

The Role of Social Media in Marketing Communication for Santet Segoro Pitu Film

Stefanus Andriano

Universitas Katolik Indonesia Atma Jaya, Jakarta, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

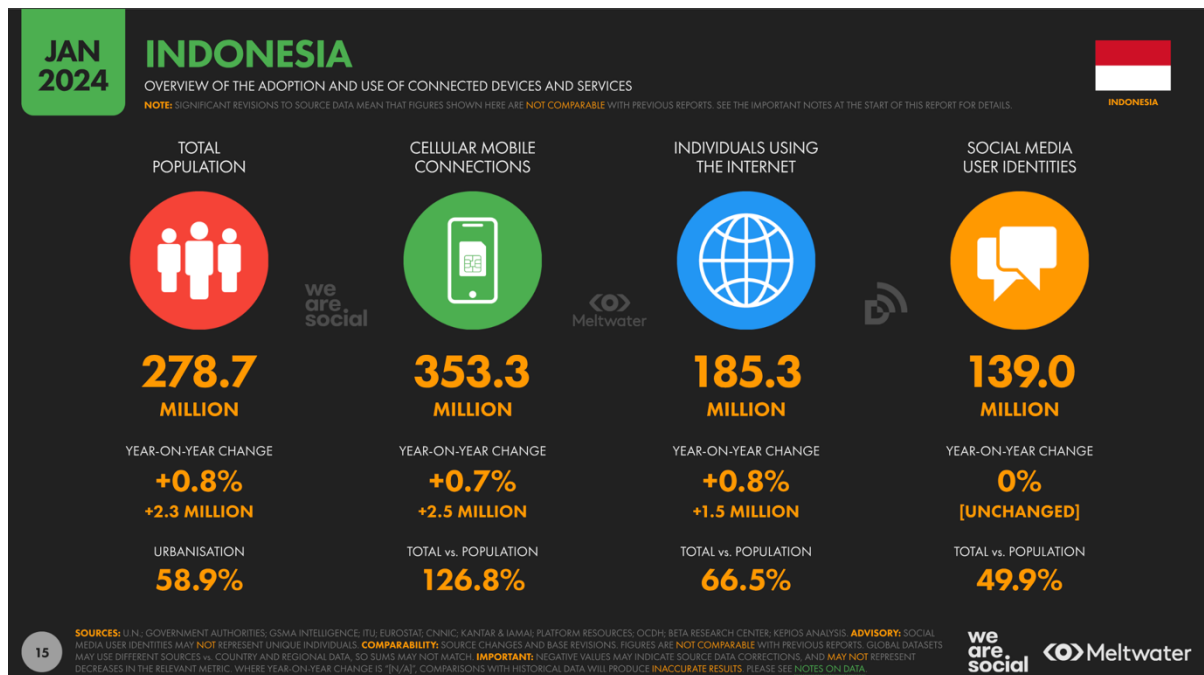
The advancement of internet-based communication technologies has significantly transformed the marketing communication landscape, particularly for businesses aiming to boost sales and profitability. In Indonesia, where internet connectivity has markedly increased, social media has emerged as a crucial tool for marketing efforts. This study investigates how Hitmaker Studios uses these platforms to promote the horror film "Santet Segoro Pitu," focusing primarily on Instagram. By employing qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and direct observations, the research examines the marketing strategies employed by the studios' team. Initial findings indicate that well-organized social media content management is essential for driving ticket sales. These insights could provide valuable guidance for the effective use of social media in marketing, offering benefits not only within the entertainment industry but also in other areas. Ultimately, this research emphasizes the importance of creatively integrating marketing communication strategies with social media to enhance overall marketing effectiveness.

