

The Director's Role in the Production of the Biographical Documentary Film of a Deaf Individual Titled "Merakit dalam Sunyi"

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Abstract

The persistent inequality experienced by persons with disabilities in Indonesia is reinforced by limited informative media representation. Digital platforms such as YouTube are dominated by entertainment-oriented content, leaving minimal space for educational materials that raise awareness about the deaf community. This project seeks to address this gap through the production of "Merakit dalam Sunyi" or in English called Assembling in Silence, a biographical documentary portraying the life of Ria, a deaf online motorcycle taxi driver. The film aims to shift public perceptions, educate audiences about the capabilities of deaf individuals, and provide an informative alternative within digital media spaces. The production employed a conventional three-stage workflow: pre-production (research, script development, and planning), production (four days of field shooting), and post-production (editing and finalization). The resulting documentary offers an audio-visual depiction of how deaf individuals can work and live independently despite social barriers. The project concludes that documentary media can function as an effective instrument for fostering social inclusion by delivering both information and motivation to the public. It also underscores the director's central role in shaping the work from initial concept to final edit.

Keywords: Deaf Friends, Documentary, YouTube.

1. Introduction

Currently, Indonesian society is predominantly presented with television programs that are merely entertaining and sell dreams such as soap operas. Issues concerning family, poverty, corruption, and the environment are phenomena that are highly prevalent, yet these problems remain unknown to us collectively. These matters are even considered unimportant in our lives, despite their significant influence and direct impact on us. However, many people remain unaware of these issues (Permana, 2012).

One problem still experienced by the Indonesian nation is equality for persons with disabilities. According to Law Number 8 of 2016 Article 1, persons with disabilities are defined as individuals who have physical, intellectual, mental, and/or sensory limitations over an extended period, who in interacting with their environment may experience barriers and difficulties in participating fully and effectively with other citizens based on equal rights. People with disabilities are often interpreted as individuals who have physical limitations or are more commonly known as handicapped persons. In fact, disability encompasses various types, with physical disability being merely one among them (Ramdan et al., 2019).

Issues in the public eye that are currently rarely known and brought to media attention concern the limitations of deaf friends who are often looked down upon by the surrounding community. Discrimination against persons with disabilities frequently occurs by companies; this problem is caused



by companies not wanting to take additional risks, as they consider persons with disabilities to have limitations and lack capabilities. In reality, persons with disabilities are the same as society in general, but they have slight differences in adjustment; however, persons with disabilities typically possess special skills that are certainly equivalent to those of people in general (Sugiarto, 2017).

Winarsih (2001) argues that deafness generally refers to hearing difficulties with levels ranging from mild to severe, classified into deaf and hard of hearing. Deaf people lose their hearing ability and thus the process of information through hearing, whether using hearing aids where the hearing threshold is sufficient to support the information process through hearing.

In developing countries, deaf children and children with hearing impairments tend not to receive adequate education. Adults with hearing impairments also have higher unemployment rates. This is caused by difficulties in communicating with others and difficulties in understanding lessons, so that most deaf persons find it difficult to be independent and prosperous. In 2013, according to Riskesdas results, in Indonesia, specifically in NTT and Lampung, the rate of persons with disabilities, particularly the deaf, reached 2.6% with the highest prevalence, while the lowest prevalence was in the provinces of DKI Jakarta and Banten (Annur, 2019).

The lack of hearing ability experienced by deaf friends can result in several problems in life (Hayyu & Mulyana, 2015). Social interaction is one of the problems; they are not optimal in life and lack self-confidence, therefore social support from surrounding people is needed for deaf persons. Modern life has dominated Indonesian society to the extent that all needs in our lives can be fulfilled online; as a society, we must follow these developments. One phenomenon in this modern era is the emergence of a new breakthrough, namely online motorcycle taxis; this new breakthrough can provide whatever we need, ranging from passenger transportation, food delivery, and also goods delivery. In this modern era, the profession of online motorcycle taxi driver has become a considerable profession, with many Indonesian people depending on their livelihoods by working as online motorcycle taxi drivers (Tarmizi, 2018)

One company in the online transportation sector that has a breakthrough in employing “deaf friends” is Grab. Breaking the Silence is an innovative program from Grab that aims to provide opportunities for deaf driver partners to generate income; this program began in September 2019. A certificate of good conduct and a Driver’s License are requirements for deaf driver partners, the same as for driver partners in general. Because a driver’s license is one of the requirements for driving on public roads, in Law Number 22 of 2009 concerning LLAJ, Article 242, persons with disabilities who drive themselves must obtain a class D driver’s license (Harpini, 2019).

