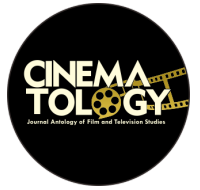




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Rebranding Indonesian Films Through the Diffusion of Innovation Theory

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the stagnation in terms of genre and plot in the Indonesia film industry. At this time, the Indonesian film industry is still dominated by the horror genre with repetitive plot structures. Through a qualitative research approach, we incorporate the data from website Film Indonesia and audience responses on social media using Diffusion of Innovation Theory (2003) by Everett Rogers that include five attributes: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. This research successfully indicates the dominance of the horror genre and linear repetitive plots. Nevertheless, this research argues that Diffusion of Innovation Theory provides a useful framework for guiding the rebranding of Indonesian films.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian film industry has experienced stagnation in terms of genre and plot in recent years. It can be seen from the genres that are frequently produced in the Indonesian film industry, especially the dominance of horror films. Undeniably, horror films have contributed to the success of the Indonesian film industry. According to Film Indonesia, a website that tracks the number of viewers, shows that the second most watched Indonesian film is “KKN di Desa Penari (2022)”, with a total of 10.061.033 viewers. Followed by, “Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion” in the 5th, “Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari” in 8th, and “Sewu Dino” in 10th. This dominance reveals the popularity of horror films among the Indonesian audiences. However, does this dominance make the Indonesian film industry grow?

This dominance limits the opportunities of the Indonesian film industry to grow, because the audiences only recognize the horror films and creates a stereotype that Indonesian films are only about horror. The Indonesian film industry must adapt to something new in terms of genre and plot, so we can compete with other countries' film industries such as Hollywood, K-dramas, etc. Other countries' film industries are not afraid to try something new, like combining different genres and creating unique plots. In contrast, the Indonesian film industry still seems afraid to try something new. Nevertheless, there is one Indonesian film that challenges this film industry, which is “Jumbo (2025)”. “Jumbo (2025)” holds the first position in the Film Indonesia website, with a total of 10.218.708 viewers. With a new image in terms of genre and plot and better production, “Jumbo (2025)” was successfully recognised in other countries. This success reveals that the Indonesian film industry still has opportunities to grow and challenge the stereotype.

This research employs the Diffusion of Innovation Theory to understand how, why, and at what new ideas and technology spread within a society over time. In addition, this research aims to analyze how Diffusion of Innovation Theory guided the rebranding of Indonesian films in genre and plot stagnation and to examine how genre and plot innovations be diffused to support the rebranding of Indonesian films. Based on these objectives, this research aims to answer the following research questions: (1) how Diffusion of Innovation Theory guided the rebranding of Indonesian films in genre, and (2) plot stagnation and how genre and plot innovations be diffused to support the rebranding of Indonesian films. To contextualize this approach, previous studies on Indonesian cinema have explored genre preferences, audience responses, and innovation, which provide a foundation for understanding the need for rebranding in Indonesian films.

Several studies have discussed the development of Indonesian films through different perspectives. One study shows that audience preferences are strongly shaped by film attributes, with genre being the most influential factor, suggesting the need for more diverse genres in Indonesian cinema (Rizky & Stellarosa, 2017). Other studies note that the essay film is a genre that has not yet been widely introduced in Indonesian cinema, indicating the need for further exploration and development within this genre (Achnas, 2025). Another research argues that films should be both entertaining and educational, especially because youth representation can deliver moral messages and social values (Rahmawati & Dewi, 2023). In addition, studies show that film viewing is highly popular among teenagers, with diverse genre preferences, highlighting the importance of understanding youth audiences in the development of Indonesian cinema (Tyas, 2022). A study on film distribution highlights that success is not only determined by production quality but also by strong digital and cinema distribution supported by government policies (Iswahyuningtyas & Fadjar H, 2021). Meanwhile, research on Indonesian web series finds that romance themes dominate and

character portrayals often become stereotypical, showing the need for more innovative storytelling (Srimayasandy & Pathia, 2023).

Other studies suggest that repetitive narrative structures vary across genres and influence both plot development and moral implications, meaning repetition can shape how stories and values are presented (Shaham, 2013). Similarly, research on Indonesian horror films shows that repetitive narratives can still reveal cultural meanings and support cultural preservation through urban legends (Tiwahyupriadi & Ayuningtyas, 2020). Another research on women's representation in films emphasizes how female characters are often objectified due to economic and political interests, which contributes to ongoing gender inequality (Ayun, 2015), a pattern that is also visible in popular films such as *Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari*. In contrast, other studies argue that certain film genres can function as tools for social justice by shaping public opinion and providing more space for underrepresented groups through participatory and technology-driven storytelling (Napitulu, 2025). However, few studies specifically examine rebranding as a strategic effort to address this monotony by connecting genre repetition and representation issues, which becomes the focus of this research.

