribution, and exhibi-

tion process of the “Noken Rahim Kedua” documentary film through interviews and literature research. The next step is data display. In qualitative research, data can be presented through graphs, charts, tables, matrices, networks, flowcharts, diagrams, extended text, narrative text, and various other formats. In this research, the researcher presented the findings in a descriptive format—also adding pictures to support the findings. The final step is conclusion drawing, where the researcher draws conclusions that are relevant to the research questions.

## Result

The documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua” directed by Adi Sumunar and produced by Yulika Anastasia is one of the works of the Imaji Papua community which was successfully nominated for “Best Short Documentary Film” at the Indonesian Film Festival in 2021. This film highlights the meaning of noken in the daily lives of women in the Baliem Valley, specifically in Wukahilapok Village, Pelebaga District, Jayawijaya Regency, through the story of Mama Yowan’s daily life as a housewife who recently gave birth. Mama Yowan always carries a noken wherever she goes—from house to garden, mountains, market, and back home. Apart from carrying the harvest, the noken is also a place for Mama Yowan to place her newborn child, both when she is being carried and when she is placed on the bed as a substitute for a blanket. Through Mama Yowan’s daily life, this film invites the audience to understand the philosophical meaning of noken as a “second womb” where after birth, the child is “moved” into the noken until he is considered old enough. However, there are many types of noken which are then introduced to the audience through ex-

cerpts from interviews with several sources such as community leaders and book authors from Papua.



Figure 1. Mama Yowan and her daughter  
(Source: Imaji Papua, 2022)

Films progress through three primary phases: production, distribution, and exhibition. Production encompasses pre-production, production, and post-production stages. Distribution encompasses the dissemination of films across different platforms, while exhibition involves presenting films in both theatrical (cinemas, museums, film clubs, art centers, and festivals) and non-theatrical (home videos, screenings at schools and universities, the internet, etc.) settings (Bordwell, Thompson, & Smith, 2017).

The overall costs of audiovisual products, including films, can be divided into five types of costs, namely pre-production costs, artistic production costs, technical production costs, post-production costs, and distribution costs. Pre-production costs include script creation costs, as well as pre-recruitment of artistic and technical resources; Artistic production costs include the costs of wages for film directors and stars; Technical production

costs include costs for producers, crew, wardrobe, sets, locations, transportation, equipment, insurance, and so on; Post-production costs include post-production laboratory rental costs and editing costs; Distribution costs include costs for accessing certain distribution platforms as well as communication and marketing costs such as posters, trailers, and so on (Torre, 2014).

### **1. The Production Process of “Noken Rahim Kedua” Documentary**

In the pre-production stage, the director attempted to send a proposal for funding the production of the documentary film “Noken Rahim Secondly” which was certainly not easy to get approved (A. Sumunar, personal interview, 31 March 2022). However, the proposal sent by the director to the Archaeological Center was finally approved on the condition that the funds provided were only used for production costs and not transportation costs. From the producer’s side, accessing documentary film funding institutions can also be said to be difficult. For this reason, film funding is also covered by the income of the Imaji Papua community from other sectors, such as video, photo, reporting, and live-streaming services (Y. Anastasia, personal interview, 25 March 2022).

Relationships play an important role in crew search and funding. The main crew consists of four people, namely Yulika Anastasia Indrawati as producer, Adi Sumunar as director, Miki Wuka as assistant director, and Alfonso Dimara as director of photography (A. Sumunar, personal interview, 31 March 2022). Crews are not paid large sums for mutual agreement to collaborate (Y. Anastasia, personal interview, 25 March 2022). Apart from relationships, of course, the crew is

selected based on knowledge, experience, and ability. In this case, Miki Wuka is a native of the area where the filming is located so of course his understanding of the local environment is very good and Alfonso Dimara has worked at a TV station before so he has good knowledge and skills regarding technical camera operations (A. Sumunar, personal interview, March 31, 2022).

Regarding funding for equipment, there were no additional costs incurred because all the equipment was previously owned by Imaji Papua, including two cameras (one used for recording videos and the other for taking photos), four portable lighting units, and one tripod, one boom mic, one stabilizer, and one drone (A. Sumunar, personal interview, 31 March 2022).

