

# “RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON” ANIMATION FILM: A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDONESIA'S CULTURE-BASED CREATIVE INDUSTRY

## FILM ANIMASI “RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON”: SUMBER INSPIRASI PENGEMBANGAN INDUSTRI KREATIF BERBASIS BUDAYA INDONESIA

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### Abstract

*The success of the animated film "Raya and The Last Dragon" which blends Southeast Asian culture is one proof of the new power of the economy that relies on creativity. This study aims to analyze aspects of art-literature-culture in the film that have the potential to be an inspiration for the development of culture-based creative industries (economy) in Indonesia. Using the basic concepts of creative economy theory and cultural anthropology, data collection in this descriptive-qualitative study is carried out by document study methods. The main data source of this study is the animated film "Raya and The Last Dragon" and secondary data sources are obtained from written, audio, and video materials. The data collected in this study refers to the scope of culture, namely ideas or opinion, cultural activities, and the results of cultural creativity contained in this animated film. The data that have been identified and classified are further analyzed using the concepts of creative (industrial) economic theory and cultural anthropology. The results of the study show that the work process and aspects of art-culture such as content creation based on local mythology, introduction of cultural values through stories, multi-cultural content creation, cultural tourism, cultural collaboration and creative industries, creative training, and innovation are important factors that inspire creators to develop culture-based creative industries in Indonesia. This study contributes to the development of interdisciplinary studies between humanities (art-culture-literature) and economics.*

**Keywords:** *animated film; creative industry; culture, Indonesia*

### Abstrak

Kesuksesan film animasi “Raya and The Last Dragon” yang meramu budaya Asia Tenggara menjadi salah satu bukti kekuatan baru ekonomi yang bertumpu pada kreativitas. Kajian ini bertujuan menganalisis aspek-aspek seni-sastra-budaya dalam film tersebut yang berpotensi menjadi inspirasi bagi pengembangan industri (ekonomi) kreatif berbasis budaya di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan konsep dasar teori ekonomi kreatif dan antropologi budaya, pengumpulan data dalam kajian deskriptif-kualitatif ini dilakukan dengan metode studi dokumen. Sumber data utama kajian ini adalah film animasi “Raya and The Last Dragon” dan sumber data sekunder diperoleh dari bahan-bahan tertulis, audio, dan video. Data yang dikumpulkan dalam kajian ini merujuk pada ruang lingkup budaya, yaitu ide atau gagasan, aktivitas budaya, dan hasil dari kreativitas budaya yang terdapat dalam film animasi ini. Data yang telah diidentifikasi dan diklasifikasi selanjutnya dianalisis dengan menggunakan konsep teori ekonomi (industri) kreatif dan antropologi budaya. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa proses kerja dan aspek-aspek seni-budaya seperti

pembuatan konten berbasis mitologi lokal, pengenalan nilai budaya melalui cerita, pembuatan konten multi budaya, pariwisata budaya, kolaborasi budaya dan industri kreatif, pelatihan kreatif, dan inovasi menjadi faktor penting yang menginspirasi kreator untuk mengembangkan industri kreatif berbasis budaya di Indonesia. Kajian ini berkontribusi bagi pengembangan kajian interdisipliner antara humaniora (seni-budaya-sastra) dan ekonomi.

**Kata-Kata Kunci:** film animasi; industri kreatif; budaya; Indonesia

## 1. Introduction

The creative industry began to get serious attention, both economically and politically, since the end of the 20th century (Vitkauskaitė, 2015). This phenomenon has experienced tremendous development in the 21st century (R. Haines & Lotter, 2022). Creative industries have replaced traditional industrial models that rely on land, labor, and capital with new industrial models that rely on the creation and exploitation of intellectual property (Araya & Peters, 2010; R. J. Haines, 2018; Howkins, 2001; Venturelli, 2000). However, this issue is still new for developing countries, including Indonesia (Barrowclough & Kozul-Wright, 2008; De Beukelaer, 2014; Fahmi & Koster, 2017; UNDP & UNESCO, 2013).