KEYWORDS

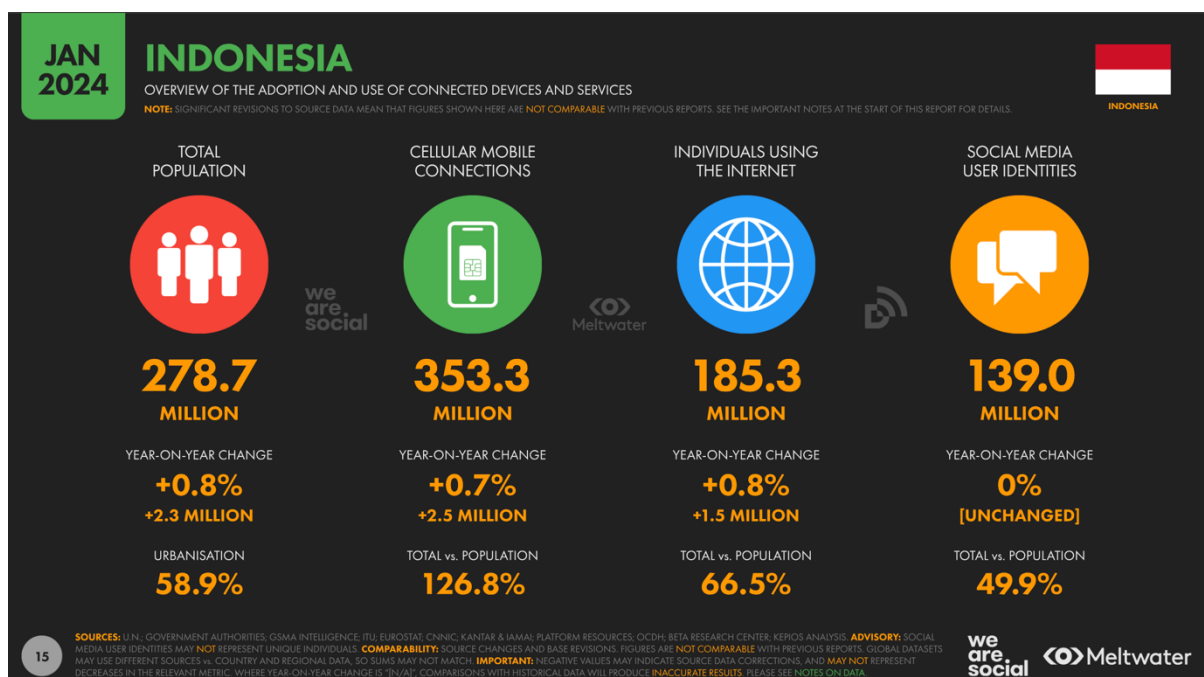
Social Media; New Media; Marketing Communication; Film; Santet Segoro Pitu

INTRODUCTION

According to We Are Social (2024), Indonesians spend an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes per day on the internet, with 3 hours and 11 minutes dedicated to social media usage. This indicates that social media has become an integral part of Indonesians' daily online activities. Indonesia is also among the countries experiencing significant growth in internet usage. As of January 2024, there were approximately 185.3 million internet users, accounting for 66.5% of the total population. This figure represents an increase of 1.5 million users, or 0.8%, from 2023 to 2024. These statistics suggest that more than half of Indonesia's population is consistently connected to the internet for various activities. The emergence of the internet has accelerated the advancement of communication technology, which continues to evolve rapidly to this day.

Figure 1. Indonesia overview of the adoption and use of connected devices and services

Source: We Are Social (2024)

Figure 2. Daily Time Spent With Media

Source: We Are Social (2024)

Mass media serve as a platform for delivering messages or information to a broad audience, whether through electronic or print formats. It operates as a one-way communication channel, meaning the audience cannot provide immediate feedback, though its impact can be felt almost instantly (Mustofa, 2022). As a result, mass media

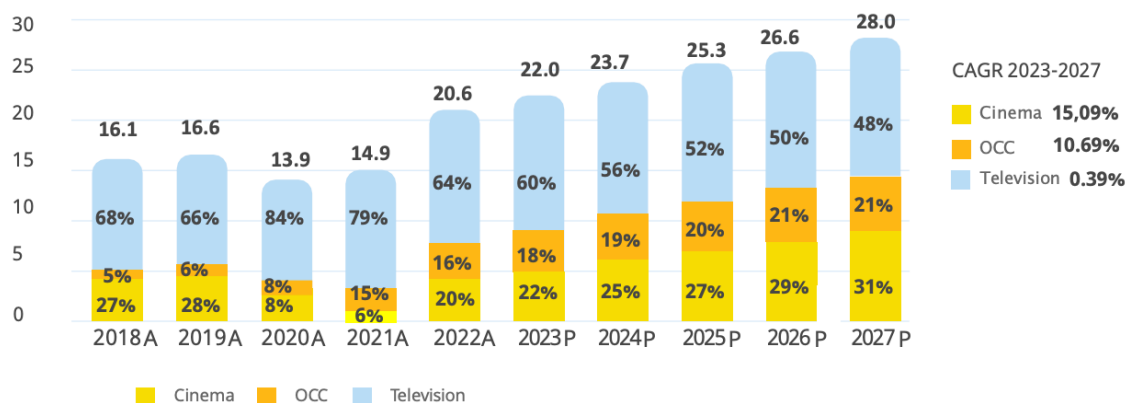
positions the audience primarily as receivers of the messages being conveyed. Mass communication is closely linked to mass media, and film is often considered one of its key mediums, as it has the ability to spread information widely and effectively (Asri, 2020).