Based on the background presented above, the creator wishes to produce a documentary film titled “Merakit dalam Sunyi” or Assembling in Silence, which the creator proposes as a final project work. “Merakit dalam Sunyi” is derived from the word assembling, which means an action, existence, and experience, and Silence means the absence of any sound or noise, which can be associated with the condition of deaf friends who experience hearing limitations.

This documentary film will broaden public awareness that deaf friends can live side by side directly with other normal humans and live like society in general; despite the limitations they possess, deaf friends can overcome these limitations to change the perception of the general public regarding deaf friends who cannot live normally like humans in general. This documentary film will be shown on digital platforms such as YouTube, due to the declining interest in watching television in the digital era, especially among Generation Z who tend to watch YouTube rather than television.

This documentary film will feature an online motorcycle taxi driver who has limitations. Her name is Ria, a deaf friend who works as an online motorcycle taxi driver; behind her deficiency, she strives to earn a living to help her family’s economy. Ria has experienced many stories while earning a

living on the road, ranging from meeting many deaf friends in the same profession, being rejected by passengers who feel unsafe, to being scolded by passengers who previously did not know that Ria was a deaf friend. However, all of this does not make Ria give up on earning a living with the profession she pursues. With all her limitations, she works hard to live like normal society in general.

The creator is interested in featuring this online motorcycle taxi driver because she is a figure who can inspire other deaf friends to overcome the limitations they possess and continue to be enthusiastic in living life without thinking about existing deficiencies. Additionally, this can educate the general public so that they can accept deaf friends to live side by side in all aspects of life.

Based on the background, where there is a lack of programs that promote tolerance to be aware of social phenomena such as living directly side by side with disabled friends, one of whom is the deaf, the creator will produce this film with the aim of providing information, education, and entertainment. From the above problems, the creator formulates: "What is the director's role in producing a biographical documentary film discussing the deaf?"

To create a work, it certainly has objectives to achieve expected results. In this work, the creator as director has the following objectives: (a) To provide information that can change the general public's perception regarding deaf friends who cannot live normally like humans in general. (b) To provide education to society regarding the existence of deaf friends by presenting a program packaged visually to be attractive for enjoyment. (c) As alternative entertainment and attempting to be as attractive as possible to be worthy of being a program that can be enjoyed by society, especially YouTube program viewers.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Communication

In the book "Introduction to Communication Science," what creates the human desire to communicate with other humans is found in basic biological theory, which states the existence of needs between humans, namely the need to survive and adapt to life in their surroundings (Widiati et al., 2016)

2.2. Laswell's Communication Theory

In 1948, Harold Lasswell proposed the communication process and its functions in society. Lasswell proposed three functions of communication: first, surveillance of the environment which alerts members of society to dangers and opportunities in the environment; second, correlation of various separate parts of society that respond to the environment; and third, transmission of social heritage from generation to generation (Mulyana, 2008)

2.3. Film as Mass Communication

In communication, film is one communication system in the form of mass communication. According to Effendy (1993), what is meant by mass communication is communication conducted through mass media, for example using newspapers with wide circulation, radio and television broadcasts that can be received and enjoyed by the public, and films shown specifically for audiences who want to enjoy them because films are only available in cinemas.

2.4. Film

An audio-visual medium that tells about a particular story and a scene presented in the form of images is called film. Film as an art work, social cultural institution, and functions as mass

communication media made according to cinematographic principles with images and sound or only images without sound that can be exhibited (Anisti, 2017)

2.5. Documentary Film

The concept of factual film and documentary film that collaborate produce a documentary film work or in television programs called television documentary. Documentary films are widely made and have become a rapidly growing film industry in the world. Documentary films develop rapidly in line with technological advances and increasingly complex problems in human life regionally and internationally (Magriyanti & Rasminto, 2020).

2.6. Biographical Documentary

Biographical documentary film is a depiction of the life experience story of a famous figure or ordinary people whose life story is considered extraordinary, interesting, unique, or concerning. Biographical documentary films are mostly related to human interest, where the film content constitutes criticism, tribute, or sympathy (Pratista, 2008).

2.7. The Director's Role

A director is a person responsible for transforming words in a script into images and uniting them into a film. The director has an important role in this project from pre-production, production, to post-production. Thus, the director is fully responsible for all creative aspects of the film from the initial concept until it finally becomes a film (Sijabat & Darwinsyah, 2019).

