

Popular Culture in Video Content on YouTube

Isabelle Christine Joemono^{1,*} Roswita Oktavianti²

^{1,2} Faculty of Communication, Tarumanagara University, Jakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding author. Email: isabelchristinee@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Popular culture means that the media can produce a form of culture, then the public will absorb it and make it a form of culture. The author raises the issue of how popular culture is in video content produced by YouTube content creators in Indonesia. In this study, the author aims to find out how the role of popular culture in the creation of video content on YouTube. The author uses qualitative research methods with interview as data collection techniques. In this research, interviewed conducted with the content creator of Jakarta Uncensored YouTube channel. This channel creates many videos about the lifestyle and personal experiences of young people in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. These contents are deemed to be sensitive or taboo by the general public, such as sex life, pre-marital relationships, and other adult-related questions. Popular culture is part of an industry that is packaged in a certain concept so that it attracts the interest of many people. The findings show that the sex-life content created by the creator done to provide entertainment, education and knowledge to the public as users of YouTube social media. This research also disclosed the viewer perspective.

Keywords: popular culture, video content, youtube

1. INTRODUCTION

YouTube is the largest online video viewing platform in the world. This platform is a video sharing website created by three former PayPal employees in February 2005. YouTube allows users to upload, watch and share videos. YouTube started as a technology start-up funded by a \$11.5 million investment from Sequoia Capital in November 2005 and April 2006 [1]. YouTube was founded by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim. The idea to form Youtube began with difficulties when sharing videos of a dinner party at Chen's apartment in San Francisco [2].

Today Youtube is the number 2 website with the highest traffic in the world, as the largest video sharing platform, Youtube plays a big role in popularizing many content creators and influencing global popular trends [3]. Proven as a job with a promising income, Youtube certainly has a significant impact on the quantity and quality of content produced every day. This directly affects the shift in the trend where traditional communication and information media such as newspapers and television are moving towards a freer and less rigid community platform. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Youtube proved to be helping many communities, especially content creators, to actively work and produce content at home, entertaining and encouraging many people during a quarantine period.

As the most popular media platform today, Youtube has been influence the movement of popular culture. Popular culture is the totality of ideas, perspectives, behaviors, memes, images, and other phenomena that are selected by informal consensus within the mainstream of a culture, particularly by Western culture in the early to mid-20th century and the emerging global mainstream in the late 20th century and early 21st century. With the great influence of the mass media which is now controlled by YouTube, this collection of ideas penetrates also affects the lives of people who are objects of popular culture.

Pop culture is part of an industry that is packaged in a certain concept so that it attracts the interest of many people [4]. The term "popular culture" emerged in the 19th century or earlier to refer to education and "culturedness" to the lower classes. The term began to consider the notion of lower-class culture separate from (and sometimes at odds with) "true education" towards the end of the century, a usage which became firmly established during the interwar period. The current definition of the term, culture for mass consumption, particularly originating in the United States, was used at the end of World War II. Its abbreviated form "pop culture" dates back to the 1960s [5]

The phenomenon of popular culture originated and developed in Europe. It is assumed that the culture attached to the lower social class distinguishes it from the high culture of the elite class. Popular culture is also often

associated with the term “mass culture” which is mass-produced and mass-consumed as well. Thus, local culture is a cultural product that is industrial, which is everywhere and does not require effort to consume it [6]

Nowadays, YouTube has become a part of modern human life. YouTube is one of the most influential social media and part of popular culture as it can be viral the content uploaded to its platform. Several phenomenons can be seen in how the Canadian singer, Justin Bieber popularly known through YouTube video, Korean PSY with a music video that makes the Wagon band dance recognize around the world, and the likes. This proves showed how strong YouTube content is as a means to disseminate popular culture. Therefore, it needs further research about what is the motivation of the content creators in creating the content?

Jakarta Uncensored is a YouTube channel that displays video content about the lifestyle and personal experiences of young people in Jakarta. The Jakarta Uncensored channel was created on February 6, 2020, and it has more than 99.000 subscribers with each video having a variety of viewers from 50.000 to 200.000 views. The content uploaded by Jakarta Uncensored generally involves various sources from various levels of social status who have ages ranging from 20 to 35 years. The informants on the video had agreed discussing these sensitive topic, so the whole video looked like a talk show rather than an interview.