In Indonesia, the film industry is experiencing significant growth, driven by the increase in domestic film production and a growing number of viewers. The industry is seen as thriving, with several films surpassing one million viewers. As the digital era progresses, Indonesian filmmakers are seizing the opportunity to promote their works more effectively. Beyond traditional cinemas, audiences can now easily access both local and international films through various streaming platforms such as Netflix, Prime Video, VIU, Disney+ Hotstar, and others. Films today are not just about entertainment; they also serve as a medium to convey meaningful messages to viewers. The use of audiovisual elements enhances the experience, allowing audiences to feel emotions that closely mirror real-life experiences. Additionally, films cater to diverse tastes by offering a wide range of genres, including horror, comedy, action, drama, and more.

The Indonesian film industry, a key part of the creative economy, has seen remarkable growth following the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the report 'The Economic Impact of the Screen Industry in Indonesia – an Opportunity,' the sector made a significant economic contribution in 2022. It generated a total output of 8.2 billion USD (approximately Rp. 130 trillion), contributed 5.1 billion USD (around Rp. 8 trillion) to the GDP, and created job opportunities for 387,000 people. This growth was supported by 55 million cinema-goers, who collectively boosted Indonesia's economy. Looking ahead, the industry is projected to grow at a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 6.13% from 2023 to 2027. In 2022, the combined revenue from cinemas, over-the-top content (OCC), and television (excluding advertising production) reached 1.3 billion USD (about Rp. 20.7 trillion), with expectations to rise to 1.8 billion USD (approximately Rp. 28 trillion) by 2027 (PwC Indonesia & LPEM FEB UI, n.d.).

Image 3. Projected growth of the film industry from 2023 to 2027

Figure 3: Industry Revenue for Cinema, OCC Video and TV 2018-2027 (Rp Trillion)



**The revenue excludes income from advertising production
 Revenue values are sourced from GEMO and might differ with values from MTCE due to classification differences
 Source: PwC GEMO (2023), and PwC and LPEM FEB UI Analysis*

Source: LPEM FEB UI (2024)

This research focuses exclusively on the film *Santet Segoro Pitu*, a box office hit in Indonesia in 2024, having attracted over 1.3 million ticket sales. Reaching the one-million mark is considered a psychological milestone that qualifies a film as a box office success (Rosadi, 2024). Released on November 7, 2024, the film also ranked as the 25th highest-grossing film of the year. *Santet Segoro Pitu* is based on a true story from Semarang, which originated from a viral thread on the X (formerly Twitter) account of Betz Illustration. This film marks the second production by Hitmaker Studio adapted from a viral social media post, following their earlier success with *Sumala*.

Set against a synopsis that recounts the story of a mysterious package discovered by his father and the eerie sounds of a tribal group, ARDI (Ari Irham) and his family begin to experience strange occurrences. One by one, SUCIPTO (Christian Sugiono), MARNI (Sara Wijayanto), and ARIF (Khalif Al Juna) fall ill. Ardi and his younger sister, SYIFA (Sandrinna Michelle), become convinced that these events are the result of a curse, and they fear they will be next. The curse, known as *Santet Segoro Pitu*, is a high-level form of black magic originating from outside Java. Based on a true story from Semarang, which first gained attention through a viral thread on the X (formerly Twitter) account of Betz Illustration, Hitmaker Studios had planned from the start to leverage social media as their primary platform for promoting this film.

Figure 4. The number of ticket admission for the film *Santet Segoro Pitu*.



Source: Hitmaker Studios (2024)

Figure 5.

