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Intertextuality Across Media: The Narrative Transformation of “KKN di Desa Penari” from Tweet to Motion Picture and Digital Pop Culture

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the narrative transformation of KKN di Desa Penari as it migrated across multiple media platforms, illustrating how local stories are reinterpreted within Indonesia’s hybrid digital ecosystem. Originating as a Twitter thread, the narrative evolved into novels, films, and user-generated content, reflecting the dynamic interplay between intertextuality, adaptation, remediation, and participatory culture. While previous studies have addressed digital folklore or single-medium adaptations, few have explored how a single narrative transforms holistically across platforms through both formal production and audience engagement. The purpose of this study was to analyze how KKN di Desa Penari was reshaped through cross-platform adaptation, cultural negotiation, and participatory practices. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach with intertextual analysis, the research drew data from primary sources (Twitter thread, novel, film, memes, fan art, TikTok videos, YouTube commentary) and secondary literature. The findings reveal that each medium reconfigured the narrative in distinct ways: Twitter fostered fragmented, speculative storytelling; the novel embedded local moral codes; the film remediated the story into visual spectacle; and user-generated content extended the narrative through reinterpretation and cultural commentary. This study contributes to understanding how local narratives achieve longevity and cultural relevance through digital convergence and audience co-creation.

Keywords: *Adaptation, Digital Media, Intertextuality, Participatory Culture, Southeast Asia*

INTRODUCTION

The interaction between local narratives and digital platforms had been vividly illustrated in Indonesia through the case of *KKN di Desa Penari*, which originated as a Twitter thread and evolved into a major cultural phenomenon. This narrative demonstrated how local stories could migrate across various media platforms, transforming in the process and reflecting what Jenkins (2006) described as convergence culture. In such a culture, media content circulated across multiple platforms, encouraging active audience participation and blurring the traditional boundaries between producers and consumers (Coritama et al., 2022; Nurazizah & Mukhtiaranto, 2023). The rapid circulation and widespread popularity of *KKN di Desa Penari* exemplified this dynamic, as the story resonated beyond its social media origins, gaining momentum through novel adaptations, cinematic productions, and broader digital expressions (Coritama et al., 2022; Dewa, 2022).

The remarkable success of these adaptations could be attributed to various factors, foremost among them the pivotal role of digital and social media platforms within Indonesia's storytelling ecosystem. The film adaptation of *KKN di Desa Penari* became a record-breaking success, attracting more than 9 million viewers and emerging as one of the most commercially successful films in Indonesian cinema history (Dewa, 2022). This phenomenon reflected how digital platforms had served as powerful conduits for local cultural texts, enabling them to achieve not only widespread visibility but also significant commercial success. Such developments aligned with scholarly arguments that media convergence opened new spaces for cultural participation and narrative innovation, even as structural inequalities in media access and participation persisted (Akbar et al., 2022; Vandenplas & Picone, 2021). Indeed, studies on media repertoires suggested that patterns of media engagement remained shaped by social stratification, indicating that convergence, while expansive, did not fully democratize access or participation (Vandenplas & Picone, 2021).

The transformation of *KKN di Desa Penari* from an online narrative to a major film encapsulated broader trends in media convergence, in which traditional storytelling forms merged with digital communication practices. This blending created new modes of cultural consumption and production, where audiences were no longer passive recipients but active agents in shaping, reinterpreting, and extending the narrative (Lang & Jing-Schmidt, 2024; Loisa et al., 2020). The participatory nature of these processes echoed global trends identified by Jenkins (2006) and others, and underscored the growing agency of local narratives within a globalized media landscape. In this sense, *KKN di Desa Penari* illustrated how local stories could both preserve cultural specificity and foster innovation through their adaptations and rearticulations (Fitriana et al., 2023).

However, while previous studies have explored aspects of media adaptation, folklore in digital culture, or comparisons between specific formats, little attention

has been given to the integrative analysis of how a single local narrative transforms across platforms while negotiating meaning with its audiences. Existing literature has yet to fully examine the combined role of platform affordances, cultural negotiation, and participatory practices in shaping the evolving meanings of such narratives. This study addresses that gap by offering a comprehensive investigation into how a local story is reshaped and sustained across media forms within Indonesia’s hybrid digital ecosystem.

