



# Characteristics of Cultural Production of Youtube Podcast of Horror Genre in Relevance with the Construction of the Consumer Society

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**Abstract:** The emergence of the horror genre YouTube Podcast during the Covid-19 pandemic is related to restrictions on people's movement, both in the production process and in enjoying the results of the production. For this reason, characteristics of cultural production emerged during the pandemic through horror podcasts on YouTube which also influenced the construction of consumer society. This is important to study in the world of the arts industry because these two orders, the production order and the consumption order, correlate with each other to shape the meaning of society. Baudrillard argued that consumption of commodities is not only seen at the level of their function, but also the relationship of meaning between the commodity and the sign it produces. Consumption looks more at the context of the existence of society itself so that it is said to be a growth society because it has the ability to produce both prosperity and poverty. The netnographic method is used to examine the relationship between the two orders so as to form meaning as a social phenomenon. The characteristics of horror genre podcasts are that they are produced with simple production, a limited number of personnel, delivered orally with distinctive characteristics, and have a production strategy that causes the audience to always wait for the next production result. The concept of horror which is used as a genre choice in podcasts is rooted in the local wisdom of podcast fans so that even though the label of modern society is attached to the activity of enjoying horror podcasts, the roots of local wisdom always color and bind the memories of the viewers to return to their identity through local wisdom.

**Keywords:** characteristics; cultural production; consumer society; YouTube podcast; horror

**Abstrak: Karakteristik Produksi Budaya Podcast YouTube Genre Horor dalam Relevansinya dengan Konstruksi Masyarakat Konsumtif.** Kemunculan Podcast YouTube bergenre horror pada masa pandemi Covid-19 terkait dengan pembatasan ruang gerak masyarakat, baik proses produksi maupun penikmatan hasil produksi. Untuk itu, muncul karakteristik produksi kultural pada masa pandemi melalui podcast horror di YouTube yang juga mempengaruhi konstruksi masyarakat konsumennya. Hal ini penting untuk dikaji dalam dunia industri seni karena kedua tatanan tersebut, tatanan produksi dan tatanan konsumsi, saling berkorelasi membentuk permaknaan atas masyarakatnya. Baudrillard mengemukakan bahwa konsumsi atas komoditas tidak sekadar dilihat pada tataran fungsinya, tetapi relasi makna antara komoditas dan tanda yang dimunculkannya. Pengonsumsian lebih melihat pada konteks eksistensi masyarakat itu sendiri sehingga dikatakan sebagai masyarakat pertumbuhan karena memiliki kemampuan untuk memproduksi kemakmuran sekaligus kemiskinan. Digunakan metode netnografi untuk menelaah relasi kedua tatanan itu sehingga membentuk permaknaan sebagai suatu fenomena sosial. Karakteristik podcast bergenre horror diproduksi dengan produksi sederhana, jumlah personil terbatas, disampaikan secara lisan dengan karakteristik yang khas, memiliki strategi produksi yang menyebabkan penikmatnya senantiasa menanti hasil produksi berikutnya. Konsep horror yang dijadikan pilihan genre dalam podcast mengakar pada local kearifan dari penikmat podcast sehingga sekalipun label masyarakat modern melekat dalam aktivitas



menikmati podcast horror, tetapi akar kearifan lokal senantiasa mewarnai dan mengikat ingatan para penikmat untuk kembali pada jati diri melalui kearifan lokal tersebut

Kata kunci: karakteristik; produksi kultural; masyarakat konsumen; podcast YouTube; horor

## 1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic situation requires everyone to keep their distance so that automatically people's space at that time becomes limited. Community activities have also decreased due to restrictions on movement. Therefore, people must cultivate their creativity to be able to deal with the pandemic situation. In this case, online activities are the choice for many people to be able to move virtually. For this reason, the community's need for the availability of an internet network for various purposes also supports the smooth movement of community dynamics. In this case, the internet becomes a link between the physical and digital worlds which will involve various things, in various regions without time limits, related to any service with any media. (Liu et al., 2019; Pramayoza and Birowo, 2022). This makes technology a tool that is absolutely needed by society (Berawi, 2018; Ribeiro et al., 2019).