2024

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Source: Cinepoint (2025)

Social media has become an integral part of daily life for many individuals. In the context of film marketing, social media enables producers and distributors to reach a broader audience and promote films more effectively. These platforms allow users to share information about films, facilitating the creation of Word of Mouth Marketing (WOMM) both before and after a film's release. WOMM is a concept used to describe the marketing buzz generated through the exchange of information among consumers. This construct is particularly significant in the film industry, where 53% of viewers choose films based on recommendations from others (Panuju, 2019). Numerous social media platforms, such as Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube, are widely utilized by film producers and distributors today, given the high rate of social media usage in Indonesia. As a result, social media has become a vital tool in Indonesian film marketing, capable of enhancing audience satisfaction and purchase intentions when used effectively. However, social media promotions must be executed with well-planned strategies that take into account audience preferences, particularly those of viewers in Indonesia.

Based on the background outlined above, this study aims to explore and analyze how the role of social media marketing can support the marketing communication efforts of Hitmaker Studios' marketing team and attract the target audience for the film *Santet Segoro Pitu*.

Marketing Communication

According to the American Marketing Association (2017), marketing is defined as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and

exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (AMA, 2017). In simpler terms, marketing involves the planning and execution of ideas, pricing, promotion, and distribution of goods and services to facilitate exchanges that fulfill the goals of both individuals and organizations. Marketing is a fundamental and essential activity for all business entities. Regardless of the industry, the core objectives of any business are to generate sales and achieve profit. These goals are pursued through well-developed marketing strategies and programs designed to reach and engage target audiences effectively. When carried out consistently, successful marketing efforts not only drive revenue but also contribute to the long-term sustainability of the business, a goal that all companies strive to achieve.

In understanding the role of social media in supporting film marketing efforts, it is essential to first revisit the fundamental concepts of marketing management. One of the core frameworks used to guide marketing activities is the marketing mix, which combines key elements necessary for achieving a company's marketing goals. Kotler and Keller (2012) describe the marketing mix as a collection of tools that organizations can utilize to reach their target market effectively. Commonly known as the 4Ps, the marketing mix includes Product, Price, Place, and Promotion.

Product strategies focus on developing goods or services that meet the needs and wants of consumers, taking into account elements such as features, functionality, benefits, and packaging. Price involves determining the value consumers are willing to exchange for a product, with pricing strategies varying depending on market conditions and positioning. Place, or distribution, ensures that products are accessible to consumers through the most effective channels. Lastly, Promotion refers to the communication strategies used to inform and persuade consumers about a product. Promotion is often executed through a combination of marketing communication tools known as the promotion mix, which includes advertising, sales promotions, personal selling, and public relations.

Shimp (2010) describes Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) as a continuous process of developing and executing various forms of persuasive communication programs aimed at both potential and existing customers. The primary goal of IMC is to influence the behavior of consumers who are the target audience of a company. Expanding on this, Kurtz and Boone (2010) define IMC as the coordination of all promotional activities, including advertising, direct mail, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations, to deliver a unified and focused promotional message to consumers.

In the context of film marketing, especially for a title like *Santet Segoro Pitu*, the promotion element becomes particularly critical. The use of social media as part of the promotion mix enables marketers to engage directly with target audiences, build anticipation, and influence consumer behavior in real-time. Therefore, understanding how Hitmaker Studios integrates social media into its overall marketing strategy, particularly as a supporting tool in promotional activities, offers valuable insights into the evolving landscape of film marketing in the digital age.

New Media

The rapid development of communication technology has led to the emergence of new media, which not only complements but, in many cases, replaces traditional media platforms. This shift marks a transition from conventional communication channels to more dynamic and interactive forms of media. New media gradually fills the gaps left by traditional media and, in some instances, renders them obsolete.

Communication technology itself can be understood as a system of knowledge, comprising both hardware and software, used to produce, transmit, store, and display messages and information. According to Terry Flew (2005), new media refers to media forms that integrate the components of the 3Cs: computing and information technology, communication networks, and content. The integration of these three components forms the basis of what is known as new media convergence, a concept that captures the blending of different media technologies into a unified digital environment.

Building on the foundational concept of new media, two essential characteristics define its function in digital communication: digitalization and interactivity. Digitalization refers to the process that enables new media to perform key functions such as the production, distribution, display, and storage of messages in a digital format. This technical capability is what distinguishes new media from traditional forms. The second characteristic, interactivity, plays a central role in shaping how communication unfolds in digital environments. Interactivity refers to the degree to which communication participants can engage in one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many exchanges, whether synchronously or asynchronously, within a technologically mediated space, primarily through the internet. This aligns with Terry Flew's (2005) perspective that internet-based media have redefined traditional models of communication by enabling both broad and individualized interactions simultaneously.