Ultimately, the interplay between local narratives and digital platforms in the case of *KKN di Desa Penari* highlighted how cultural texts adapted, circulated, and thrived within convergence culture. This case underscored the critical role of digital media in contemporary storytelling practices and pointed to the need for further scholarly exploration of how local narratives are negotiated, transformed, and sustained within complex, hybrid media environments (Dewa, 2022; Pratopo, 2022).

Building on this context, the present study sought to examine *KKN di Desa Penari* as a paradigmatic example of digital intertextuality and media convergence in Indonesia. By tracing the narrative’s journey across platforms from social media threads to print publications and cinematic adaptations this research aimed to illuminate the processes through which local stories have been reshaped and reinterpreted in the digital era. In doing so, the study aspired to contribute to broader debates on narrative adaptation, cultural agency, and the dynamics of participatory media, offering new insights into how digital technologies have transformed the production and circulation of cultural meaning in Southeast Asia and beyond.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intertextuality in Digital Culture

Intertextuality, a concept introduced by Kristeva (2024) and systematically elaborated by Genette (1997), provides a lens for analyzing how texts, narratives, and cultural artifacts relate to and transform one another across contexts and media. Genette categorized intertextuality into hypotextuality (the transformation of an earlier text into a new one), paratextuality (framing elements like titles and prefaces), and architextuality (the relationship between a text and its genre conventions). These frameworks help trace how narratives like *KKN di Desa Penari* draw upon, transform, or reposition prior cultural materials. In digital environments, intertextuality takes on new dimensions as texts are rapidly circulated, remixed, and layered with audience interaction and technological mediation (Fan et al. 2021; Jin, 2025; Kencana & Meisyanti, 2020). While prior studies such as Darmawan et al. (2022); Maharani et al. (2024); Noor ‘Alim & Wibowo (2023) have examined digital intertextuality in folklore and horror genres few have provided an integrated analysis of how these dynamics operate across multiple media platforms within a single narrative case.

Adaptation and Cultural Identity

Adaptation, as conceptualized by Hutcheon & O’Flynn (2013), is a dialogic process where narratives are not simply reproduced but transformed, engaging both the original text and contemporary cultural contexts. Lestari & Sihombing, (2022); Yngvesson & Alarilla (2020) argue that adaptations reflect the symbolic significance of the medium and respond to sociocultural anxieties. Fitriana et al. (2023) show how local legends morph into horror films as commentaries on cultural identity and societal fears, while Djamaly et al. (2025) note that Indonesian digital cinema often embeds national identity markers within its adaptations. However, existing research tends to focus on single media forms such as print or film and rarely explores how a narrative like *KKN di Desa Penari* moves fluidly across platforms while negotiating cultural meanings with multiple audiences (Purnama, 2023).

Participatory Culture and Audience Agency

Jenkins (2006) introduced the concepts of participatory culture and transmedia storytelling, emphasizing that audiences are no longer passive consumers but active contributors who reshape narratives across platforms. Purnama (2023) highlight how digital users co-create and extend cultural narratives, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts. Setiawan et al. (2021) show that user participation on platforms like YouTube and TikTok directly shapes the production and circulation of cultural content. Zhou et al. (2020) offer a comparative view, showing regional variations in participatory practices between Asian and Western audiences. Despite these insights, limited research has focused on how participatory practices contribute to the sustained relevance and reinterpretation of a single local narrative across multiple media forms (Budiana, 2024; Sofia, 2025).

Remediation and Narrative Transformation

Bolter & Grusin (1999) conceptualized remediation as the process through which new media refashion older media forms to suit contemporary aesthetic and consumption patterns. This is evident in *KKN di Desa Penari*, where the migration from symbolic Twitter horror threads to cinematic spectacle exemplifies how narratives are reshaped to meet the sensory and emotional demands of each platform. Coritama et al. (2022); Dewa (2022); Akbar et al. (2022) illustrate how horror elements in Indonesian media are remediated to amplify emotional impact and broaden market appeal. Nevertheless, prior studies have focused largely on general patterns of convergence rather than examining how remediation operates at the level of specific narrative elements such as character depiction or cultural symbolism as a story crosses media boundaries (Sofia, 2025).