Activities on this network are also part of alternative entertainment options for people when facing a pandemic situation which requires them to practice social distancing by staying at home. This makes virtual world activities an alternative choice which then becomes a trend for carrying out production activities in order to channel creativity while meeting various community needs. (Berawi, 2021; Bertoneclj, 2022). The transition in the form of several production activities carried out by the community during the pandemic, including: zoom jam sessions, online buying and selling from a side alternative to the main one, virtual work exhibitions, and podcast production. Podcast production is actually a form of developing virtual production from various applications that were already popular before the pandemic, both Twitter, YouTube and other social media applications. On YouTube itself, this form of development has become one of the main choices considering the many productions that have emerged during the pandemic. Various YouTube channels have emerged as a cultural production for society, one of which is a YouTube channel with horror content. Due to the pandemic situation, of course this affects the characteristics of the cultural production that appears in the podcast.

## 2. Literature Review

The rise of cultural production trends that have entered the world of networking is supported by the great need of society for its production results. In a pandemic situation, there are many activities that require optimizing the use of the networking world. From the scope of economic turnover, the implementation of the education system, to the provision of entertainment, people's movement is very dependent on the world of networks. In fact, this high level of cultural production also supports the emergence of figures who become new idols in society. The existence of this figure causes the emergence of a cultural trend following the idol's behavior. Idols then act as influencers in society. This influences the identities that also emerge in various ways (van Eldik et al., 2019). Likewise with the world of education, which initially used technology as part of method development due to the demands of societal development and then became the main supporting tool in the process of providing education during the pandemic. (Camargo, 2020; Qura et al., 2022; Sofino and Pradikto, 2022; Buhaichuk, Nikitenko and Voronkova, 2023).

Meanwhile, cultural production related to horror works also has a dark side that can attract the inner desires and imagination of the viewer. This is studied in British horror fiction through political, religious or sexual content that challenges taboo values (Lazaro, 2017). Other cultural products appear in the video game industry which is closely related to violent content and the genres of fiction, horror and fantasy. In the gaming industry, products are starting to emerge that use personal stories or autobiographies as their content material. Another development of the industry is leading to an increase in the number of games that tell life-inspired/autobiographical personal stories. Therefore, this game also creates lively and believable characters to tell personal stories or emotional experiences through interaction with the use of narration or storytelling. This type of game is on the indie game path and outside of the conventional path run by big publishers (Haggis, 2016; Winardi and Handayani, 2019). Various studies of cultural production have material differences with the research to be carried out, both in relation to the media regarding its material objects, concepts and distribution materials, as well as the formal objects studied.

### **3. Methods**

Cultural products that offer simple forms of production are increasingly appearing through the YouTube application in the form of podcasts, one of which is the horror genre podcast. This podcast production appears in various concepts. Its existence also drives the dynamics of the consumer community who access these shows as a form of entertainment during the pandemic. The production and consumption case studies that will be studied are the Kembara Sunyi YouTube channels and the Emak Official Channel. By using the netnography method, the relationship between the two orders is studied as a social phenomenon in society, both production trends and consumption trends. The trend of its existence is studied as cultural production in the digital industry that drives consumer society. Baudrillard (1998) states that there are two large orders of production and consumption processes that are correlated with each other. The relationships can be used to analyze the society. Production and consumption activities will bring value construction to society. Baudrillard, who categorized his society as a growth society, would be interpreted as a society that continues to process, not only as a society whose needs are met because it has the ability to obtain commodity products, but also as a complex meaning of the systematic impoverishment of the movement of production and consumption. In this case, the context of the existence of the community is studied more as part of the impact of the construction of the two orders of production and consumption.

### **4. Discussions**

#### **4.1 Characteristics of Cultural Production of YouTube Podcasts in the Kembara Sunyi Horror Genre**

##### **a. Produced with a Limited Number of Personnel with Similar Hobbies**

Kembara Sunyi is produced with three personnel, namely Itank Tirta, Idris Firmansyah, and Remon Zay. The meeting of the three was related to the same artistic hobbies, namely nature lovers, playing theater and social activities. In early productions, Kembara Sunyi's content focused on nature lovers' activities. For them, this hobby of nature lovers will bring them closer to nature and God. This became the basis for naming their official account channel, namely Kembara Sunyi. 'Kembara' means wandering or traveling in search of something. Meanwhile, 'silence' means silence, loneliness, as well as comfort. Therefore, Kembara Sunyi can be interpreted as a journey to seek solitude and comfort. The silence and comfort that is experienced is in the context of searching for or approaching oneself with God. To achieve a sense of silence and comfort in getting closer to God requires honesty and seclusion from the hustle and bustle of life. This refers to mountain climbing activities that the Kembara Sunyi team usually carries out periodically.