Furthermore, DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1982) emphasize that interactivity in new media exhibits several traits commonly associated with interpersonal communication. However, before interactivity can occur, a fundamental prerequisite is connectivity. Connectivity refers to the level of linkage or access between communication participants, made possible through various platforms, systems, and applications rooted in modern communication technology. It is through this connected infrastructure that interactivity becomes possible, allowing audiences not only to receive messages but also to respond, participate, and engage actively in content creation and dissemination.

Social Media

Social media has emerged as a key communication tool, particularly for newly established business entities looking to initiate marketing communication for their products or services. In the Indonesian context, the large number of social media users combined with the relatively low barriers to entry in using these platforms has made social media an attractive and accessible marketing channel. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media refers to a group of internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allow users to create and exchange user-generated content (UGC). This definition highlights the participatory nature of social

media, where users are not only consumers of information but also active content creators.

Further elaborating on its function, Shimp and Andrews (2013) define social media as an internet-based technology that enables interactive communication. In a business context, social media integrates technology with social interaction to generate value for users, particularly in the form of brand engagement and relationship building. Nasrullah (2018) expands on this by describing social media as an internet medium that allows users to represent themselves, interact, collaborate, share, and communicate with others, forming virtual social bonds in the process.

These perspectives illustrate how social media is not merely a channel for information dissemination but a dynamic platform that fosters two-way engagement and strengthens the relational dimension of marketing communication. For production companies like Hitmaker Studios, leveraging these characteristics is essential in developing effective marketing strategies, particularly in promoting films such as *Santet Segoro Pitu* to targeted audience segments.

METHOD

To align with the focus of this research, *The Role of Social Media in Marketing Communication for Santet Segoro Pitu Film*, a qualitative approach is applied. This method is chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena by exploring the perspectives and experiences of individuals involved, as articulated through descriptive narratives and insights from informants (Rijal Fadli, 2021). In this study, the researcher aims to clearly explain how social media is used and how it contributes to the marketing activities carried out by the team at Hitmaker Studios. A descriptive research method is used to provide a detailed overview of how the marketing team develops and applies social media strategies to support the marketing communication of the film *Santet Segoro Pitu*.

This study employed qualitative data collection techniques, including in-depth interviews, direct observation, and literature review. The research was grounded in theoretical concepts such as the marketing mix, new media, and social media, which were then operationalized through unstructured in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted with five key informants: three individuals from the marketing and public relations division of Hitmaker Studios, and two social media specialists from Cinema 21 and Cinépolis Indonesia.

In addition to interviews, the researcher conducted direct observations to capture the ongoing phenomena as reflected through observable behavior. Specifically, this involved examining the use of Instagram as a marketing platform by Hitmaker Studios during the promotional period of the film *Santet Segoro Pitu* from May to November 2024. Observation was particularly valuable when combined with the in-depth interviews, as this methodological pairing enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Through the dual role of the researcher as a full observer and as an

informal interviewer, the study aimed to uncover the deeper meanings behind the strategies and practices employed in the film's social media marketing.

According to Zed, as cited in Kartiningsih (2015), the literature study method involves a series of activities related to gathering information from various written sources, including reading, note-taking, and organizing research materials. Kartiningsih further explains that the primary aim of a literature review is to provide a strong foundation for developing a theoretical framework, constructing a conceptual model, and formulating preliminary assumptions or research hypotheses. In other words, the term "literature study" is often used interchangeably with "library research." In this study, the literature review was conducted by collecting relevant books, journal articles, interviews, and other published materials that align with the research topic and objectives. For data analysis, the researcher adopted an inductive reasoning approach. The process began with the collection of empirical data and moved toward the formulation of conceptual interpretations grounded in existing literature. Through the integration of interview findings, observational insights, and supporting literature, the study sought to identify concepts that align with the promotional strategies used by Hitmaker Studios. The core unit of analysis in this study was the studio's promotional content on Instagram. This became the focal point for interview discussions, allowing the researcher to gather insights into how the marketing team and social media specialists understood and implemented promotional and media communication strategies. These findings were then classified into conceptual categories drawn from both the empirical data and theoretical insights gained through the literature review.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Social Media in Supporting the Marketing Communication of the Film *Santet Segoro Pitu*