Synthesis and Gap in the Literature

Existing scholarship provides valuable insights into intertextuality, adaptation, participatory culture, and remediation as individual frameworks (Bolter

& Grusin, 1999; Genette, 1997; Hutcheon & O’Flynn, 2013; Jenkins, 2006). However, there is limited integrative analysis that brings these perspectives together to explore how they intersect in shaping the transformation of a single narrative across platforms. The case of *KKN di Desa Penari* offers a unique opportunity to address this gap by analyzing how intertextual references, adaptive strategies, audience participation, and remediation processes collectively shape narrative meaning within Indonesia’s hybrid digital ecosystem.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with an intertextual analysis framework to examine the narrative transformation of *KKN di Desa Penari* across various media platforms. The focus on *KKN di Desa Penari* was deliberately chosen through purposive sampling, as the narrative represents a unique case within Indonesia’s digital cultural ecosystem. It originated as a social media phenomenon through a Twitter thread and evolved into formal adaptations such as novels and films, as well as informal expressions through user-generated content on platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram. This case was considered particularly suitable for investigating digital intertextuality, media convergence, adaptation strategies, and participatory culture because of its extensive cross-platform migration, sustained audience engagement, and cultural resonance. Other local horror narratives were excluded due to their more limited transmedia presence and lower levels of public participation across platforms, which would have constrained the depth of comparative intertextual analysis.

The data for this study consisted of both primary and secondary sources. The primary data included the original Twitter thread posted by @SimpleMan in 2019, the official novel adaptation, the film produced by MD Pictures in 2022, and a variety of user-generated digital content such as memes, fan art, TikTok remixes, YouTube reviews, and reaction videos. These data sources were selected to represent both formal adaptations and grassroots participatory expressions, ensuring a holistic view of the narrative’s transformation. Secondary data included academic articles, media reviews, and online commentaries that provided context, critical perspectives, and scholarly interpretations relevant to *KKN di Desa Penari* and its cultural impact. Data were gathered through systematic documentation, purposive online searches, and content archiving across major social media platforms and digital repositories between 2019 and 2024.

The analytical process followed a multi-step intertextual method inspired by Genette (1997) theory, emphasizing hypertextual relationships, narrative adaptation, and remediation processes. The first step involved mapping direct and indirect references between the original narrative and its adaptations to identify narrative elements that were retained, modified, or expanded. This included tracing recurring motifs, character portrayals especially of Badarawuhi and cultural symbols. The second step applied thematic coding to categorize patterns of

transformation across media platforms, focusing on how each medium’s unique affordances shaped the form and meaning of the narrative. The third step analyzed relationships between texts to identify adaptation strategies, remediation dynamics, and the role of participatory culture in sustaining and reshaping the narrative. Special attention was given to how formal media (e.g., film and novel) interacted with user-generated content to create a layered, evolving story world.

To enhance validity and rigor, the study incorporated triangulation by comparing formal adaptations with user-generated reinterpretations and situating these findings within broader theoretical frameworks of digital intertextuality, participatory culture, media convergence, and remediation. This methodological design enabled the research to go beyond surface-level descriptions, offering a comprehensive understanding of how *KKN di Desa Penari* was continuously negotiated, reconfigured, and sustained through interactions between media forms, cultural contexts, and audience practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study explored the transformation of *KKN di Desa Penari* as it migrated across media platforms, reflecting dynamic processes of intertextuality, adaptation, remediation, and participatory culture within Indonesia’s digital storytelling ecosystem. The findings show that the narrative did not merely shift between forms but was actively reinterpreted and reshaped in ways that reflected the affordances of each medium, the cultural context, and the agency of both producers and audiences.