Furthermore, at the production stage, the largest expenditure is in the transportation sector (Y. Anastasia, personal interview, 25 March 2022). This is because the journey requires land and air transportation over quite difficult terrain. The filming location is in Wukahilapok Village, Pelebaga District, Jayawijaya Regency, while the office location (or what is called basecamp) for Imaji Papua is in Jayapura. The film actor sector does not require a lot of money, because documentary film actors are not paid in rupiah but with necessities, areca nuts and cigarettes which are also given to the local community (Y. Anastasia, personal interview, 25 March 2022). To save costs and make the filming process easier, the crew chose to stay overnight at the village office because mobility was much easier (Y. Anastasia, personal interview, 25 March 2022).

Shooting time was limited, namely only one week with details: three days to approach residents and find and determine the shooting location, while the other

four days were used for the shooting process which could only start in the morning when the fog had fallen and efforts were made to finish before six in the afternoon (A. Sumunar, personal interview, 31 March 2022). Fortunately, the residents accepted it well and the language barrier did not make the filming process that difficult—Mama Yowan could understand and speak Indonesian even though it was not standard and not very fluent (A. Sumunar, personal interview, 31 March 2022).

Filming data (both audio and visual) is backed up during the production stage to ensure that the data is safe (A. Sumunar, personal interview, 31 March 2022) considering that the filming location is far from the office location and time and cost limitations make it impossible to get the filming process back. This is in line with the theory expressed by Bordwell, Thompson, & Smith (2017) which states that the post-production crew can work behind the scenes while the shooting (production) process is taking place.

In the post-production stage, the crew is also not paid large amounts of rupiah based on mutual agreement to collaborate. There were several additional crew at this stage, such as Hadi Surya as editor, Septina Rosalina Layan as music director, Fransiska Pigay as infrastructure, and Brothers Petrus Hisage and Vincencius Himan as translators (Imaji Papua, 2021). Then, there are no post-production laboratory rental costs because it uses existing resources. At this stage, what takes quite a lot of time is the process of translating regional languages and composing songs (A. Sumunar, personal interview, 31 March 2022). The song is unique to the documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua” which is a substitute for the narrative (A. Sumunar, personal interview, 31 March 2022).

## **2. Distribution and Exhibition Process of “Noken Rahim Kedua” Documentary**

At the distribution stage, Fajar Nirmana was tasked with designing the poster for the documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua” (Imaji Papua, 2021). Apart from posters, film trailers are also used as promotional media which are published on Imaji Papua’s social media platforms, one of which is via YouTube @Imaji Papua. From the producer side, a search was carried out for film festivals with no fees for submissions (Y. Anastasia, personal interview, 25 March 2022). Film festivals are a distribution option because they are felt to be able to open up the discussion spaces needed in watching documentaries (Y. Anastasia, personal interview, 25 March 2022).. The documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua” cannot be screened en masse because it deals with cultural issues that can be said to be sensitive, so there needs to be discussion during the screening (A. Sumunar, personal interview, 31 March 2022).

Finally, at the exhibition stage, the documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua” succeeded in making it to several film festivals such as the 2021 Indonesian Film Festival (FFI), the 2021 Bali Mahakarya Film Festival, and the 2021 Sumbawa Film Festival (Imaji Papua, 2021). This shows that the documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua” is a quality film—because it successfully entered the film festival, and even became a nominee (Komalawati, 2017) in the Best Short Documentary Film category at the FFI event. The income for the documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua” comes from awards from film festivals. One of the film festivals that provides awards is the Sumba Film Festival. Apart from film festivals, exhibitions are also held in alternative screening rooms, for example at the Nayak II Dormitory in

Jayapura, Papua, and at the “Documentary Film Production and Creative Content” Workshop which was held in Manokwari, West Papua (Imaji Papua, 2021; Imaji Papua, 2022).

## **Discussion**

During the pre-production stage, the director endeavored to submit a funding proposal for the “Noken Rahim Kedua” documentary film, a task that posed challenges in obtaining approval. This is in line with research conducted by Sorensen (2012) that collecting funds for documentary films is not easy to do; partly due to the fact that documentaries struggle to appeal to wide audiences compared to dramas or entertainment content.