Santet Segoro Pitu becomes the second film produced by Hitmaker Studios that is adapted from a viral tweet on social media. Released in theaters on November 7, 2024, this film is a collaborative project between Hitmaker Studios, Legacy Pictures, Masih Belajar Pictures, and Role Entertainment. The film also ranked as the 25th highest-grossing film of the year. The film's success owes much to the marketing and PR team at Hitmaker Studios, who also acted as primary sources for the researchers' in-depth interview-based data collection. Hitmaker Studios, as a business entity, strives to compete in the Indonesian film industry while adopting Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) as part of its marketing communication strategy. This includes leveraging advancements in new media technology, specifically, the use of social media to support the promotional efforts for its film *Santet Segoro Pitu*. At the core of its marketing communication strategy, the marketing and PR team carries out segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) for the film ahead of its theatrical release in Indonesia.

The segmentation process carried out by the marketing and PR division of Hitmaker Studios reflects a deliberate strategy in identifying and reaching their intended

audience. This approach can be seen through their focus on specific demographic characteristics.

Demographic Segmentation of the Target Audience

Hitmaker Studios aims to reach individuals aged 18 to 34, a group that notably overlaps with Instagram's dominant user base in Indonesia, particularly those aged 25 to 34, as reported by Statista in 2024. This demographic generally comprises students and professionals from both the public and private sectors. They are often drawn to content related to entertainment, the arts, folklore, or mythical stories, and experiences that offer a sense of thrill or excitement.

To effectively engage this audience, the marketing and PR team, in a discussion with the researcher, explained their rationale for selecting Instagram as the primary platform to introduce and promote *Santet Segoro Pitu*. Instagram was chosen not only because of its popularity among the target demographic but also due to its multifunctional features that support visual storytelling and audience interaction.

Through this platform, Hitmaker Studios consistently shares various promotional materials, such as behind-the-scenes content, still images, posters, and trailers, to maintain audience interest. Additionally, the team actively uses the Instagram Stories feature to provide daily updates related to the film. This feature enhances audience engagement, as followers are able to send replies or react directly to the content, allowing the studio to foster ongoing two-way communication with potential viewers.

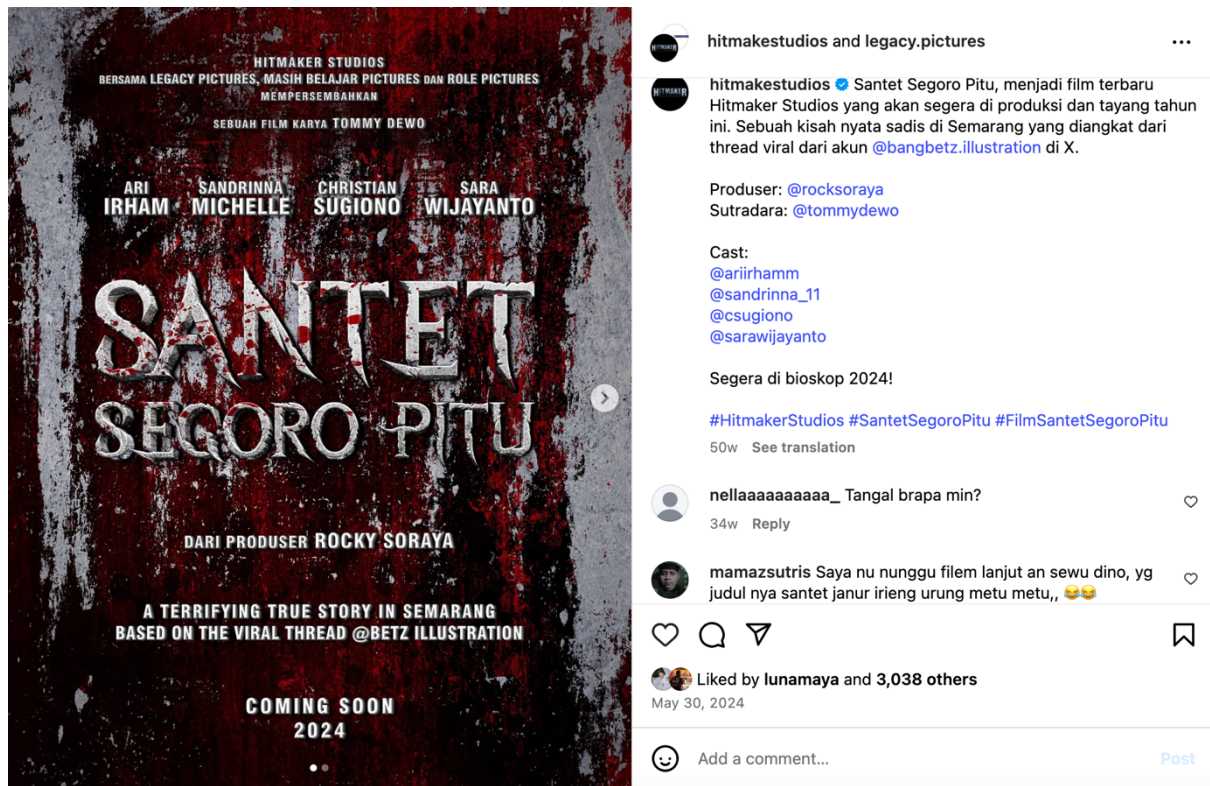
After defining the target market segments, the marketing and public relations team at Hitmaker Studios identified the specific audience they aimed to reach for *Santet Segoro Pitu*. Their focus was mainly on individuals aged 18 to 34 who are avid social media users, particularly on Instagram, and who have a strong interest in horror stories, folklore, and adrenaline-filled entertainment. This group also includes students as well as employees in both the private and government sectors.