The diversity and uniqueness of Indonesian culture has the opportunity to be used as a source of inspiration for the development of the creative industry through the creation, production, and distribution of works of art, literature, and/or culture. This can be seen from several local-style novels published between 1970-1995 such as *Confession Pariyem* (1981) by Linus Suryadi A. G, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (1982) by Ahmad Tohari, *Canting* (1986) by Arswendo, and *Curtain Down* (1993) by NH. Early (Rahaya et al, 2021). According to Fahmi et al. (2017), around 7% of creative industries based on arts-literature-culture in Indonesia have the potential to trigger an increase in regional income. However, access to the development of creative industries in Indonesia has not been evenly distributed and only centralized in certain regions. Therefore, efforts are needed to develop creative industries sourced from local arts and culture.

The opportunity for the development of the art-culture-based creative industry has apparently been read by Walt Disney, one of the largest animated film companies in America, with the birth of "Raya and The Last Dragon" (Disney, 2021). Walt Disney is ranked first as the most popular film production house with a profit of 37.9% (Saputri, 2022). The same thing is also done by several countries in Asia. Japan and Korea have long been seriously developing culture-based animation and *video games*. Although initially their products were only for the domestic market, gradually they made the creative industry an export commodity. This step was followed by China with the *online game* and animation industry. Several other countries such as the Philippines, India, and Singapore are also developing creative industries oriented towards animation exports (Tscang, 2009).

Animation is an integral part of the creative industry as it involves the creation and production of visual artworks. Creative industries produce not only physical products but also cultural values, creativity, and identity. The sector creates jobs in everything from arts and entertainment to technology and marketing. In addition to its economic contribution, the field also plays an important role in promoting cultural diversity, exchange of ideas, and cross-cultural understanding. The animated film "Raya and The Last Dragon" is one of the products of the creative industry that is able to provide creative and collaborative inspiration in concocting Southeast Asian culture.

In the production process, the animation of "Raya and The Last Dragon" involves various collaborative, creative, and technical

stages. In the early stages, the Walt Disney Animation Studios creative team developed concepts for the story, characters, and world in the film. They took inspiration from Southeast Asian culture and mythology, creating character designs inspired by various tribes and traditions in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, metaphorized as Kumandra. The diversity of tribes and traditions is described as the body parts of the dragon, namely the heart, tail, claws, bones, and fangs (Aliffianda & Yusanto, 2022).

The screenplay was written by Adele Lim, Qui Nguyen, and Paul Briggs (Saba et al., 2022). Adele Lim was previously involved in writing the screenplay of the film "Crazy Rich Asians". Qui Nguyen has a background in theatre and has contributed to screenwriting for numerous productions. The writing team developed complex and interesting characters and built a storyline that focuses on the adventures and growth of the main character, Raya. Meanwhile, character designers create visual displays of characters, costumes, and the world where the story takes place. This design includes elements of culture, architecture, flora, fauna, and the unique environment of the land of Kumandra.

The *storyboard* team depicts important sequences in the form of sequential images. It helps in planning the visualization of the scene and ensures the storyline goes well. The next step is to create a rough version of the film that uses moving images and temporary sound. This helps the creative team to assess the rhythm, storyline, and potential improvements before entering the more in-depth animation stage.

After all the processes are done, the main work of creating an animated film begins. This stage involves creating actual animations for characters and scenes. These animations include movement, facial expressions, interactions between characters, and voice over. The sound recording process is done by the

actors to give voice to the characters. These recordings are then synchronized with existing animations. Visual effects such as water, fire, and magical elements are added to provide visual depth. Lighting is also applied to create an atmosphere that matches the *mood* of the scene.

In the final stage, music and film scores are created to reinforce the emotions and atmosphere of the story. Composers create songs that depict the culture and feelings of the characters. Further editing is carried out. Scene-gradual, visual, and sound are carefully combined and edited to produce a coherent final version of the film.