Narrative Distribution and Transformation Across Platforms

The transformation of *KKN di Desa Penari* across media platforms reflects how a local narrative can evolve dynamically in response to the affordances of different media, the expectations of distinct audiences, and the broader cultural context. As discussed in the Introduction, this narrative serves as a paradigmatic example of how digital intertextuality and media convergence operate in Indonesia’s storytelling ecosystem. The analysis, following the intertextual and adaptation frameworks outlined in the Methodology, shows that the migration of *KKN di Desa Penari* was not a linear transfer of content but a complex, layered process involving reinterpretation, remediation, and participatory co-creation.

The original Twitter thread, published by @SimpleMan in 2019, initiated the narrative as a fragmented, personal horror account that leveraged the platform’s affordances for immediacy and intimacy. The thread’s episodic structure, conversational tone, and atmospheric tension encouraged readers to engage imaginatively, filling narrative gaps with their own interpretations. This mode of storytelling reflects what Genette (1997) describes as hypertextuality, where the narrative built upon familiar horror tropes and folklore references but reassembled them in a format suited to social media consumption.

The novel adaptation of *KKN di Desa Penari* transformed the narrative by expanding its descriptive depth, moral framing, and cultural embedding. The print medium allowed for greater elaboration on local customs, prohibitions, and spiritual beliefs, situating the horror within a clearly articulated moral universe. This shift demonstrates how adaptation operates as a dialogic process (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013), where narratives are recontextualized to engage with the cultural and symbolic functions of the new medium. The novel offered readers a more detailed, reflective engagement with the story, embedding it within familiar cultural codes and communal anxieties.

The cinematic adaptation remediated the narrative into a visual and auditory spectacle, employing the conventions of horror film to evoke fear and fascination. Through cinematography, sound design, makeup, and special effects, the film materialized the unseen horrors of the Twitter and novel versions, transforming atmospheric suggestion into visceral experience. This process aligns with Bolter & Grusin (1999) concept of remediation, wherein older narrative forms are refashioned to suit the sensory demands of new media. The film's mass-mediated format also enabled the narrative to reach a broader, more diverse audience, amplifying its cultural impact while rearticulating its meanings to suit cinematic conventions.

Beyond formal adaptations, the narrative continued to evolve through user-generated content on platforms such as TikTok and YouTube. Here, participatory practices played a central role in sustaining and reshaping the story. TikTok users produced remixes, parodies, and reaction videos, while YouTube creators offered critical reviews, analyses, and alternative interpretations. These practices exemplify participatory culture where audiences act as co-creators, extending the narrative beyond its original forms and embedding it within contemporary digital vernaculars (Jenkins, 2006). The participatory remixes and reinterpretations reflect horizontal intertextuality, creating new texts that exist in dialogue with the original while also serving as sites of cultural negotiation and community identity formation.

The table below summarizes how each platform contributed uniquely to the narrative's transformation, shaping the structure, emotional resonance, and cultural significance of *KKN di Desa Penari*:

Table 1. Platform-Specific Contributions to the Narrative Transformation of *KKN di Desa Penari* across Media Formats

Platform	Narrative Type	Characteristics
Twitter	Horror threads	Personal, fragmentary, intimate
Novel	Adapted fiction	Descriptive, culturally layered
Film	Horror film	Visual, affective, mass-mediated
TikTok	Reaction content, remixes	Participatory, viral
YouTube	Reviews, commentary	Critical, interpretive

Source: Processed Data by Researchers (2025)

This multi-platform transformation highlights that *KKN di Desa Penari* is not a static text but a dynamic cultural artifact. Its meaning, emotional impact, and cultural resonance were continually renegotiated through adaptation, remediation, and participatory engagement as the narrative moved across media forms. The findings illustrate that in the context of Indonesia’s digital convergence culture, local narratives thrive not by remaining fixed, but by adapting flexibly to the diverse modes of expression and interaction that characterize contemporary media ecosystems.

Shifting Representation of Badarawuhi Across Media

The transformation of Badarawuhi as a character across platforms exemplifies how adaptation and remediation reshape cultural symbols in response to the affordances of different media, audience expectations, and ideological frameworks. As described in the Introduction, this study seeks to illuminate how local narratives are renegotiated in hybrid media environments, and the character of Badarawuhi provides a key lens through which this process can be observed. The Methodology section outlined an intertextual and adaptation-based analytical strategy, which revealed that Badarawuhi’s portrayal was not merely transferred across platforms but actively reconfigured to serve different narrative, aesthetic, and cultural functions.