In this study, researchers have conducted observations and interviews with the owner of the Jakarta Uncensored Youtube channel where this channel discusses and uploads content every week, records and explores the lifestyle of young people in Jakarta which is an existing cultural phenomenon.

Based on the background stated above, the researcher aims to formulate how and why a content creator decided to create sensitive content on YouTube platform. The objectives are to find out how the role of popular culture in the creation of video content on YouTube, a case study of the Jakarta Uncensored Youtube Channel.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

With the aim of learning more about the role of popular culture in the creation of video content on the Jakarta Uncensored YouTube channel, the author using a qualitative approach as problems relate to humans which fundamentally depend on observation. The research method that the author uses is a case study in the Youtube channel Jakarta Uncensored.

In this study, the researcher used the in-depth interview method to obtain the required data. The interview used in this study was a semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews are interviews that aim to discuss

issues more openly, the interviewees are asked for their ideas and personal opinions. Semi-structured interviews are more independent than structured interviews [7].

In conducting interviews, researchers had prepared a list of questions as instruments or research tools to facilitate the interview process. The researcher interviewed two (2) informants: Kelvin Rei, the owner or worker of the Jakarta Uncensored Youtube account identified as informant 1; Alma, a subscriber as informant 2.

3. FINDINGS

Jakarta Uncensored is a Youtube channel that showed content that is considered taboo by the general public, such as sex life, pre-marital relationships, and other adult-related questions. Based on the experiences told by female friends of informant 1, many of them are prejudiced because of their sex-life. When the topic being uploaded to Youtube, informant 1 had desired to tell the target audience, mostly millennials, that the disgrace they have faced is not a bad thing, but is a problem that has been neglected for a long time because it has never been discussed. Informant 1 puts a value or message that is expected to be used by Jakarta Uncensored viewers, but informant 1 as a creator does not feel that Jakarta Uncensored content is an educative channel. He tells the content merely the information to the viewers through YouTube. The informant 1 hopes that the channel as a means to promote content or products to the market, and to be the largest informative content in Indonesia in the long run.

3.1 Experiences and Stories

Considering that the topic uploaded to the Jakarta Uncensored Youtube channel is a sensitive topic that tends to generate controversy in the general public, informant 1 admits that there has not been a controversy spurred by its videos.

"My friends said that none of them are negative, so I don't know, or it might be I'm a man who's sometimes do not care, but my friends said that 'it is safe' - Kelvin Rei, a creator.

"I think the content and themes raised in the Jakarta Uncensored video are cool and sometimes relate to what I feel and what I hear from my friends. Today's, free-sex are more common in our social life, right. If it's controversial or not, I think it's relatable, a lot of people feel it and the content gives a new perspective." – Alma, a subscriber.

3.2 Content Creation Process

The majority of videos uploaded in the channel are podcasts or interviews are generally not planned. The process of video making itself can take up to 2 weeks.

The scheme for creating Jakarta Uncensored Youtube content usually starts with topic planning, where

informant 1 as a creator plays a major role in determining the topic. Then, the grouping of Jakarta Uncensored content has a season system or general category where each video will be divided into a sub-category.

“First, I have to invite people to be guests. I have to make sure the schedule. Then, I have to shoot, edit and revise many times. It could be more than two weeks. You know, I can't even make videos based on trends at that moment, whilst other channels can create 5 minutes talks and it's over.” - Kelvin Rei, a creator

The guest star or main informant of each video is a friend of informant 1. In addition, informant 1 invites informants who are deemed professional and can provide accurate information.

3.3 Jakarta Uncensored Content and Pop Culture

It can be seen that Jakarta Uncensored aims to provide information and clarification of sensitive questions discussed with informants in the form of podcasts, so the general public can hear confessions and stories directly from Jakarta Uncensored guests.

The purpose and function of Jakarta Uncensored itself can be felt directly by the social environment of informant 1. Implicitly, Jakarta Uncensored videos content have changed how an individual responds to an unknown topic which generally taboo or sensitive things.