The animated film "Raya and The Last Dragon" which was released in 2021 takes inspiration from Southeast Asian culture, including Indonesia. In this animation, there is no specific visualization depicted that refers to the culture of a particular country because it only takes the Southeast Asian region as the background of the story. Therefore, each form must cover the entire culture of Southeast Asia (Saba et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the reflection of Indonesian culture in this animated film can be used as inspiration, opportunity, and challenge for Indonesian creators to improve the creative industry based on art-literature-culture. From the various stages of collaboration, creativity, and technical work in making the animation "Raya and The Last Dragon" then the question arises how to develop the creative economy based on Indonesian art and culture. Through this effort, it is hoped that opportunities will be opened for the growth of the creative economy (industry) based on local cultural wisdom that is able to compete in the global arena.

## 2. Method

The data collected in this study refers to the scope of culture, namely ideas or ideas, cultural activities, and the results of cultural creativity. From the three scopes, data were obtained in

the form of food, clothing, figures, traditional houses, livelihoods, traditional weapons, traditional equipment, music, traditional rituals, values, and art. After all are identified and classified, data in the form of these elements are then analyzed using the concepts of creative economic (industrial) theory (Howkins, 2001) and cultural anthropology (Kuntjaraningrat, 1987). The concept of creative economy is used to see the relationship of creativity, innovation, and cultural expression with economic value creation. Meanwhile, the concept of cultural anthropology is used to see cultural variations in animation that inspire creativity and innovation. Finally, the results of the analysis and its findings are presented descriptively.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 A Glimpse of "Raya and The Last Dragon"

The animation "Raya and The Last Dragon" revolves around a fairyland called Kumandra. In this land humans and dragons once coexisted in harmony. However, when evil forces affect the world and threaten human existence, the dragons make great sacrifices to save humanity. They sacrifice themselves by destroying the forces of evil in an action called "The Last Dragon".

Several hundred years later, Kumandra split into five different regions and humans lived separately for fear that evil forces would return. Raya, a princess from the Kingdom of Hatu, takes on a personal mission to search for "The Last Dragon" who is believed to still be alive in the remote forest. According to legend, "The Last Dragon" can restore magical powers and bring peace back to Kumandra.

However, after finding a legendary dragon named Sisu, Raya realizes that restoring magical powers is not an easy task. They must team up with unexpected allies and face the enormous challenge of reuniting divided kingdoms, as well as confronting evil that

wants to prevent "The Last Dragon" from achieving its goals.

While traveling across a land full of dangers and wonders, Raya learns about the importance of trust, friendship, and learns to understand and forgive the past. In their quest to save Kumandra, Raya and Sisu face various obstacles and powerful enemies. However, with determination and unwavering spirit, they strive to restore harmony and restore the lost miracle in their land.

Judging from the aspects of creation (innovation, creativity), facts and means of the story (socio-cultural setting and presentation techniques), along with its content, the animation "Raya and The Last Dragon" shows several things that allow many parties to develop as an important factor in the art-literature-culture-based creative industry. For example, it is related to mythology-based content, introduction to cultural aspects (clothing, environment, food, characters, values), and some creative products as a means of tourism development. This possibility can happen because this animation is a product that combines innovation, creativity, and cultural richness, allowing the development of various sectors in the creative industry. In addition, animation is a translation tool that can strengthen visual-creative-innovative images as a representation of art-literary-cultural products (Kabelen, 2024).

#### 3.2 Development of Creative Industries Based on Indonesian Art-Culture

The filming of "Raya and The Last Dragon" shows the collaboration of a large creative team in combining various elements to create a rich and exciting animated world. The film reflects Disney's attention to strong cultural representation and storytelling, while still delivering an entertaining and inspiring treat. Therefore, learning from the animated film, Indonesian creators and art-culture actors can take advantage of the potential of Nusantara art-

literature-culture as a basis for the development of the creative industry.

