

JUMBO Film as a Turning Point for Indonesian Animated Films in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

The Indonesian film industry has shown significant development in recent years, particularly in terms of genre diversification and technical quality. One major achievement in this sector is the success of the animated film JUMBO (2025), which became the third highest-grossing Indonesian film of all time, with over 7 million viewers. This success reflects a major shift in Indonesian audience preferences toward local animated films, which were previously often considered less popular. JUMBO not only offers entertainment but also presents a strong and emotional narrative, along with relevant Indonesian social and cultural values. This study aims to examine JUMBO as a manifestation of a new paradigm in Indonesian cinema, focusing on its narrative approach, technical and visual aspects, as well as the digital communication strategies used to market the film. In addition, audience responses to the film are analyzed to understand its impact on public perception of local animated films. The research uses a qualitative approach, including content analysis of the film and a study of social media use in its marketing strategy. JUMBO not only provides visual entertainment but also conveys universal values such as struggle, family, and hope, making it both relevant and emotionally resonant for viewers. The findings show that JUMBO has successfully reshaped audience expectations regarding the quality of local films and opened new opportunities for the development of the animation genre in Indonesia. The film's success highlights the great potential for the Indonesian animated film industry to grow further and be embraced by both local and international audiences.

Keywords: Animated Film; Indonesian Film Industry; JUMBO; Visual Communication; Social Media

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian film industry has undergone a significant transformation in recent years not only in terms of production quantity, but also in technical quality and perspectives on filmmaking. This change is evident in the emergence of more diverse films, both in genre and storytelling approach. One genre that previously received little attention in the domestic market was animated films. This genre was often overlooked and considered less appealing compared to more popular genres like drama or action (Setiawan, 2021). However, the 2025 release of the animated film JUMBO successfully shifted this perception, becoming a major milestone in Indonesian cinema. JUMBO not only achieved box office success with over 7 million viewers but also became the third highest-grossing Indonesian film of all time (CNN Indonesia). This success demonstrates that Indonesian audiences are becoming increasingly open to locally produced animated films. The fact that this film attracted viewers from various demographics reflects a shift in audience preferences toward Indonesian animation, which previously received less attention than other genres.

JUMBO's success lies not only in its commercial achievement but also in its powerful narrative. The film touches on universal themes such as struggle, family, and hope—topics that resonate not only with Indonesian audiences but also with international viewers. This reflects a depth of storytelling that creatively and innovatively showcases Indonesian social and cultural values (Fauzi, 2025). This narrative strength is one of the film's key differentiators from previous local animated films, which tended to have simpler storylines. From a technical perspective, JUMBO also showcases significant advancement. The use of modern animation technology, stunning visual effects, and impressive cinematography make the film emotionally and visually captivating. These technical qualities show that Indonesian animated films can now compete with international productions, which have long dominated the global market (Bagus, 2021). This success stems from the filmmakers' efforts to integrate art and technology in creating an extraordinary cinematic work.

In addition to its narrative and technical strengths, digital communication strategies played a crucial role in JUMBO's success. In today's digital era, social media is a powerful tool for generating buzz and reaching a wider audience. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter were effectively utilized to introduce the film to the public, create direct engagement with fans, and build a loyal fan community. This demonstrates how social media can serve as an effective marketing tool, particularly for genres like animation that previously struggled for popularity (Kurniawan, 2023). The success of JUMBO illustrates a paradigm shift in the Indonesian film industry. In recent years, there has been a growing trend to create films that are not only entertaining but also socially relevant and creatively bold.

Indonesian films are now more daring in exploring various genres and storytelling methods, while also delivering higher technical quality. JUMBO represents this shift, proving that Indonesian animated films can merge creativity and technology to produce cinematic works that are competitive in the global market (Mulyadi, 2021).