In the original Twitter thread, Badarawuhi appeared as an unseen, implied presence evoked through suggestion, atmosphere, and fragmented description. This form of depiction leveraged the platform’s fragmentary, conversational structure and invited readers to engage their imagination. The horror was generated not by direct visualization but by what remained unseen and unsaid, aligning with the platform’s tendency toward speculative participation. This approach reflects the principle of horizontal intertextuality, as readers drew upon prior cultural knowledge of mystical figures to co-construct the character’s presence in their minds.

The novel adaptation rearticulated Badarawuhi within a clearer moral and cultural framework. Here, she was depicted in greater descriptive detail and embedded within a narrative that highlighted customary prohibitions, moral codes, and spiritual warnings. This transformation illustrates the adaptive process as a dialogic negotiation Hutcheon & O’Flynn (2013), where the character’s role was expanded beyond a figure of fear to serve as a symbolic guardian of moral boundaries, reflecting the cultural values and anxieties of Indonesian society. The novel’s descriptive depth allowed readers to engage with Badarawuhi as both a supernatural entity and a representation of communal ethical structures.

In contrast, the film adaptation remediated Badarawuhi into a vivid, explicit visual icon. Through costuming, makeup, special effects, and cinematography, the character was transformed into a spectacle designed to evoke visceral fear. This shift reflects the conventions of horror cinema, where fear is often generated

through sensory overload rather than suggestion. The film's materialization of Badarawuhi illustrates Bolter & Grusin (1999) concept of remediation, where older narrative forms are refashioned to meet the sensory demands of new media. In doing so, Badarawuhi became an iconic image in contemporary Indonesian popular culture, recognizable not only for her narrative role but for her visual aesthetic as popularized through trailers, posters, memes, and fan art.

The following table summarizes these shifts in representation across media platforms:

Table 2. Media-Specific Shifts in Character Representation and Their Impacts on Audience Perception in *KKN di Desa Penari*

Medium	Character Depiction	Audience Impact
Twitter	Symbolic, unseen, described through suggestion	Sparks imagination, mystique
Novel	Detailed, contextualized in local customs	Clarifies moral and cultural tensions
Film	Explicit visual portrayal with special effects	Intensifies fear, creates viral imagery

Source: Processed Data by Researchers (2025)

These transformations reveal that Badarawuhi's meaning is not fixed but continuously negotiated as the narrative moves across platforms. Each medium reframes the character in ways that align with its expressive affordances and ideological functions: from a figure of suggestion and mystery in social media storytelling, to a moralized entity in literary adaptation, to a visual spectacle in mass-mediated cinema. This dynamic reconfiguration highlights how cultural symbols are not simply preserved across adaptations but are actively reshaped in ways that engage with local values, technological affordances, and audience expectations.

Ultimately, the shifting representation of Badarawuhi illustrates that adaptation and remediation are not neutral processes of transfer but are sites of cultural negotiation, where meaning, identity, and ideology are continuously rearticulated. In the context of *KKN di Desa Penari*, this process reflects broader patterns of how local myths are transformed in hybrid digital environments to maintain relevance, resonance, and cultural significance in Indonesia's contemporary media landscape.

Audience Participation and Digital Reinterpretation

The transformation of *KKN di Desa Penari* across platforms was not shaped solely by formal adaptations; it was equally driven by the active participation of digital audiences who engaged with, extended, and reinterpreted the narrative. This study examines how local narratives like *KKN di Desa Penari* are sustained and reshaped within hybrid media environments through participatory culture. The analytical approach detailed in the Methodology highlighted how user-generated

content functions as a critical site for cultural negotiation, enabling audiences to act as co-creators of meaning rather than passive consumers.