### 3.2.1 Local mythology-based content

The animation of "Raya and The Last Dragon" can encourage Indonesian animators and creators to explore mythology and local stories in the context of animation. This can include characters, backgrounds, and storylines sourced from the richness of Indonesian art-literature-culture. Understanding local mythology, folklore, legends, and Indonesian culture thoroughly is important. From these myths will be obtained legendary figures and important elements in the story. This will help understand the cultural roots and values that will be displayed in the animation. Choose the appropriate story or myth to be raised in animation by considering messages or values that are relevant today. Of course, the story or myth fits into the animation format and has elements that can be visualized well.

The characters created are strong and memorable characters based on characters from mythology or folklore selected. Each character has clear physical traits, personalities, and goals. These characters should reflect Indonesian cultural identity and have emotional depth. The setting is designed to support the story and characters by using elements of Indonesian culture, such as traditional architecture, nature, and distinctive objects. The background should help create the right atmosphere and be rooted in the cultural context. Creating an engaging, flowing storyline with climax points and emotional peaks that keep the audience engaged. Elements of mythology and local stories are integrated into the plot by incorporating Indonesian cultural values into the storyline. Thus, the moral of a myth or story such as friendship, courage, perseverance, or respect for nature is well conveyed.

Next, design a unique visual design and depict elements of Indonesian culture. The

design design considers the color palette, art style, and aesthetics in accordance with the myths and stories raised so as to create smooth animations and successfully convey the emotions of the characters well. The right sound and music can enhance the animation viewing experience. The use of music, both traditional and modern, is adapted to the atmosphere of the story. The dialogue that is built also aims to support the characters and atmosphere of the story.

### 3.2.2 Introduction to Cultural Aspects Through Stories

Introducing cultural aspects through animated films is a creative and interesting step to introduce Indonesia's artistic, literary, and cultural heritage to a world audience. It seems that the creative work of making the animated film "Raya and The Last Dragon" can be one example. Although set in Southeast Asia, directly or indirectly, the film shows some aspects of Indonesian culture. Some of these cultural aspects include the following.

#### *Traditional Clothing and Accents*

The costumes worn by the characters in the animated film "Raya and The Last Dragon" are inspired by traditional clothing from various countries in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. Some of these costumes feature elements such as batik motifs, songket, caping, and other traditional accents (Nirvana, 2023; Saba et al., 2022; Saputri, 2022; Susanto & Wiyanti, 2021)

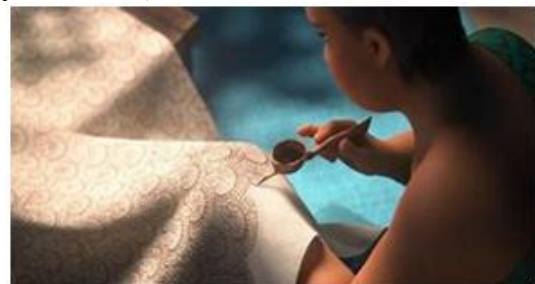


Figure 1. Batik making activity (Source: <http://www.hot.detik.com>)



Figure 2. Songket cloth (Source: <https://www.cnnindonesia.com>)



Figure 6. Puppet (Source: <https://www.goodnewsfromindonesia.id>)



Figure 3. Caping (Source: <http://www.ngopibareng.id>)

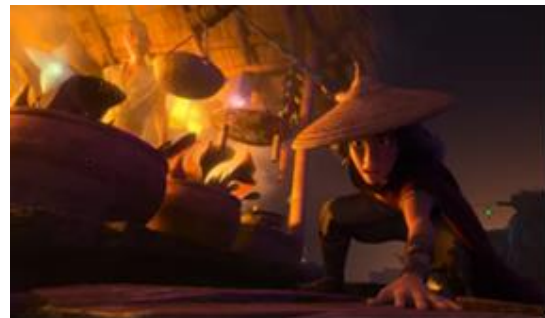


Figure 7. Martial arts (Source: <https://deadline.com>)



Figure 4. Rice filter (Source: Film *Raya and The Last Dragon* minute 08.19)



Figure 5. Dagger (Source: <http://www.hotstar.com>)

### *Milieu*

The animation "Raya and The Last Dragon" features an environment that has similarities with several places in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. Some of these places are called Kumandra which includes the territory of Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia as the center (Saputri, 2022). In the land of Kumandra also grows rice plants which are a staple food source. The human has mature and exotic skin as shown through the character Raya. Here there are also views of dense forests and rivers with floating market activities (Susanto & Wiyanti, 2021). The kingdoms depicted can be reminiscent of the tropical nature of the Southeast Asian region.