Apart from being a place for self-contemplation, the existence of the Kembara Sunyi channel is an educational effort for the wider community through the content messages it delivers. Its existence has become an educational medium for the wider community regarding its reach which is able to penetrate the boundaries of space and time in terms of enjoying its work. Educational media in this case is related to enriching people's wisdom towards nature, such as not throwing rubbish carelessly, not speaking carelessly, or using loudspeakers that will disturb the tranquility of the natural habitat. Meanwhile, the activities of nature lovers cannot be separated from the mystical events encountered so that this material is also an interesting choice of material to be used as content for Kembara Sunyi.

**b. Activeness and Consistency in Production**

The Kembara Sunyi channel can be said to have a high level of activity and production consistency. Since its founding until mid-May 2023, it has recorded 458 content productions in the form of podcasts totaling 421 videos with a classification of 10 categories. The number of subscribers is also quite high, reaching 405 thousand. The following is a classification of Kembara Sunyi production content.

**Table 1:** Classification of Horror Podcast Categories on the Kembara Sunyi Channel  
 (Source: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_zLYDD8XRfCM1dOhSfDcg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_zLYDD8XRfCM1dOhSfDcg) accessed 15 May 2023)

CATEGORY									
Haunted Place	Horror Adventure	Wandering Ghosts	Personal Experience	Song	Heretical Ritual	General Content	Death	Collaboration	Sacred Objects/ Science
76	93	64	12	1	82	13	68	3	9

Other productions on this channel are short and live. Shorts are usually excerpts from uploaded podcasts, one of the purposes of which is for promotion. The story told in this story is not based on fiction, but rather on stories of experience, both those experienced by the team, sources, and stories sent by the team from the community. The story in question is the story contained in the Kembara Sunyi email. Generally, the stories received will be read one by one and then the most interesting ones will be selected for use in the production process by the team. Before the production process for the story is carried out, confirmation will be made repeatedly to the sender of the story that the story sent is a true story. With the level of activity and consistency in production on this YouTube channel, it can be seen that the public's response to this channel is quite high. The large number of stories submitted will also encourage the production team to continue actively producing.

**c. Production with a Simple Talent and Property Prioritization Concept**

Based on its production pattern, Kembara Sunyi produces its podcasts with minimal and simple equipment. From the production process, Kembara Sunyi only uses two studios with similar themes so that fans don't get bored with the decoration settings. Taking pictures was done with a smartphone camera with the help of a tripod and recording using a clip-on to avoid noise when using earphones. Post-production after shooting and sound recording are complete, editing is done using the Corel Video Studio application which is classified as basic for editing work.(Poernomo, Wibowo and Jupriono, 2023).

With the habit of producing theatrical performances, Kembara Sunyi decorated the shooting studio using a black backdrop with the help of artificial lighting as an aesthetic concept. At the start of production, Kembara Sunyi featured Itank Tirta chatting with his interlocutor regarding content material. Itank seems to be telling a story and the person he is talking to is the listener of the story. With a typical Surabaya cangkrukan style, this concept is used by Kembara Sunyi to present the story so that Itank's storytelling style feels relaxed. Apart from appearing relaxed,

this production pattern also does not require Itank Tirta to tell stories by strengthening facial expressions but rather by repeating parts of the story motif.

The next production pattern presents a source who tells the story directly. However, it seems that this pattern is not really enjoyed by the audience because the concept of storytelling does not only present the story but must be accompanied by a coherent story, organized intonation, clear articulation, convincing expressions, and not rushing the story. This then became an evaluation material in production and the production pattern of presenting resource persons was stopped and completely carried out by Itank Tirta.