2. METHODS

This study is using a qualitative research approach to analyze genre and plot stagnation in Indonesian films, and also to explore how innovation is adopted within the film industry. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it shows depth analysis of meaning, patterns, and audience interpretations rather than numerical statements. This study is applying a qualitative content analysis. This method is used to identify recurring themes, narrative structures, and genre patterns in Indonesian mainstream films. Qualitative content analysis is chosen because it helps to examine how certain genres and plot formulas become dominant, also how innovation emerges and is resisted within industry. This study chose four Indonesian films released between 2022 and 2025 as primary case studies. The films were chosen using purposive sampling because they represent different positions within the Indonesian film industry in relation to genre dominance and innovation.

- Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion (2022) and *Vina* (2024) represent dominant horror films with conventional narrative structures.
- *Jumbo* (2025) represents a successful genre and narrative innovation.
- *Merah Putih: One For All* (2025) represents an attempt at innovation that was not successfully received by audiences.

These films were selected to allow a comparative analysis between dominant genres, successful innovation, and unsuccessful innovation in Indonesian cinema. The data for this analysis are collected from multiple sources such as selection of recent Indonesian films and audience responses on social media. Audience responses were gathered from publicly accessible online platforms and selected based on their relevance to discussion of genre, narrative quality, and innovation. The data were used to capture general audience perceptions rather than individual audience behavior. The data were analyzed following Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory (2003). The analysis is focused on identifying the patterns of genre dominance, narrative structure (linear and non-linear), also levels of innovation in plot and genre. This theory has five attributes of innovation, which are relative advantage, compatibility, complexity trialability, and observability, and were used as analytical categories to examine how genre and plot innovations were introduced, perceived, and adopted by audiences. Each film was analyzed based on these attributes to explain why certain innovations were accepted while others were resisted in the Indonesian film industry.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results and discussion regarding selected Indonesian films that show clear patterns in the use of genre, plot, and audience response. Horror films such as *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion* (2022) and *Vina* (2024) continue to dominate Indonesian cinema, with both films using linear narratives focused on the storyline. Audiences responded positively to *Pengabdi Setan 2*, particularly praising its storytelling strength and cinematography. In contrast, *Vina* received more critical feedback, as many viewers questioned the depth of its narrative and the ethical sensitivity in depicting real tragedies. Various patterns emerge in films that attempt to innovate. *Jumbo* (2025) presents an adventure-fantasy genre with a non-linear narrative focusing on characters, generally regarded as a fresh and engaging film. Many viewers appreciate the quality of the animation, the relatable story, and cultural representation. Meanwhile, *Merah Putih: One For All* (2025) was promoted as an animated film with a nationalism theme, but it received largely negative responses from the public. People criticized the poor animation quality and lack of narrative coherence, causing the film to fail at the box office. Overall, these results indicate that genre and plot stagnation are still common in Indonesian films, while audience responses tend to be more positive when innovation is clearly executed and effectively presented. The following discussion is presented in the table showing the differences in results regarding the plot and genre that answer the research questions that have been made. The analysis consists of viewers' opinions on the monotonous genre and plot, which require innovation, and film analysis based on diffusion theory.

Genre and Plot Stagnation in Indonesian Films

This analysis presents information and audience responses regarding the genre and plot of selected films. This analysis addresses the first research question, which is: How can the Diffusion of Innovations Theory guide the rebranding of Indonesian films that are experiencing stagnation in genre and storyline? To begin, the following table summarizes information about these films and audience responses.

Table 1.

Film	Year	Dominant Genre	Plot Pattern	Innovation Level	Audience Response
Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion	2022	Horror	Linear, plot-driven	High	The film received positive audience responses, particularly regarding the narrative quality and cinematography. However, audiences still compare it to the first "Pengabdi

					Setan” and many of them say the first one is still better.
Vina	2024	Horror	Linear, plot-driven narrative	Low	Many viewers criticized the film for exploiting a real tragedy, lacking sensitivity, and prioritizing commercial gain over meaningful storytelling. Some audiences also felt the horror elements were forced and did not add depth to the story.
Jumbo	2025	Adventure/Fantasy	Non-linear, character-driven narrative	High	Audience responses to Jumbo (2025) were largely positive. Viewers praised the high-quality animation, relatable storyline, and strong representation of Indonesian local culture, while also noting that the film was easy to understand and suitable for family audiences.