"Personally, it's true that the content created by Jakarta Uncensored indirectly gives a lot of knowledge and tells you something that people don't know yet, so I'm like 'O, that's how it turns out', so it's easy to understand because the content relates to the same what we feel. Based on what I have noticed, there are many comments from the subscribers who are also speechless and grateful for getting new knowledge.” - Alma.

3.4 Against its competitors

Jakarta Uncensored is not the only channel on Youtube that creates podcast on the YouTube channel, in Indonesia there are several popular podcast Youtube channels such as Cretivox, Behind the Door (Deddy Corburizer), etc. However, informant 1 said that Jakarta Uncensored is differ from others Youtuber. The topic discussed in Jakarta Uncensored is considered to be too controversial to be brought into the public domain. Informant 1 will not change the content showed on its Youtube.

“Honestly, I don't really care when it comes to competitors, because the videos I make are too risky for a channel that's already big like that. Jakarta Uncensored is unique in its own way. But if, for example, Jakarta Uncensored has become a trend and continues to be a benchmark for pop culture, I won't stay from the roots. My subscribers have been watching my content for a long

time, and they won't the channel change the content only to follow trends instead of making trends. Also, I don't want to be forced not to make content just because of being judged by viewers.” - Kelvin Rei, a creator.

Popular culture is a culture that was born at the will of the media. It means that the media is able to produce a form of culture, then the public will absorb it and make it a form of culture. Popularity referred to here is inseparable from consumption behavior and the determination of the mass media towards the public who act as consumers.

According to Frankfurt, popular culture is mass culture produced by the culture industry for the stability and continuity of capitalism. Meanwhile, according to Williams, the word "popular" has four meanings, namely:

1. Many people like,
2. Types of lowly work,
3. Works done to please people,
4. Culture that is made by people for themselves.

Popular culture emerges and survives on the will of the media and people's consumption behavior. In terms of popularizing a cultural product, the media has an important role as a disseminator of information according to its function as well as forming public opinion or opinion which then develops into a uniform opinion and taste. This results in whatever is produced by a media will be accepted by the public as a value, in this case cultural value. The problem is, so far, popular culture comes with a stigma that this is a culture that tends to just create images without meaning, are shallow and not valuable. The power of the media in this case is none other than in constructing media reality, namely a reality that is constructed based on a system engineered by the media with the aim of one of which is to gain financial benefits from the public who consume all types of commodities offered.

The problem that the author wants to raise is how popular culture is in video content produced by Youtube content creators in Indonesia.

Jakarta Uncensored has many competitors who have the same concept. However, Jakarta Uncensored has a competitive edge that its competitors don't have, namely the courage to bring up topics that cannot be discussed in general so that they can be accessed in cyberspace. The content provided by Jakarta Uncensored is a relative advantage in creating a new phenomenon where prejudice, which was previously taboo to talk about, becomes open to the public where other content creators on Youtube are not brave enough to bring up a topic that is quite controversial.

One indication of popular culture is getting enough positive responses so that it becomes a trend. The response from Jakarta Uncensored content to audiences who consume content and how the audience views Jakarta Uncensored as an influence or influenced by popular

culture. Based on comments from the Jakarta Uncensored video, it can be seen that the majority of the public have a positive response to the content of Jakarta Uncensored.

Jakarta Uncensored has positive responses since the topics raised are indeed topics that the audience wants. However, Kelvin Rei as creator feared that in the future if Jakarta Uncensored becomes a trend, more and more individuals will consume Jakarta Uncensored and their views may clash with what is considered popular culture by Jakarta Undercover.

Experimental practice of innovation with actual conditions. So far, Jakarta Undercover has not had any significant consequences from creating controversial content. The response from the audience can be said to be positive and it seems as if the audience also wants to be part of the content by providing additional information.

Jakarta Uncensored creates a phenomenon where every consumer of the Jakarta Uncensored channel can discuss, share experiences and knowledge, and share opinions without prejudice.