2.8. Deaf

The deaf are individuals who have hearing limitations that result in partial or complete non-functioning of the hearing apparatus, so they cannot use their hearing apparatus in daily life. This greatly impacts daily life. The hearing impairment experienced by the deaf causes hindered language development. This is because to communicate with others requires language with clear articulation and pronunciation so that messages can be conveyed properly and have one meaning, so that there is no misinterpretation of the conveyed meaning (Winarsih, 2001).

3. Methods

The production of this documentary was carried out through three primary stages, following a standard film production workflow.

3.1. Pre-Production

Pre-production is preparation and planning; pre-production activities include three things, as follows: (a) Idea discovery; this stage begins and is discovered by a producer, conducting research, and the script is written by a writer who will develop the idea from research results, (b) After the idea discovery stage is completed, the next step is determining the shooting schedule (time schedule), perfecting the script, selecting talent, shooting locations, and the team. In addition, budget design and allocation plans are important parts of planning that need to be made completely and very carefully, (c) At this stage, it includes permits and documents required for production. Completing shooting equipment needed. All these preparations are best completed within the determined working time (Laksono & Atmaja, 2021).

Currently, the creator as director is working on the pre-production stage, including analyzing and developing the idea found by the producer. This idea is already in script form prepared by a scriptwriter; next, the director's task is forming a production team.

3.2. Production

Production (implementation), to realize what is already in the script into results in the form of images that match the story in the script. In the production stage, a director must work together with the entire team and sources during shooting. Important roles in the production stage besides a director are several people who are fully responsible for the course of production according to their respective work sections so that production results are as desired (Nyoman et al., 2020).

3.3. Post-Production

Post-production, the final stage from pre-production to production; at this stage, there are several steps. There is offline editing and online editing; offline editing is the first step with non-linear technique, which is editing using computers through special equipment for editing. The first step in editing is entering all images that have been recorded and passed the image selection stage into the hard disk. This process is called capturing or digitizing, which is converting recorded images into image sequences. Meanwhile, online editing is perfecting offline editing results, the final stage in the computer while simultaneously combining it with illustrative music or image and sound effects that must enter the story. After everything is perfect, online results are then re-entered into files that have become complete image form (Nyoman et al., 2020).

3.4. Production Evaluation

The production evaluation of the documentary film “Merakit dalam Sunyi” is not a perfect documentary film in the production process stage. There are still many things that need to be improved better. In the pre-production stage, the creator as director should conduct more in-depth research and create a list of images to be taken and a more complete flow to facilitate shooting execution and minimize the possibility of missing images. Besides that, in the production stage, the director should also create a complete team so that all work is not entirely borne by the creator as producer and director; for example, carrying shooting equipment will be easier and the equipment brought will be more complete if there is a team. When production is ongoing, attention should be paid to all equipment used; during shooting, ensure all cameras have the same color to produce images with the same color. In the post-production section, the director must be consistent with the flow established from the beginning; if there are changes, they should be confirmed first so that during editing, too much time is not wasted due to repeated revisions. Besides that, the selection of background sound, color, font type, and graphics also has complexity.

4. Results and Discussion

The production of the documentary film “Merakit dalam Sunyi” was conducted based on analyzed data. Many programs on social media, especially YouTube, are dominated by various entertainment programs; certainly, there are still very few programs that display a phenomenon that is actually very close to us and we are not aware of; one example is the phenomenon about the struggle of a person with disability, namely a deaf friend, to continue their life with all their limitations.

In documentary film production, there are several steps ranging from pre-production → production → post-production. The pre-production sequence consists of various work done before starting image capture in film production, such as scenario writing, budgeting, and scheduling.

At this stage, the creator as producer and director prepares all production needs, from ideas and concepts, research, location hunting, title, production team, production schedule, and funding so that all production needs can be met.

Table 1 outlines the three-day filming schedule, detailing the dates, times, locations, and specific activities undertaken to capture the informant's life as an online motorcycle taxi driver in Jakarta.

Table 1. Production Schedule

No.	Date	Time	Location	Activity
1	6 September 2021	06.00-08.00 08.00-10.00 10.00-14.00 14.00-16.00	Informant's Residence Jakarta Streets	1) Briefing with the informant and team before starting the filming. 2) Filming the informant's activities at home with her family. 3) Filming the interview with the informant's husband. Filming the informant while working as an online motorcycle taxi driver.
2	7 September 2021	10.00-11.00 13.00-14.00	Driver Basecamp	Filming the informant with fellow drivers. Shooting the interview with her fellow driver.
3	9 September 2021	08.00-17.00	Jakarta City	Filming establishing shots around Jakarta.