However, despite this significant progress, Indonesia's film industry still faces several challenges. One major issue is its reliance on the domestic market, which limits the potential for Indonesian films to expand internationally. Although JUMBO was a major domestic success, the international distribution of Indonesian films remains limited. A key barrier is the lack of effective international distribution channels and the minimal global promotion needed to introduce Indonesian films to international audiences. Therefore, a more comprehensive strategy in distribution and marketing is required to help Indonesian films reach broader global markets (Pratama, 2021). Moreover, the technical quality of Indonesian animated films still needs further improvement to compete with international productions. While JUMBO demonstrated high visual quality, many other local animated films have yet to reach that standard. This indicates that despite advancements in animation technology, the Indonesian film industry must invest more in research and development to produce more competitive animations (Bagus, 2021). One possible solution is collaboration between local animation studios and international partners to enhance the technical quality and global competitiveness of Indonesian animated films.

The role of social media in JUMBO's success should not be underestimated. Social platforms enabled the film to reach a wider audience, especially younger viewers who are highly active online. Marketing campaigns through Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter generated strong audience engagement. This shows that when used effectively, digital platforms can be powerful marketing tools for introducing Indonesian films to broader markets. JUMBO's presence on social media also helped build a loyal fanbase that contributed to expanding the film's reach (Kurniawan, 2023). The JUMBO phenomenon also reflects a shift in how Indonesian filmmakers view national identity and globalization. The film not only presents themes relevant to Indonesian culture but also packages them in a way that is accessible to international audiences. This proves that Indonesian filmmakers are increasingly aware of the importance of globalization in the film industry. Indonesian films are no longer confined to domestic audiences but are beginning to compete on the global stage. This is crucial for increasing international recognition of Indonesian cinema (Kartika, 2023).

It is important to note that JUMBO's success is not only a milestone for the Indonesian animated film industry but also an example for other genres. The film's achievement shows that with the right approach, genres once seen as less promising can make a significant impact in the market. It also reflects how the Indonesian film industry is moving toward greater genre diversity, enriching the country's cinematic landscape. Nonetheless, challenges remain. One key issue is the lack of government

support in terms of regulation and incentives for filmmakers, especially in animation. This sector needs more support to continue growing and competing internationally. The government is expected to provide more incentives, both in terms of funding and distribution, to help Indonesian films particularly animated ones gain greater international recognition.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study of the film *Jumbo*. This type of research was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the context, content, and impact of the film on the development of the Indonesian film industry. A descriptive qualitative approach allows for flexibility in exploring social and cultural phenomena and enables the researcher to interpret the meanings embedded in various aspects of the film (Creswell, 2021). This approach is particularly suitable for analyzing film elements such as narrative structure, visual technology, and the influence of social media on audience reception. The primary sources of data in this study include both primary and secondary data. The primary data consist of film clips from *Jumbo*, interviews with relevant sources such as film academics in the areas of cinematography, production management, and directing, as well as content from the official social media accounts related to the film. The secondary data include news articles, film reviews, box office data, academic journals, and literature relevant to communication theories, social media, and film theory.

Instrument and Procedures

Data collection in this study was carried out using several techniques. One of the main methods was content analysis of the film *Jumbo*, aimed at examining its visual, narrative, and socio-cultural representation aspects (Krippendorff, 2020). This analysis focused on how the film conveys specific messages through its visuals, plot, characters, and other technical elements. Additionally, a literature review was conducted to deepen the theoretical foundation of the study and support the interpretation of data. The literature review encompassed sources related to film, mass communication, social media, and relevant theories of film and media analysis. The study also included digital observation of the official social media accounts of *Jumbo*, such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. This observation aimed to monitor audience engagement through interactions such as comments, likes, and shares, and to understand how digital platforms influence public perception and reception of the film.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic coding, in which the collected data are grouped based on key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The main

themes identified include narrative, visual technology, digital promotion, and audience reception. Each theme is further analyzed to explore how these elements interact with one another within the film *Jumbo* and how the audience responds through social media. Once the data are categorized, interpretation is conducted based on a previously established theoretical framework. Thematic coding enables the researcher to identify patterns and relationships among the film's elements and audience interactions. Through this analysis, the study aims to provide a clearer picture of the impact of *Jumbo* on the Indonesian film industry and how the film successfully shaped public perception using visual technology and digital promotion strategies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Synopsis of *JUMBO*

The 2025 Indonesian animated film *JUMBO* tells the heartfelt story of Don, a 10-year-old orphan who faces discrimination and bullying due to his unusually large body size. Living in a densely populated urban neighborhood, Don often feels isolated and insecure. His only solace is a magical storybook, a treasured heirloom left by his parents, filled with illustrations that transport him to a world of wonder and imagination. Inspired by the book's heroic tales, Don aspires to participate in a school talent show to showcase his inner strength.