In addition, the marketing team established Hitmaker Studios' business positioning as part of its marketing communication strategy by emphasizing the film's uniqueness. They highlighted the distinctive aspect of *Santet Segoro Pitu* as a horror story rooted in real events and originally gaining popularity through a viral thread on the social networking platform X (formerly Twitter). This distinctiveness served as a key differentiator in their communication approach.

Building upon this foundational positioning, the studio's marketing and PR team planned and executed an integrated marketing communication strategy aimed at raising awareness and boosting audience interest in the film. Internet marketing played a significant role in this effort, leveraging social networks to effectively engage the online audience. This approach aligns with Rouse's explanation in Chen (2018) that social media-based internet marketing has become essential and unavoidable in modern business promotion. Moreover, as supported by Hamill's insights in Ali and Allan (2017), such digital strategies prove to be cost-effective, offering broad reach without constraints of geography or time. Consequently, Hitmaker Studios actively utilized their Instagram

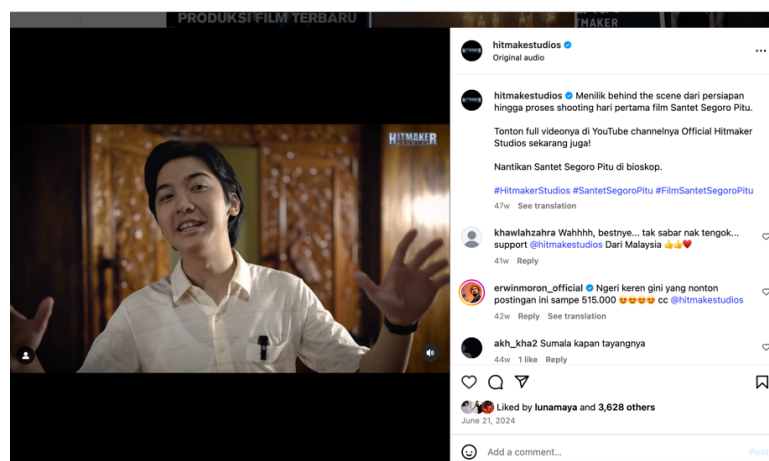
account @hitmakestudios, employing it as a key channel to carry out integrated promotional activities and communication efforts directed toward their target market.