Source: Author, 2025

The initial budget estimation for the documentary film is presented in Table 2, breaking down the projected costs for pre-production, production, and post-production phases.

Table 2. Budget Estimation

Budget Estimate	Days	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Pre-Production				
Meeting with Informant	1 day	2	Rp 30,000	Rp 60,000
Project Briefing	2 days	5	Rp 30,000	Rp 150,000
Sub Total				Rp 210,000
Production				
Consumption	3 days	5	Rp 40,000	Rp 600,000
Camera Set	3 days	2	–	–
Lighting	3 days	2	Rp 150,000	Rp 900,000
Lens	3 days	1	Rp 200,000	Rp 600,000
Clip-On Microphone	2 days	1	Rp 150,000	Rp 150,000
Tripod	3 days	2	Rp 50,000	Rp 300,000
Sub Total				Rp 2,550,000
Post-Production				
Editing and Graphics	–	–	–	Rp 500,000
Sub Total				Rp 500,000
Unexpected Costs				Rp 1,000,000
Total Cost				Rp 7,910,000

Source: Author, 2025

Table 3 displays the final realized budget, showing the actual costs incurred during the project's execution and allowing for a direct comparison with the initial estimates.

Table 3. Budget Realization

Budget Estimate	Days	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Pre-Production				
Meeting with Informant	1 day	2	Rp 30,000	Rp 60,000
Project Briefing	2 days	5	Rp 30,000	Rp 150,000

Sub Total				Rp 210,000
Production				
Consumption	3 days	5	Rp 40,000	Rp 600,000
Camera Set	3 days	2	–	–
Lighting	3 days	2	Rp 150,000	Rp 900,000
Lens	3 days	1	Rp 200,000	Rp 600,000
Clip-On Microphone	2 days	2	Rp 150,000	Rp 300,000
Tripod	3 days	2	Rp 50,000	Rp 300,000
Sub Total				Rp 2,100,000
Post-Production				
Editing and Graphics	–	–	–	Rp 500,000
Sub Total				Rp 500,000
Unexpected Costs				Rp 1,000,000
Total Cost				Rp 4,310,000

Source: Author, 2025

In production, the creator as director and producer directs the entire team during production, from production schedule efficiency, directing the camera person during image capture, and conducting interviews with sources. This stage requires 4 days for producing the documentary film “Merakit dalam Sunyi.” Figure 1 presents a selection of still frames captured during production, offering a visual glimpse into the documentary’s content and cinematic style.



Figure 1. Several Images from the Film

Subsequently, in the post-production stage is image editing. This editing stage involves cooperation between the director and editor. Figure 2 shows the editing timeline interface, illustrating the structure and assembly of video and audio clips during the post-production phase.

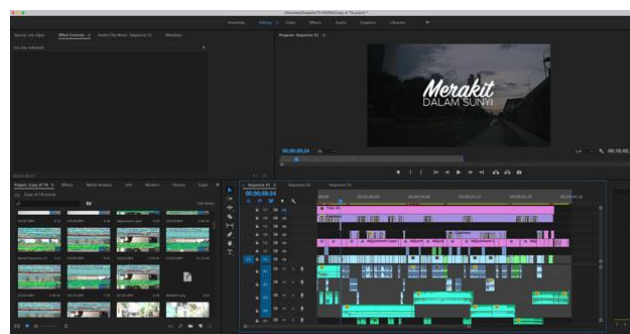


Figure 2. Editing Timeline Display

5. Conclusion

The documentary film work “Merakit dalam Sunyi” is a documentary program that provides alternative information and education to Indonesian society, especially viewers of digital programs on the YouTube platform. The background of this documentary film is that the creator observes many Indonesian people who are less aware of the existence of deaf friends around them; this may be because the physical condition of a deaf friend is not physically visible as they resemble normal humans in general. In this final project, the creator produces an audio-visual program. The creator serves as producer, director, scriptwriter, and editor. As director, they are fully responsible for the overall implementation of this documentary film production, and the creator creates a production work plan that includes selecting shooting locations, scheduling, and directing the entire team and talent involved during the pre-production stage.

In the production process, the creator is involved as director, tasked with directing the camera person to capture images according to the script and with the desired shooting angles. The creator as director of the documentary film “Merakit dalam Sunyi” aims to provide a program packaged attractively to become an educational, informative, and motivating program for Indonesian society.

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