The concept of storytelling then changed to no longer using the *cangkrukan* pattern. Itank Tirta tells the story directly in front of the camera as if telling the story directly to his podcast viewers. With this pattern, Itank Tirta tries to strengthen his facial expressions, eye gaze, voice emphasis, intonation and articulation so that he can give the maximum possible picture to his podcast viewers. It is hoped that the resulting image will be able to bring the viewer's imagination as if they were experiencing the things described by Itank Tirta.

#### **d. Collaborative Production**

Apart from presenting resource persons, the work of the *Kembara Sunyi* team is also characterized by collaborative podcast work. This is done to support the development of the horror podcast industry in the digital world. By working together between YouTube channels, a promotional pattern between YouTube channels will be built. Digital sophistication means that the consumer community can easily browse and access collaborating YouTube channels. Several YouTube channels recorded as having collaborated with *Kembara Sunyi* include: *Bang Awe* (Samawe Adventure), *Desy Prayogo* (Emak Official Channel), *Heru* (Heru Survival Communication), and *Fajar Aditya* (RJL5).

This collaborative work can increase the number of podcast viewers. It is not uncommon for some viewers' comments on a particular channel's podcast production to begin with seeing and enjoying the collaborative work. By enjoying the style of storytelling on one YouTube channel, the audience then searches for production channels from collaborators. In this case, the audience of the *Kembara Sunyi* podcast alone has reached 405 thousand subscribers spread throughout Indonesia with the dominance of people from the island of Java. However, this does not rule out the possibility that *Kembara Sunyi* fans are outside Indonesia, such as Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Turkey, Frankfurt and Mecca. The existence of fans who are always waiting for the next productions encourages the channel to always be actively producing. Even if there is a problem that causes a podcast production to not be broadcast on time, the official channel will make an announcement to postpone the broadcast time and apologize for the delay in broadcasting. This was also done by *Kembara Sunyi*, which initially only produced twice a week to increase its broadcast hours to three times a week.

### **4.2 Characteristics of Cultural Production of YouTube Podcasts in the Horror Genre Emak Official Channel**

#### **a. Production with a Limited Number of Personnel and Starting from the Same Work**

The emergence of *Emak Official Channel's* YouTube podcast production began when *Desy Prayogo* decided to stop working (resign) as a bridal make-up artist at a wedding organizer led by *Sammy* at the end of 2020. The beginning of her work in the world of horror podcasts started with her hobby of writing threads on Twitter. *Desy* then had the idea to rent a building that she would use to focus on writing stories by inviting *Dimas*, *Nindi* and *Jeff*, her work friends at *WO*, by pooling the savings of the four of them. Apart from writing stories, the four of them also started receiving stories from sources sent by email [emakcerita@gmail.com](mailto:emakcerita@gmail.com). Apparently, sharing this story received a

good response from the public. Many stories from sources came into the email, causing the email to become overloaded. The initial range when sharing stories via email was opened had reached 1,267 emails. Until now, there have not been 200 stories uploaded as content. The description of the team's work is divided as follows: Nindi as a social media account monitor who at that time was still focused on Twitter, Dimas and Desy were tasked with tidying up the sources' writing, and Jeff was assigned to confirm the sources. However, during its development, there were changes in personnel. Jeff had left the work team earlier. Nindi and Dimas continued their Masters in Jakarta. Dimas received a master's scholarship in Jakarta, while Nindi continued her master's degree in Jakarta because her mother lived alone in Jakarta after her father died of Covid-19 at the end of December 2020. Nindi then decided to leave the work team. Therefore, until now, the Emak Official Channel work team only has Desy and Dimas. Communication between the two of them for work matters related to the horror podcast is done via email and chat.

**b. Activeness and Consistency in Production**

Data of July 20 2023, there were 42.7 thousand subscribers with 277 video uploads which were divided into several categories as follows.