Figure 8. Forest background (Source: Sumber: <https://www.bbc.com/>)



Figure 9. Floating market on the river (Source: <https://subkultur.id/>)



Figure 10. Floating market on the river (Source: <https://subkultur.id/>)



Figure 11. Ethnic diversity (Source: <https://kincir.com/>)



Figure 12. Rumah gadang (Source: <https://anandastoon.com/>)

### Character Names

Some of the names of the characters in this film sound similar to names in Indonesian culture. For example, the character name "Raya" can be considered to have similarities with names that are common in Indonesia. As the main character, Raya as a woman with dark brown skin, big eyes and black tan, and thick black hair (Nirvana, 2023). This depiction is in accordance with the characteristics of women in Southeast Asia who live in the tropics and are accustomed to moving in direct sunlight so that they have brown skin. Brown skin color is a typical skin color for Indonesians (Sukisman & Utami, 2021).

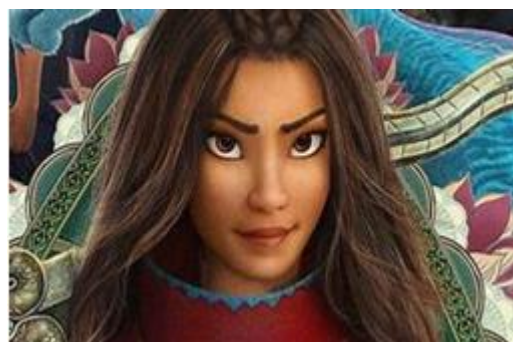


Figure 13. Raya figure (Source: <https://indonesiainside.id/>)

### Food

Although not specifically mentioned in the film, there are scenes that show foods that can be reminiscent of dishes from the Southeast

Asian region, including Indonesia. This includes main meals, side dishes, various cakes, and several types of vegetables and fruits (Susanto & Wiyanti, 2021). However, this is more likely to depict general inspiration than represent Indonesian culture specifically.



Figure 14. Rice (Source: <https://food.detik.com/>)



Figure 15, dragon fruit, mango, satai, sticky rice (Source: <https://www.unclekick.com/>)



Figure 16. Longan fruit (Source: <https://assets.pikiran-rakyat.com/>)



Figure 17. Durian, rambutan, sambal, gulai (Source: <https://www.kompasiana.com/>)

### Cultural Values

Although elements of Indonesian culture are not directly emphasized in the film, the messages of cooperation, courage, and determination that can be found in the film are cultural values that are commonly valued in many Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia. Some of the cultural values reflected in the animation "Raya and The Last Dragon" are hospitality by giving smiles, offering food to others, giving deliveries or gifts, sitting on the floor, and removing footwear when entering the house (Aliffianda & Yusanto, 2022; Susanto & Wiyanti, 2021).



Figure 18. Removing footwear (Source: Film *Raya and The Last Dragon*)

### 3.2.3 Multicultural Content

The film "Raya and The Last Dragon" combines various cultural elements in the Southeast Asian region so that it can be used as inspiration to create content that combines various cultures in Indonesia. This multicultural content can be used as a means of promoting cultural diversity and building a better understanding of ethnic diversity in Indonesia. To create animations with Indonesian multicultural content, a holistic and sensitive approach to Indonesia's cultural diversity is needed. Therefore, animators need to have a strong understanding of the various cultures that exist in Indonesia, such as customs, traditions, languages, food, and diverse values in various regions. It is important to avoid stereotypes and

understand the deeper nuances of each culture. The animation "Raya and The Last Dragon" has provided an example of the *melting pot* of Southeast Asian culture.