Research conducted by Setiawan [8] highlighted that YouTube as a new media have shaped popular culture in Indonesia and brought significant impact in the character, behavior, and lifestyle. YouTube contents created realities and social change in the society through its opinion. This also one of the finding of this study. Youtube is a medium for disseminating information where information also helps to form a popular culture. The power of Youtube as a new media where the power of this new media can shape popular culture in Indonesia, the Youtube phenomenon in Indonesia and how it creates its own culture and how popular culture influences the style and type of content produced by Youtube content creators in Indonesia.

Sari and Oktavianti [9] did a research in the video clip content shared on the YouTube by Indonesian singer. They found that popular culture is dominated by the production and consumption of material goods whose creation is driven with the motive of profit. The cultural industry is directed by the need to realise value in the market.

Based on this research findings, it can be said that Youtube as a global or broad social media is a medium where every person or individual can express, educate, entertain, and disseminate information or culture. In this case, Jakarta Uncensored channel aims to convey different information and educate the audience indirectly through content created and uploaded through the Jakarta Uncensored YouTube channel platform. It is true that YouTube social media is a medium that has power or effective power in shaping a culture of a group or individual because in this era every individual is able and can access any social media including YouTube as a medium to find information, entertainment, and so on. In addition, with the existence of YouTube, this implicitly

affects the mindset and cultural patterns of each individual who watches content, for example content from Jakarta Uncensored which conveys various things such as sex education and experiences that have never been previously expressed by anyone who later delivered through the Jakarta Uncensored Youtube channel to be used as an education and knowledge for many people.

Based on the comments that the author finds in each of the Jakarta Uncensored video content, the author concludes that many viewers of YouTube feel the same way the creator feeling in the Jakarta Uncensored content. The topic abouts rape, toxic relationships and so on are more engaged with the audiences. The viewers commented positively and it can be concluded that the viewers felt that they had gained new knowledge, solutions, uniformity and other benefits due to the content on the Jakarta Uncensored Youtube channel is deemed not only entertaining but also educational.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Popular culture is part of an industry that is packaged in a certain concept so that it attracts the interest of many people. Social media is one of the results of popular culture that is widely used and utilized by many individuals, not only easy to access but also can be used by anyone, anywhere, and anytime. One of the social media that has become a popular culture is YouTube. Currently, there are many users of the YouTube platform who create educational, interesting, entertaining, and informative content. However, what determines a content creator to create videos depends on what people are interested in so that it can be called a part of popular culture. However, there is creator who creates entertaining and educational content through stories or conversations.

Video on YouTube that showed sensitive sex-life content could undermine the existing culture and people's behavior. It can lead to behaviors such as sexual harassment, rape, and so on. However, there are also many female victims who do not dare or cannot speak up or express it on the basis of fear and shame. Therefore, the channel uses this concept to be used as a lesson. The creator realizes that many people experience this and feel marginalized due to their past experiences. In reality, subscribers are lured with the videos uploaded as it provided knowledge and understanding to the public.

REFERENCES

[1]M. Helft and M. Richtel, "Venture Firm Shares a YouTube Jackpot," *New York Times*, New York, 2006.

[2]J. Claud, "The YouTube Gurus,"
<http://content.time.com>, 2006.

[3]A. Internet, "<https://www.alex.com/topsites>," 19 March 2021. [Online].

[4]J. McGaha, "Popular Culture & Globalization: Teacher Candidates' Attitudes & Perceptions of Cultural & Ethnic Stereotypes," *Multicultural Education*, pp. 32-37, 2015.

[5]M. G. Steinem, "Outs of Popular Culture," *Life Magazine*, p. 73, 1965.

[6]H. Subiakto and R. Ida, *Komunikasi Politik, Media dan Demokrasi*, Jakarta: Kencana, 2015.

[7]Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Administrasi*, Bandung: Alfabeta, 2010.

[8]Setiawan and Rudy, "Kekuatan New Media dalam Membentuk Budaya Populer di Indonesia," *eJournal Ilmu Komunikasi*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 355-374, 2013.

[9]J. R. Sari and R. Oktavianti, "Budaya Populer Dalam Pembuatan Video Klip (Studi Kasus Pada Video Klip 'Merakit' Oleh Yura Yunita)," *Koneksi*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 172-177, 2020.

[10]B. D. Ruben and L. P. Stewart, "Communication and Human Behavior," Pearson/Allyn & Bacon, Boston, USA, 2006.