**Table 2:** Classification of the Emak Official Channel Horror Podcast Category  
 (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/@EMAK>)

CATEGORY					
Emak's story	Ghibah Mum's friend	Bridal makeup	Creepypasta	Haunted Place	Source's Horror Stories
28	9	79	1	1	153

Some videos such as Creepypasta have been taken down so that even though they are recorded as data, they can no longer be accessed. From all categories, except for the Friends of Emak's Ghibah category, Desy presented by telling a story in a monologue with the concept of a mother/mother gossiping. This concept also underlies the name of the YouTube account which is used as a forum for production. Apart from that, the account name is also based on the nickname usually given to Desy by her friends and environment, namely Emak. The Emak as a representation of the mother figure underlies Desy's position when she works a lot as the leader of the bridal make-up team at Wedding Organizer Sammy. Desy is responsible for the work success and safety of her team in every task given by Sammy as company leader. However, as good as her efforts were, the many tours of duty and life she lived still brought several tragedies which caused Desy to lose around seven of her friends in various different incidents. Desy and the team described the loss incident as a story on their YouTube channel.

**c. Production with the Concept of Straightforward Storytelling and Simple Properties**

The Emak Official Channel's production concept presents the figure of a mother giving a monologue in a character that looks like she is gossiping. This monologue makes podcast viewers the people with whom to gossip. The production strategy is also carried out by dividing stories, for example, during a make-up assignment trip there is a horror incident in the client's family or the person being made-up and a horror incident related to the place where they are staying during the assignment, then the story will be divided into two productions, namely the Bridal Make-up and Emak's Stories categories. Apart from that, some podcast productions are also made in parts (part system). The development of a production pattern by breaking up the story appears in several parts of the story production. This is intended to arouse the curiosity of podcast viewers. Apart from that, dividing stories into several parts for production uploads is also a strategy so that podcast fans don't get bored with podcasts that are too long. The results of this strategy cause curiosity to grow over time and will make viewers continue to wait for each

production from the Emak Official Channel podcast. The production strategy of breaking the story into several productions will ultimately shape society into a consumer society because this will trigger people to continue waiting and looking for connections and continuation of the story.

With a podcast production character like a gossiping mother, Desy's storytelling style looks more straightforward. He uses this straightforwardness to get closer to his audience so that it seems as if he is a friend of his podcast audience. This straightforwardness is also used to lighten the burden of errors in storytelling, such as slips in memory of story sequences. With the gossip model, when a slip in the sequence occurs, the storyteller can correct the mistake in the middle of the story and correct it with the correct storyline. Apart from that, Desy often inserts her thoughts regarding the message and moral of the story in the middle or end of the story. This is in accordance with the concept that Desy wants to create, that from every story she brings, there are positive values that can be taken away by podcast viewers.

The straightforward storytelling style is also supported by the simple concept of decoration and props. Because the video shooting process is done alone (or sometimes assisted by Desy's husband) without a work team, the props and decorations are presented simply. Often times, videos are only taken in one corner of the house, using curtains as a backdrop for Desy when telling stories. Because it is in the home environment, disturbances such as the sound of Desy's child, the cat entering the shooting location, the shadows of people passing by behind the backdrop, and the sound of the room door being opened and closed, often disrupt the flow of the story. However, all these disturbances strengthen the characteristics of a mother as the center of the story.

#### **d. Collaborative Production**

Emak Official Channel which made its debut on the Twitter network through the production of threads in the form of stories in written form. From this activity on Twitter, the name Desy Prayogo became known. Then Desy is often invited by YouTube content creators, such as RJJL 5, Kembara Sunyi, Horny Channel, Lentera Malam, as a resource person. Some of the stories shared in this collaborative production were taken from threads that had been uploaded to his Twitter account. Through this collaboration process, Desy began to understand the production process in a different form than before, from written to oral. After frequently receiving these invitations, an Emak Official Channel YouTube account was created.

From the emergence of this channel account, Desy started telling her fans verbally. The challenges of conveying stories orally are certainly different from telling stories via threads on Twitter. Stories in written form can be tidied up first so as to minimize story line errors or build an aura of horror in the story that will be uploaded. The story that has been tidied up will be conveyed back to the source to ensure that there are no changes to the storyline from the real story due to the story kiln process. After confirming the accuracy of the plot, the thread is uploaded. This is different from oral storytelling which will provide opportunities for mispronunciations, slips of memory related to the plot of the story, or emphasis on tone of voice to create a horror feel in the story being told. However, the risk of conveying stories orally can be minimized and can be overcome by Desy by choosing a production concept and storytelling style. The straightforward storytelling style makes it easier for Desy to convey her story. Mistakes or slips of memory related to the story line that sometimes appear can be corrected easily when the atmosphere is created like someone is gossiping.