Merah Putih: One For All	2025	Adventure, Animation, Nationalism, Family	Linear, message-driven narrative	Low	The film received largely negative responses from audiences, particularly regarding the quality of the animation and the coherence of the story.
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Table 1 summarizes the dominant genres, plot patterns, levels of innovation, and audience responses of the selected Indonesian films. The table highlights the dominance of horror films with linear narratives, indicating genre and plot stagnation, while also showing that innovation can receive positive and negative audience responses depending on its execution. The findings presented in Table 1 highlight clear reasons why rebranding is necessary in the Indonesian film industry, especially in terms of genre and storyline development. One of the most prominent patterns is the strong dominance of the horror genre. Films such as *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion* and *Vina* show how horror remains the main genre being produced and promoted. Although this genre previously attracted large audiences, the repetition of similar themes and narrative approaches shows that Indonesian cinema has become heavily dependent on horror. This dominance limits genre diversity and reinforces the perception that Indonesian films lack variety.

In addition to genre dominance, Table 1 also shows a pattern of narrative stagnation. Most of the films analyzed use linear narratives driven by plot and follow predictable story structures. Although this narrative style is easy to follow, its repetitive use reduces authenticity and limits creative exploration. On the other hand, *Jumbo* adopts a character-driven, non-linear narrative, which sets it apart from the dominant plot. Importantly, this difference does not confuse the audience; on the contrary, it is positively received and shows that audiences are able to interact with more complex and diverse narrative structures when they are clearly executed.

The difference in terms of genre and plot in *Jumbo* clearly shows that *Jumbo* adapts to something new that leads to a high innovation level. This high level of innovation has created a new turning point for the Indonesian film industry, which can be seen from the audiences. *Jumbo*'s audiences praised the high-quality animation such as character design with unique characteristics, color grading, lighting, and style consistency. Then, audiences also praised the relatable storyline that perfectly reveals Indonesian local culture, for example in *gotong royong* scene. Lastly, the simple conflict that combines with rich moral values makes this film easy to understand for audiences, both children and adults.

From this analysis we can conclude that Diffusion of Innovation Theory helps reveal and explain the genre and plot stagnation in the Indonesian film industry. The domination of the horror genre and linear plot strengthens this condition. However, the presence of *Jumbo*, a new film with high innovation level suggests that rebranding Indonesia films can be possible when innovation that is introduced align with cultural compatibility and narrative

accessibility. It highlights that the success of rebranding depends on the strategy, such as compatibility and accessibility, so audiences can adapt to the new genre and plot beyond the stagnation.

Table 2.

Title	Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion	Vina	Jumbo	Merah Putih One For All
Genre	Horror	Horror	Adventure/Fantasy	Adventure, Animation, Nationalism, Family
Relative Advantage	Moderate	Low	High	Low
Compatibility	High	Moderate	High	Moderate
Complexity	Moderate	Low	Low	High
Trialability	High	High	High	Moderate
Observability	High	High	High	High

Table 2 presents an analysis of the selected films based on the five attributes of Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory, including relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. The table shows that genre and plot innovations are more likely to be accepted when they offer clear advantages, align with audience expectations, remain easy to understand, and are highly visible to the public.

Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion

In terms of relative advantage, Pengabdi Setan 2 is categorized as moderate level. This film does not introduce a new genre, but it enhances the scale, atmosphere, and storytelling quality compared to many other Indonesian horror films. This improvement provides a better viewing experience for the audience, even without strong innovation. In terms of compatibility, this film is categorized as high level. Horror is an established and popular genre in Indonesia, and the themes presented in this film align well with audience expectations. As a result, viewers can easily connect with the story and accept it as part of mainstream film culture. In terms of complexity, this film is categorized as moderate level. The narrative follows a generally linear structure, but the extended plot and many characters require viewers to pay closer attention. Nevertheless, the story remains understandable and does not cause significant confusion. In terms of trialability, this film is categorized as high level, as it is easy for viewers to try watching the film without requiring prior knowledge or special preparation. Familiar genres and easily accessible narratives encourage viewers to

engage with the film. In terms of observability, this film is categorized as high level. Pengabdi Setan 2 gained strong visibility through box office success, widespread discussion among audiences, and media attention. Its impact on the public is clear and easily observable.

Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari

In terms of relative advantage, Vina is categorized at a low level. This film heavily relies on common horror conventions and does not introduce significant improvements in storytelling or genre development. As a result, viewers do not see this film as anything new compared to existing horror films. In terms of compatibility, this film is categorized as moderate level. Although horror as a genre is familiar to Indonesian audiences, the depiction of real-life tragedies in this film causes discomfort for many viewers. This reduces emotional acceptance, even though the genre itself remains recognizable. In terms of complexity, this film is categorized as low level. The storyline is easy to follow. However, this simplicity also contributes to the perception that the film is predictable and lacks narrative depth. In terms of trialability, this film is categorized as high level, as viewers can easily watch this film without any background knowledge. Despite this trialability, many viewers expressed reluctance to recommend the film due to dissatisfaction with the narrative and its ethical approach. In terms of observability, this film is categorized as high level. Vina has attracted significant public attention, especially through online reviews and debates. Audience reactions are very visible, although mostly negative.