Digital platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Reddit served as arenas where audiences interacted with the narrative, producing derivative works that reflected both engagement and reinterpretation. On TikTok, users created remixes, parodies, and reaction videos that transformed scenes from the film or novel into new hybrid forms, often blending horror with humor or social commentary. YouTube users engaged in critical analyses, offering alternative readings, unpacking cultural symbols, and comparing adaptations. Instagram and Twitter became spaces for visual reinterpretation through memes and fan art, where the imagery of Badarawuhi and other elements of the narrative were reimagined, often in ways that merged local symbolism with contemporary pop culture. Reddit users contributed by crafting alternative threads and speculative sequels, extending the narrative through horizontal intertextuality and collective storytelling practices.

Table 3. Examples of Participatory Reinterpretations of *KKN di Desa Penari* across Various Media Platforms

Participation Form	Example	Dominant Platform
Memes	Humorous or critical mashups blending <i>Badarawuhi</i> with popular icons	Instagram
Fan art	Artistic visualizations of characters or scenes	Twitter
TikTok remixes	Music-video mashups, parodies, reaction edits	TikTok
YouTube commentary	Reviews, critiques, cultural analysis	YouTube
Reinterpretation threads	Alternative versions, speculative continuations	Reddit

Source: Processed Data by Researchers (2025)

These participatory practices exemplify Jenkins (2006) concept of participatory culture and transmedia storytelling. They show that narratives no longer belong exclusively to formal producers but are co-constructed in dialogic interaction with audiences. Importantly, audience engagement in this case extended beyond entertainment; it functioned as a form of digital cultural literacy where users actively negotiated cultural identity, moral codes, and social commentary through their reinterpretations.

The participatory ecosystem surrounding *KKN di Desa Penari* demonstrates that user-generated content is not merely ancillary but central to how contemporary narratives achieve longevity and cultural resonance. Each reinterpretation, remix, or commentary contributed to a living, evolving narrative network where meaning was continuously negotiated and redistributed. This dynamic process reflects horizontal intertextuality, as new texts and interpretations emerged alongside the original and its formal adaptations, creating a fluid narrative ecology.

Furthermore, this participatory engagement facilitated cultural negotiation, as audiences embedded local moral values, spiritual anxieties, and communal identities into their creative works. Memes and remixes often reflected tensions between tradition and modernity, fear and humor, spirituality and spectacle. In doing so, they transformed *KKN di Desa Penari* from a fixed narrative into a participatory site where cultural anxieties and identities could be explored, contested, and rearticulated.

Ultimately, the findings illustrate that in Indonesia's digital convergence culture, participatory practices play a vital role in sustaining and transforming local narratives. Audiences, through their creative engagements, act as cultural agents who ensure that stories like *KKN di Desa Penari* remain relevant, resonant, and meaningful across media boundaries and social contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated how *KKN di Desa Penari* evolved as a dynamic cultural artifact through its migration across media platforms, illustrating the interplay of intertextuality, adaptation, remediation, and participatory culture within Indonesia's hybrid digital ecosystem. The narrative transformation reflected that adaptation was not a mere transfer of content but a complex process of reinterpretation and cultural negotiation shaped by the affordances of each medium and the expectations of diverse audiences. On Twitter, the story fostered intimacy and speculative participation; in the novel, it embedded local moral codes and cultural depth; and in film, it remediated into a visual spectacle that amplified horror aesthetics for mass consumption.

The shifting representation of Badarawuhi further highlighted how cultural symbols are continually rearticulated across platforms, transforming from an unseen mystical figure to a moralized entity and ultimately into a mass-mediated visual icon. Audience participation played a critical role in sustaining and reshaping the narrative, as users engaged through memes, fan art, remixes, and reinterpretation threads that extended the story's relevance and cultural resonance. These practices reflected how digital storytelling in Indonesia is no longer the domain of producers alone, but a collaborative space where audiences act as co-creators of cultural meaning.

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research on digital intertextuality and participatory culture by showing how local narratives in Southeast Asia thrive through flexible adaptation and continuous negotiation across media forms. The study also highlights that remediation in this context involves not only aesthetic transformation but ideological reframing that reflects and reworks local cultural identities. Future research could explore comparative cases across other Southeast Asian narratives, investigate the role of platform-specific algorithms in shaping participatory practices, or examine the long-term cultural impacts of such cross-platform storytelling phenomena.

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