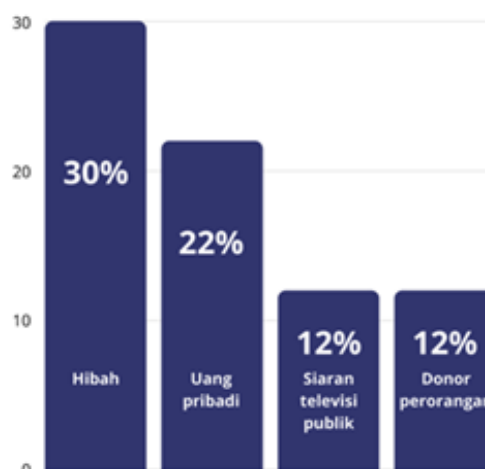


Figure 2. Documentary film funding source (Source: Chatto & Harder, 2018, processed by researcher)

Revenue from documentary films is different from fiction films which tend to be more flexible. Based on Figure 1, it is evident that grants and personal funds from filmmakers primarily finance documentary films. Even though the “Noken Rahim Kedua” documentary received some grants from the Archaeological Cen-



ter, they were insufficient to cover all production expenses. Consequently, the challenge lies in funding transportation costs using the filmmakers' personal finances and Imaji Papua's savings.

Besides the financial aspect, another challenge arose during the exhibition. The “Noken Rahim Kedua” documentary film cannot be shown to a large audience due to its sensitive cultural content, requiring discussions to take place during the screening. This obstacle hinders the “Noken Rahim Kedua” documentary film from achieving its goals in compliance with relevant laws.

The objectives of the film are stated in Article 3 of Law Number 33 of 2009 concerning Film, including the development and preservation of the nation's cultural values; recognition of national culture by the international community; as well as the development of films based on living and sustainable national culture. Therefore, how can “Noken Rahim Kedua” promote national culture recognition when it cannot be showcased on a large scale? Whereas, according to Komalawati (2017), local documentary films are expected to achieve this objective. Additionally, documentary films offer authenticity by incorporating real-life footage. Furthermore, “Noken Rahim Kedua” has been nominated at a national film festival as well.

The filmmakers of the “Noken Rahim Kedua” documentary film opt to showcase the film exclusively in venues that provide a platform for discussion, such as selected film festivals. This is actually in line with the theory put forward by Roy (2016) that film festivals, especially documentaries, allow individuals to obtain information in a supportive atmosphere which becomes the basis for exchange and dialogue.

Besides the obstacles encountered, the filmmakers of the “Noken Rahim Kedua”

documentary demonstrate that local films, beyond the usual ‘Jakarta-centric’ ones, can successfully compete in the national film industry. This finding could address the uncertainties of local filmmakers highlighted in the study by Permana, Puspitasari, and Indriani (2019).

In line with the perception of filmmakers from communities in South Sumatra regarding the exploration of local wisdom (Permana, Puspitasari, & Indriani, 2019), Imaji Papua continues to strive to explore local wisdom in Papua through its films. On February 22, 2022, Imaji Papua received an award from the West Papua Indigenous Community Institution (LMA) which was presented during the Documentary Film Production and Creative Content Workshop and Screening of the Film “Noken Rahim Second” in Manokwari, West Papua (Imaji Papua, 2022). Franky Umpain, as Daily Chair of the LMA, expressed appreciation for the good intentions and efforts of Imaji Papua to elevate Papuan culture through documentary films (Imaji Papua, 2022).

## Conclusion

It can be said that finding funds to finance documentary film production is not easy to do. Documentary films generally raise certain issues so they are not (or have not been) able to attract mass audiences like dramas or other entertainment. The same problem occurred in the documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua” which experienced difficulties in the process of finding funds—in the end, it received some assistance from the Archaeological Center, although most of the funds used came from the savings of the Imaji Papua community. Relationships and collaboration played an important role in realizing the documentary film “Noken Ra-

him Kedua”, especially in reducing crew costs. The documentary film “Noken Rahim Kedua” requires alternative screening rooms supported by film discussions to help viewers understand the philosophical meaning of this documentary.

This research certainly has limitations, for example, the lack of a detailed explanation of the challenges faced at each stage from production to exhibition, and there is no discussion regarding the development stage before pre-production. For this reason, future researchers can continue research in more detail and depth. Apart from that, research on the economics of documentary film media is still very rare. So it is hoped that future researchers can develop research on the economics of documentary film media with case studies of other documentary films.

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