Figure 6. Announcement Santet Segoro Pitu Film



Source: Hitmaker Studios (2024)

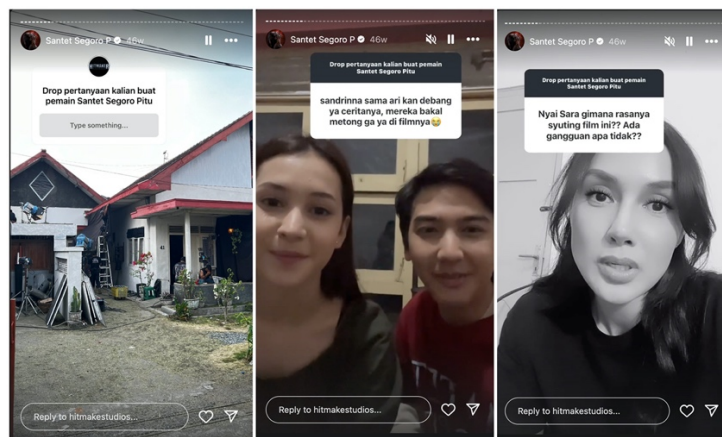
Figure 7. Behind The Scenes Santet Segoro Pitu Film



Source: Hitmaker Studios (2024)

Through their use of Instagram, as explained during interviews with the author, Hitmaker Studios' marketing and public relations team actively worked to establish connections with potential viewers of Santet Segoro Pitu. One key tactic involved organizing Q&A sessions featuring the film's actors, giving followers a chance to interact directly. This approach was designed to encourage word-of-mouth marketing by fostering a sense of closeness and accessibility on Instagram. The team engaged with followers by replying to comments, answering questions, and sharing viewer testimonials during the film's run. Such ongoing interaction aimed to build long-lasting relationships with audiences, which in turn supports the development of brand loyalty, as discussed by Gunelius in Orzan's study (2016). Among their regular activities were posting interactive Q&A content and reposting audience feedback, both of which served to reassure and persuade potential viewers to watch the film, strengthening the promotional impact through sustained social media engagement.

Figure 8. Santet Segoro Pitu Film QnA With Cast



Source: Hitmaker Studios (2024)

In an interview with the researcher, two social media specialists from Cinema 21 and Cinépolis Indonesia shared that the connection between Santet Segoro Pitu and its potential audience was further strengthened through a series of media visits to both cinema chains. Cinema 21 featured the film's cast on its official YouTube segment titled Cinechat, while Cinépolis Indonesia conducted a similar initiative via its own YouTube channel. These media appearances allowed the film's actors to engage with a wider audience beyond promotional posts. To complement this, Hitmaker Studios' marketing and PR team created dedicated social media content encouraging followers to submit questions for the cast in anticipation of the media visits. This strategy not only amplified audience engagement but also gave fans a sense of involvement in the promotional journey of the film.

Figure 9. Media Visit Cinema 21 & Cinepolis Indonesia

Source: Cinema 21 & Cinépolis Indonesia (2024)

As part of its promotional strategy, Santet Segoro Pitu also held a series of in-person cinema visits during its theatrical release, particularly across cinemas in the Jabodetabek region. These events involved cast appearances and joint screenings, allowing the audience to engage directly with the film's creators. By organizing these gatherings, the marketing and PR team at Hitmaker Studios sought to leave a lasting, favorable impression on moviegoers. Beyond enhancing audience connection, such efforts contributed to shaping a strong, positive brand perception, helping distinguish Hitmaker Studios from other production houses through its hands-on and personable marketing approach.

Image 10. Cinema Visit To Jabodetabek Cinema



Source: Hitmaker Studios (2024)

CONCLUSION

This research underscores how platforms like Instagram have become indispensable tools for promoting films, as demonstrated by Santet Segoro Pitu's campaign. Hitmaker Studios' strategic implementation of integrated marketing communications enabled them to effectively capture the 18-34 age group. Through tailored content and active engagement, the team utilized Instagram's dynamic features to cultivate audience participation, stimulate organic discussions, and nurture lasting connections—key factors that translated into strong ticket sales.

The film's distinct identity as a horror feature inspired by viral social media lore further cemented its market position, setting it apart from conventional offerings in Indonesia's crowded cinema landscape. By capitalizing on social media's borderless and instantaneous nature, the marketing team achieved widespread visibility without the limitations of traditional advertising budgets. This synergy of precise audience analysis, strategic branding, and digital innovation mirrors broader industry trends where traditional marketing models are being redefined by digital integration.

Ultimately, Santet Segoro Pitu's trajectory illustrates the paradigm shift in how Indonesian films are marketed. Hitmaker Studios' approach reveals that when digital interactivity is prioritized, campaigns gain not only wider exposure but also meaningful audience relationships that fuel profitability. These observations offer actionable lessons for industry practitioners: in an era dominated by digital consumption, aligning

marketing strategies with contemporary viewer habits isn't just advantageous, it's imperative for survival.

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