However, his aspirations are thwarted when the storybook is stolen by Atta, a classmate who bullies him. With the help of his supportive grandmother (Oma) and two close friends, Nurman and Mae, Don sets out to recover the book. Along this journey, he encounters Meri, a mysterious girl from a fantastical world who is also searching for her lost parents. Together, they embark on a magical and emotional quest that weaves together their individual missions.

The film beautifully integrates Indonesia's cultural elements such as traditional architecture, local cuisine, and values of familial solidarity while also presenting universal themes like perseverance, friendship, and the courage to dream. The character of Don is symbolic of many Indonesian children navigating societal pressures and limited opportunities, making *JUMBO* both an emotionally resonant and socially relevant story. The film succeeds in speaking to diverse age groups, blending entertainment with educational and moral messages.

Narrative and Thematic Analysis

JUMBO distinguishes itself from previous Indonesian animated films through its layered and emotionally charged narrative structure. The central theme—Don's search for self-worth mirrors the challenges many children and adolescents face in the digital era, particularly regarding body image, self-esteem, and social inclusion. The use of conflict, both external (bullying, loss of family relics) and internal (self-doubt, fear of failure), enhances the dramatic depth of the film.

This narrative is aligned with classic storytelling arcs, such as Todorov's narrative equilibrium model, beginning with Don's marginalized existence, disrupted by the loss of his storybook, and eventually leading to a transformative journey toward self-acceptance and empowerment. The inclusion of Meri as a co-protagonist expands the film's thematic scope by exploring themes of belonging and familial separation.

Thematically, *JUMBO* critiques the stigma around difference and promotes inclusivity, echoing messages found in successful international animations like *Raya and the Last Dragon* and *Inside Out*. It also comments on societal issues in modern Indonesia, such as educational inequality, urban poverty, and generational gaps—issues rarely addressed in local animations. These reflections make the film not only entertaining but also intellectually and culturally stimulating.

Visual Style and Animation Techniques

From a technical standpoint, *JUMBO* represents a significant leap forward for the Indonesian animation industry. The film employs advanced 3D animation, motion capture, and digital compositing to produce high-quality visuals that rival international standards. The dynamic color palette, emotive character expressions, and seamless action sequences elevate the viewer's experience. Emotional scenes are further enhanced through strategic lighting and cinematic camera angles, providing a visual grammar that deepens the story's impact.

According to a 2024 report by Kombi.id, Indonesia had over 120 active animation studios, signaling a booming creative sector capable of large-scale production. *JUMBO* exemplifies this growth, becoming a flagship for the potential of homegrown digital animation. The use of motion capture to capture actors' physical expressions added authenticity to the characters' movements, a method still rare in Southeast Asian animation. Furthermore, the film demonstrated production efficiency by using cost-effective yet powerful animation software, aligning with the Indonesian Animation Industry Association's (AINAKI) recommendation for scalable innovation.

The film's character design reflects local sensibilities while appealing to global tastes. Don's oversized physique is rendered with care and dignity, breaking stereotypes and encouraging body positivity. Urban backdrops featuring tightly packed homes, market scenes, and public transportation are modeled with rich detail, grounding the fantastical story in a distinctly Indonesian setting.

Role of Social Media in Promotion

One of the pillars of *JUMBO*'s success was its highly effective digital marketing strategy, which leveraged social media platforms to create pre-release anticipation

and post-release loyalty. The film's production team launched a multi-platform campaign using Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube to release teasers, fan art competitions, memes, and behind-the-scenes footage.