This collaborative production had quite a big influence on one of the events involving the death of Desy's friend which occurred in 2018. Traces of the person who caused her friend's death can be found thanks to the upload of this collaborative production. In this case, the story told by Desy was uploaded by RJJL5 in 2022. Eight months later, traces of the person who caused the death of Desy's friend were found and the problem that had been buried for years was resolved. The story of

finding the person's traces was uploaded on the Emak Official Channel account, not on RJL5. From the production process which is carried out crosswise, these accounts will trigger horror podcast fans to trace them to related accounts. This has had the impact of the trend of YouTube podcasts in the horror genre increasingly developing in society. What often happens is that the virality of a YouTube account begins with the presence of the account owner as a resource or the virality of the stories presented when he is a resource because podcast fans then trace the source's account.

#### 4.3 Construction of Consumer Society in Correlation with Trends in Horror Podcast Production on YouTube

The rise in the trend of producing horror podcasts on YouTube is in line with the rise in people's living standards which have made the digital world a necessity for daily life in the modern era and globalization. The high interest of the consumer community in the digital world has resulted in high access to internet use among the public. This shows two possibilities: first, an improvement in living standards, and second, a shift in economic values on the scale of priorities for living needs. The demands of various interests in society require the closeness of life to technology and internet networks. This makes the internet a medium for cultural production in society. People who see modernity through the existence of the internet make it practical to fulfill their needs, one of which is related to public entertainment. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, the internet became the main means for social, economic, entertainment, education and so on. In this way, two orders are established, production and consumption, as a form of effort to fulfill people's needs.

People's closeness to the digital world is often not followed by placing a priority scale in fulfilling it. The digital world has become a culture in society. To meet these needs with practicality, people grow into wasteful people without using a priority scale because they assume that its existence has become a habit as part of society's culture. Thus, society is formed into a wasteful society due to a shift in function because modernity has become an inherent part of the body of digital society. However, modernity is not always able to change the character of society. This can be seen from the large number of horror content productions on applications that offer various entertainment, such as YouTube. Because horror shows are considered to be something beyond reason, they are generally considered unedifying, old-fashioned, low-key, illogical shows. This is because the evidence is difficult for reason to accept regarding mystical matters. Even since the time of our ancestors, forces beyond human strength have been believed to exist in human life itself. However, looking at the high number of fans of horror shows shows that the consumer society which has become a modern society still roots itself in things that are ancient, traditional, unreasonable and illogical. The roots of this thought construction still carry a local character, including types of mystical or horror signifying representations. Some representational markers related to locality include: pocong, kuntilanak, tuyul, genderuwo, weve gombel, kuyang in the people of Kalimantan, and selak in the people of Lombok. In this case, it can be said that consumer society is constructed as a society whose thought patterns still hold strong traditional local wisdom but whose life patterns are moving towards modernity. This pattern is also used as a production idea by considering network developments through collaborative work between channels which will enable horror shows in the form of YouTube podcasts to develop into part of the country's entertainment industry.

## 5. Conclusions

The characteristics of podcast production on horror genre YouTube channels form a trade-off construction with the needs of the consumer community for entertainment that can be practically fulfilled. Mass podcast production has become an entertainment choice that constructs consumer society into a modern character because it is active in internet networking and technology life without losing local



roots by continuing to explore the horror genre which for some modern people is a topic that is avoided because it seems unreasonable, uneducated, and illogical. Something that does not make sense in human thought is considered something ancient. This is contrary to the character of modern people. In reality, there are still many societies that have grown up as consumer societies with their modernity regarding the use of technology and are still unable to escape from activities that are considered contradictory. Wasteful use of internet quota to access these shows is part of fulfilling people's needs, not at the functional level of entertainment needs but more at the expense of being labeled as a modern society. The production process of the producing agent turns ancient and non-modern labels into modern products by packaging them into YouTube content. The production of horror genre podcasts on YouTube is constructed with collaborative work between agencies to build digital industry trends related to horror content.

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