Jumbo

In terms of relative advantage, Jumbo is categorized as high level because it clearly deviates from the dominant genre patterns in Indonesian cinema. By adopting an adventure-fantasy genre and a non-linear character-focused narrative, this film offers a new cinematic experience for the audience. This difference is easily recognized and appreciated by viewers. In terms of compatibility, this film is categorized as high level. Despite its innovative approach, Jumbo is still accessible through familiar emotional themes, cultural representation, and a family-friendly story. In terms of complexity, this film is categorized as low level. Although its narrative structure is non-linear, the story remains clear and coherent. Viewers are able to follow the storyline without confusion. In terms of trialability, this film is categorized as high level. The film can be enjoyed independently and is appealing to various audience groups. Viewers are more willing to try and recommend this film because it is easy to understand and enjoyable. In terms of observability, this film is categorized as high level. Jumbo received widespread positive attention, strong word-of-mouth, and public discussion. Its success makes it an example of innovation visible in Indonesian cinema.

Merah Putih: One For All

In terms of relative advantage, Merah Putih is categorized at a low level. This film is an animated film with a theme of nationalism, but audiences do not consider these elements to be clear improvements or innovations compared to other films due to the poor execution of the film. The differences with other films are noticeable, but they do not seem to have any meaningful significance. In terms of compatibility, this film is categorized as moderate level. The film's theme is in line with national values and its target audience is all ages, but its narrative approach limits the audience's emotional connection and acceptance. In terms of complexity, this film is categorized as high level. Many viewers report confusion regarding the storyline and narrative logic. This makes the film difficult to follow and reduces audience

engagement. In terms of trialability, this film is categorized as moderate level. Although it can still be viewed as an animated film with a theme of nationalism, the initial negative reaction from the public has made them reluctant to recommend or watch it. In terms of observability, this film is categorized as high level. This film received low ratings due to its unclear animation and storyline, and became a topic of widespread discussion due to public criticism and viral reactions, making its reception clearly visible, albeit in a negative context.

The analysis of table 2 shows that innovative films can be successfully distributed if they meet the key attributes of Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory. *Jumbo* (2025) clearly illustrates this process, as it offers a strong relative advantage by presenting a genre and narrative style that differs from the dominant horror films in Indonesian cinema. The adventure-fantasy genre and character-focused storytelling style are considered by audiences to be fresh and meaningful. At the same time, the film demonstrates high compatibility, as its themes, cultural elements, and family-friendly approach are in line with audience expectations. The innovation in *Jumbo* is also supported by its low complexity, meaning that even though the narrative structure is non-linear, the story remains clear and easy to understand. This reduces audience confusion and encourages acceptance. In addition, *Jumbo* is accessible to a wide range of audiences, making viewers more willing to try it and recommend it. This film achieved a high level of observability due to its success, positive audience response, and widespread discussion in society, making the innovation highly visible. Therefore, these five attributes explain why the innovation in *Jumbo* was able to spread and be accepted effectively. Regarding Research Question 2, this study concludes that genre and plot innovations can support the rebranding of Indonesian films when these innovations provide clear advantages, align with audience values, remain easy to understand, and are clearly recognized by the public. The Diffusion of Innovation Theory offers a useful framework to guide Indonesian filmmakers in spreading innovation and strengthening the image of Indonesian cinema in the future.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Diffusion of Innovations Theory by Efferet Rogers can effectively explain how the rebranding of Indonesian films can be used in response to genre and plot stagnation. The findings show that the Indonesian film industry is dominated by horror films with repetitive and linear storylines, which limits genre diversity and strengthens the stereotype that Indonesian films lack variation. However, this study also finds that genre and plot innovation can be accepted by audiences when it offers clear benefits, matches audience values, is easy to understand, and gains strong public attention. The success of *Jumbo* (2025) shows that overall well-executed innovation in genre and narrative storylines can be positively received, while the case of *Merah Putih: One For All* shows that innovation without strong storytelling and execution tends to be rejected. Also, genre and plot innovation following the Diffusion of Innovations Theory can support the rebranding and development of Indonesian films.

Based on the result of this study, future research should examine more films and genres to better understand how innovation spreads in Indonesian cinema. Further study may also explore the role of filmmakers, distributors, and digital platforms in influencing audience acceptance of new film ideas. Then, for the Indonesian film industry, filmmakers are encouraged to explore new genres and storytelling approaches while keeping narratives clear and culturally relevant. By focusing on both great innovation and well execution, Indonesian films can strengthen the rebranding efforts and compete more effectively in the global film industry.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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