The multicultural content in this animation combines several cultural icons in the Southeast Asian region into an interesting story. Cultural experts, anthropologists, or other local resources help animators get a more accurate view of the culture they portray. The resulting animation focuses more on the uniqueness and complexity of each culture. In making multicultural animation, it is necessary to maintain a balance between the cultures depicted to prevent the dominance or choice of one particular culture.

Incorporating cultural elements from different parts of Indonesia into the animation will create an inclusive experience for the audience. Each tribe in Indonesia has its own uniqueness. Therefore, it is important to respect the cultural values and beliefs presented in animation by involving a team of animators who come from different cultural backgrounds to help gain a broader and more accurate perspective. Producing animated multicultural content is complex. It takes hard work, responsibility, and deep respect for cultural diversity. One of the traditional rituals included in "Raya and The Last Dragon" is an offering ritual in Bali called *banten* (Nirvana, 2023). In addition, frangipani flowers as part of the completeness of worship (Saba et al., 2022) are also displayed attractively.

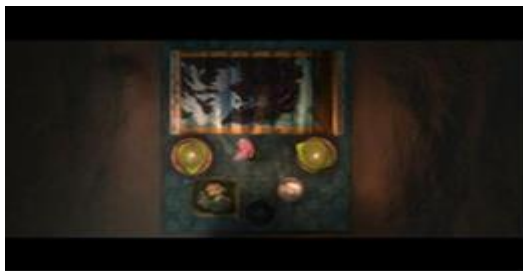


Figure 19. Offerings (Source: Raya and The Last Dragon)

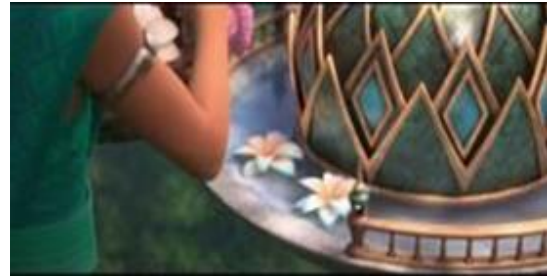


Figure 20. Frangipani flowers for ritual (Source: Raya and The Last Dragon)



Figure 21. Cambodian means of worship (Source: Raya and The Last Dragon)

### 3.2.4 Cultural Tourism

The popularity of cultural elements in "Raya and The Last Dragon" is undeniably an attraction for tourists to explore Indonesian culture directly. Historical places or cultural rituals can be interesting tourist destinations. Creating animations for the development of culture-based Indonesian tourism is a good idea to elevate the cultural richness of a country such as traditions, dances, music, food, traditional clothing, and historical places. The cultural aspects raised in the animation of course focus on the purpose of tourism development.

Character development and visual design tailored to the story and culture raised. Likewise, the background design, props, and other visual elements are adapted to the desired cultural style. Strong animation and focusing on the richness of Indonesian culture can be an effective tool to increase tourism and introduce our culture to the world.

### 3.2.5 Cultural Collaboration and Creative Industries

The success of the film "Raya and The Last Dragon" can encourage collaboration between the film, art, music, and handicraft industries with other creative industries. This could create cross-cutting products that combine culture and creativity. Combining culture and creative industries is an exciting way to create added value and create unique experiences for society. It takes effort to find common ground between culture and creative industries in order to collaborate.

These collaborations can be art, music, design, fashion, technology, film, and more. Simple examples include the use of traditional motifs in modern designs or blending local elements in marketing campaigns. The collaboration process must involve local artists, designers, musicians, and creative practitioners who have a deep understanding of the culture so as to create authentic projects. They can help interpret and integrate cultural elements with their creativity.

Therefore, it is important to approach the local community in project planning and implementation in order to obtain input and feedback. Thus, the projects carried out are relevant and beneficial to the local community. The provision of information about the origins of culture, traditions, and the meanings behind the interpreted cultural elements will provide valuable experiences for the people involved in them.