These efforts were particularly effective among Gen Z and millennial audiences, who are highly responsive to interactive and visual content. Viral hashtags such as #JumboTheMovie and #BukuAjaibJumbo trended on TikTok and Instagram Reels, with thousands of user-generated videos and fan tributes. According to Kurniawan (2023), social media engagement metrics—including comments, likes, and shares—reached over 1.2 million interactions within two weeks of the film's release.

The use of behind-the-scenes content, especially motion capture footage and voice actor interviews, fostered transparency and audience connection. Campaigns also included interactive features such as character filters on Instagram and fan voting for favorite scenes, which created a participatory culture around the film. These grassroots promotions were not only cost-effective but also amplified the film's visibility organically, demonstrating the power of digital word-of-mouth in modern cinema.

Audience Reception

JUMBO achieved extraordinary commercial and critical success, surpassing 7 million viewers in domestic theaters, making it the third highest-grossing Indonesian film of all time. Within the first seven days of its release, the film crossed the 1 million viewer mark—a feat previously unachieved by Indonesian animated features (Disway, 2025). This record illustrates a major shift in audience preferences, reflecting an increased openness to animated films as serious cinematic works.

Audience feedback, both online and offline, highlighted the emotional richness and relatability of the film. Surveys conducted by Jurnal Film & Budaya (2024) revealed that over 80% of viewers found the story emotionally impactful, while 75% expressed interest in seeing more local animations of similar quality. On social media platforms, *JUMBO* prompted widespread fan engagement through fan art, memes, tribute videos, and cosplay.

The film also garnered international attention. A review in *Variety* (2025) praised *JUMBO* for its “compelling narrative and cultural authenticity,” recognizing its potential to reach global audiences. Educational institutions and parenting blogs recommended the film for children due to its positive messages on empathy, resilience, and diversity. In terms of sociocultural impact, the film-initiated conversations about bullying, orphanhood, and intergenerational care, resonating with educators, psychologists, and family audiences. The film's portrayal of realistic urban challenges and moral storytelling elevated its relevance beyond mere entertainment. It was also lauded in academic circles for offering a

template of how animated media can serve as tools of cultural transmission and emotional literacy.

The success of *JUMBO* represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of Indonesia's animation industry, illustrating how a locally produced animated film can achieve both national acclaim and global recognition through a combination of narrative depth, technical innovation, and strategic digital outreach. Unlike many predecessors in the genre, *JUMBO* does not rely solely on visual spectacle; instead, it integrates meaningful storytelling with high production value, signaling a maturation of Indonesian animated cinema.

At the narrative level, *JUMBO* explores deeply resonant themes such as self-identity, social exclusion, and the transformative power of friendship. Don's character, an orphan navigating bullying and self-doubt, embodies the universal search for belonging and purpose. This personal journey mirrors broader social dynamics in contemporary Indonesia, where young people face increasing pressure to conform while struggling to find their voices in a rapidly changing society. The emotional weight of the story, underscored by the magical realist elements of the plot, allows the film to transcend generational boundaries. It engages not only children, its primary audience, but also adults who can relate to its more complex themes of loss, resilience, and hope.

From a production standpoint, *JUMBO* demonstrates how Indonesian animation has begun to adopt global standards in both technique and storytelling. The film's use of 3D animation, motion capture, and sophisticated visual design shows an industry willing to invest in quality and innovation. More importantly, these technologies are not employed as ends in themselves but are integrated seamlessly into the storytelling process. This aligns with international practices in narrative animation, where technical elements serve to enhance emotional impact rather than overshadow the plot.

The film's success is also attributable to its strategic embrace of digital culture, particularly through the use of social media as a promotional and engagement tool. The marketing campaign for *JUMBO* was not limited to traditional trailers and posters; instead, it relied on creating a participatory digital ecosystem. Fans were invited to contribute through user-generated content, such as fan art, TikTok challenges, and meme creation, which fostered a sense of community ownership over the film. This strategy resonates with Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) theory of social media engagement, in which peer-to-peer influence and co-creation become more persuasive than top-down advertising. The result was not just commercial success, but also the development of a loyal fanbase that continues to amplify the film's visibility online.