### 3.2.6 Culture-Based Creative Education and Training

The film "Raya and The Last Dragon" can be a source of inspiration in the development of education and training programs that focus on merging culture with creativity. This can help train a generation of creators who are able to combine both aspects in innovative ways. Culture-based creative education and training is an approach that can help develop the

creativity and cultural awareness of students or trainees, for example conducting in-depth analysis related to culture that will be integrated in education or training such as values, norms, beliefs, and relevant cultural practices. This will help us in identifying cultural elements that can be included in creative activities. One example of culture-based creative training has been carried out by Anoeграjeki (2020), namely training on making Gandrung Batik which takes inspiration from Gandrung Dance in Banyuwangi, East Java.



Figure 22. Creative training module (Source: Anoeграjeki, 2020)

The creation of learning or training materials that emphasize creativity and cultural values using literature (stories), art, music, dance, or other forms of cultural expression is an important part of training activities. In this way the material taught becomes interesting according to the intended audience. Designing different types of creative activities that encourage participants to think outside the box and apply cultural elements becomes part of the training method. For example, holding role-playing sessions based on traditional stories, or creating art projects inspired by cultural motifs.

Interaction and collaboration between participants will open opportunities for creative thought exchange and strengthening social ties. Participants have the opportunity to take an active role in the learning process and contribute with creative ideas and their own way of cultural interpretation. This training will encourage participants to continue to develop creativity and appreciate the cultural diversity around them. This can be realized through art exhibitions, cultural performances, or other community projects.

### 3.2.7 Innovation in Design and Animation

The animation of "Raya and The Last Dragon" has a unique visual style. This encourages Indonesian animators and designers to develop visual approaches and styles that reflect local culture. Encouraging innovation in culture-based design and animation is an important step towards producing works that are unique, meaningful, and relevant locally and globally. Adapting elements of local culture into design and animation in creative ways is the first step in innovation. It is likely that modern elements will then merge with traditional or even make unique reinterpretations of existing cultural elements. However, the narrative of any culture-based design should be culturally relevant and relatable to the audience. Experimentation with different shapes, colors, patterns, and textures that refer to the culture being interpreted will result in unique works. Involving local communities or sources of inspiration in the creative process will help provide valuable input, maintain cultural accuracy, and increase a sense of belonging among those communities. Adopting new technologies in design and animation such as virtual reality, *augmented reality*, or 3D animation can also give a new dimension to culture-based works.

In addition, the inclusion of works in art exhibitions, cultural festivals, or cross-

disciplinary collaborations will open opportunities for the works that have been produced to be more widely known, thus opening opportunities to collaborate with others. As the world of design and animation continues to evolve, innovation will be a way to produce interesting and impactful work. Innovations in culture-based design and animation not only create beautiful works, but also have deep meaning for the audience.

## 4. Conclusion

The popularity and success of "Raya and The Last Dragon" as an animated film can be an inspiration to encourage more investment and opportunities to develop culture-based Indonesian animated films. At least this can create new jobs in the creative field. This film inspires the development of tourist destinations based on the *setting* or background of the story and culture. If the location or cultural elements in it are adapted into tourist destinations, it will undoubtedly create jobs in the tourism sector and support local economic growth. These animated films can encourage the development of story-based games and apps related to the characters and worlds in the film. This creates new opportunities for software and technology developers to create attractive and profitable digital products.

The success of animated films will also have an impact on increasing the demand for professional creators such as animators, illustrators, screenwriters, and art directors. This situation will encourage the establishment of educational and training institutions. Through education and training will also provide wider opportunities for individuals to develop skills in the field of creative industries. The animated film "Raya and The Last Dragon" can inspire the local creative community to more actively participate in creative projects and collaborations. Through collaboration and active participation among the community of artists and creators, an atmosphere that is more

productive, innovative, and allows for a more intensive exchange of ideas and experiences.

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