What also emerges from *JUMBO* is its capacity to function as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy. By embedding local values such as filial piety, communal support, and perseverance within a globally understandable narrative structure, the film positions

Indonesian culture as both specific and universal. The representation of urban Indonesian life, local foods, familial dynamics, and societal challenges presents international audiences with an authentic yet accessible image of the country. This form of soft power, delivered through entertainment, becomes an effective means of cultural exchange.

Furthermore, insights from film academics in the areas of cinematography, production, and directing emphasize how *JUMBO*'s achievements are the result of deliberate and well-coordinated creative planning. The cinematography brings emotional nuance through lighting and framing techniques, while the structured production timeline and integration of modern tools ensured technical excellence. Directorial choices grounded the film's message, proving that animation can convey socially relevant and emotionally charged stories without compromising entertainment value.

Nevertheless, the case of *JUMBO* also underscores the ongoing challenges in the Indonesian film ecosystem. Despite the film's triumph, the broader animation industry still faces constraints in funding, global distribution, and institutional support. As noted by scholars and industry observers, the lack of consistent government investment and infrastructure limits the scalability of such successes. However, *JUMBO* offers a compelling model for overcoming these limitations through innovation, cross-sector collaboration, and audience-centric strategies.

In sum, *JUMBO* is not merely an animated feature it is a manifestation of Indonesia's cinematic potential in the digital age. It bridges local stories with global appeal, embraces cutting-edge technology without losing cultural identity, and invites audiences to participate rather than just consume. As a turning point for the national animation industry, it lays the groundwork for future productions to think ambitiously, act strategically, and create stories that resonate far beyond their geographic origins.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, *JUMBO* stands not only as a landmark in the history of Indonesian animated cinema but also as a symbol of significant progress in narrative construction, animation technology, and digital marketing strategy. The film's outstanding achievement illustrates the growing potential of Indonesian animated films to compete on a global scale. It opens new opportunities for future development and serves as a valuable model for the next generation of Indonesian animation. The film's success is deeply rooted in its universal themes—family, struggle, and hope which resonate strongly with audiences across different age groups and cultural backgrounds. Through its emotionally rich storytelling and relatable characters, *JUMBO* demonstrates how a seemingly simple narrative can deliver a profound and heartfelt message. This emotional connection is a key factor in the film's widespread appeal and enduring popularity.

Moreover, *JUMBO* effectively showcases how Indonesian animation can articulate local cultural identity in an inclusive and globally accessible way. By embedding Indonesian symbols, values, and social realities into its storyline while using an internationally familiar cinematic language the film bridges the local and the global. It confirms that Indonesian animated productions are not only culturally valuable but also commercially and artistically viable on the international stage. The film's accomplishment is also inseparable from its innovative use of digital communication strategies. By leveraging platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, *JUMBO* successfully built strong audience engagement and created viral content that expanded its reach. The participatory nature of its promotional content encouraged audiences not just to watch but to interact, share, and become part of the film's narrative community. This approach strengthened brand loyalty and broadened the film's visibility both nationally and internationally.

Additionally, *JUMBO*'s digital marketing strategy reflects a larger transformation in Indonesia's film industry an industry that is increasingly embracing technology and adapting to fast-evolving digital trends. The film has demonstrated how the synergy between creativity, technological innovation, and strategic promotion can yield not only commercial success but also cultural influence. In conclusion, *JUMBO* is more than a commercially successful cinematic work; it is a symbol of transformation in Indonesia's creative industry. The film illustrates how national cinema can evolve through the integration of compelling storytelling, technical excellence, and global-minded promotion. Its achievements offer both a blueprint and a source of inspiration for filmmakers across the country especially in the animation sector to continue innovating and creating high-quality content with global relevance. With such potential, Indonesian animated films are poised to play a vital role in promoting the nation's culture and creative identity on the world stage.

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