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Digital Literature in Indonesia's Creative Economy: Negotiated Capital, Algorithmic Habitus, Reader Agency, and Monetisation Pathways

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how digital literature in Indonesia generates cultural value within the digital creative economy by integrating cultural capital, reader agency, and platform aesthetics. A conceptual model is advanced with operational definitions of negotiated capital, a mapped capital conversion and monetisation landscape, and actionable policy levers for equitable discovery and transparent intellectual property and monetisation. The construct of algorithmic habitus is also proposed as the durable yet adaptive dispositions through which works are calibrated to platform aesthetics and platform grammars without forfeiting craft. A multi-stage design was applied, combining observational analysis of creative practice across Wattpad, Instagram, TikTok, Medium, and YouTube; semi-structured interviews with ten creators (R1 to R10); an online survey of 100 readers aged 15-29; and an expert–practitioner FGD. Thematic synthesis produced a cross-platform matrix and propositions on opening fit, unit calibration, prosodic layout, affective timing, and navigability. Creator portfolios align with platform grammars, including serialisation and cliffhangers on Wattpad, three-second hooks and affective pivots on TikTok, caption depth and visual lineation on Instagram, and framed openings with chapter markers on YouTube and Medium. In conclusion, platforms operate as co-authors of both form and value. The framework extends Bourdieu's field and capital to platform infrastructures, clarifies how symbolic recognition is converted into economic opportunity, and specifies policy levers for fairer discovery and transparent monetisation. While grounded in Indonesia, the propositions might be generalisable to other platform ecologies. It also introduces a Creator–Platform–Reader (C-P-R) system model to map how attention and legitimacy circulate as platform signals and how these signals condition monetisation pathways. The study closes with policy recommendations for fairer discovery, revenue transparency, and rights protection in Indonesia's creative economy.

Keywords: capital conversion; creative economy; digital literature; platform aesthetics; reader agency

INTRODUCTION

The platformisation of culture has reconfigured how literary works in Indonesia are produced, circulated, and valued, shifting from print-centric traditions to open, algorithmically mediated environments across Wattpad, Medium, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube (Ajie et al., 2024; Jordan & Richterich, 2023). In these environments, readers act not only as consumers but also as curators and co-legitimators, exercising what this study conceptualises as reader agency. In this study, reader agency refers to readers' capacity to actively influence literary visibility and circulation through such platform-mediated practices, enabled by digital literacy. Signals such as

comments, saves or shares, and watch or read duration shape discovery and durability. The implications are simultaneously cultural and economic. Platforms co-author form via interface grammars and value via visibility inputs within the digital creative economy, giving rise to what this study conceptualises as platform aesthetics and algorithmic habitus.

In this study, platform aesthetics refers to the visual, textual, and interactional design conventions embedded in digital platforms such as interface layouts, feed structures, and preview mechanisms, which shape how literary content is composed, circulated, and evaluated (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Trillò, 2023). Algorithmic habitus is used here to denote the durable yet adaptive dispositions through which creators internalise platform logics and routinely calibrate creative decisions such as openings, unit length, and affective timing, in response to algorithmic visibility metrics and monetisation incentives, building on scholarship on digital habitus and algorithmic governance (Bishop, 2019; Bucher, 2018; Ignatow & Robinson, 2017). However, these concepts have rarely been operationalised to explain digital literary production within Indonesia's creative economy.

Despite a growing literature on digital culture and creative industries, three gaps persist. First, prior scholarship seldom integrates creator strategies, reader agency, and platform infrastructures into an operational account of how different forms of capital are validated and converted into symbolic recognition and monetisation. Second, the aesthetic grammars of platforms, including openings, unit sizing, prosodic layout, caption depth, affective timing, and navigability, are frequently discussed impressionistically rather than translated into comparative measures for analysis. Third, Indonesia-specific evidence connecting these dynamics to policy levers, including fair discovery, transparent revenue splits, and intellectual property (IP) safeguards, remains limited (He et al., 2023; Magalhães-Timotio, 2024; Martial et al., 2024). This study addresses those gaps by adopting two constructs from prior scholarship and adapting them to digital literature: 1) negotiated capital, denoting the actor-level work through which cultural, social, and digital capitals are validated and converted into symbolic and economic value and 2) algorithmic habitus, describing durable yet adaptive dispositions through which creators calibrate openings, unit length, caption depth, and affective timing to interface grammars while maintaining craft. We attempt to connect these constructs to reader agency and platform aesthetics, modelling how symbolic recognition commonly precedes offers, curation, sponsorship, or adaptation in Indonesia's platformised literary field. Guided by this framing, the study asks: (1) How is digital literature constructed and distributed within the digital creative economy? (2) How do cultural, digital, and social capitals shape legitimacy and conversion to income? (3) In what ways does digital literacy confer reader agency that matters for discovery? (4) How do platform aesthetics mediate form and value, and what policy levers follow?

LITERATURE REVIEW

FIELD, CAPITAL, AND LEGITIMACY IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF LITERATURE

Bourdieu's field theory treats literature as a competitive arena in which agents mobilise cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capitals. Legitimacy is historically contingent and reproduced through institutions and networks (Bourdieu, 2010; Rayhan et al., 2025). In platformised settings, indicators such as follower counts, dense interpretive comments, retention, and cross-platform resonance function as symbolic signals convertible into opportunities.

DIGITAL LITERACY AND READER AGENCY

New literacies research conceives digital literacy as multimodal competencies, such as navigation, hyperlinking, commenting, remixing, and moderation, which shape interpretation and circulation. Participatory-culture work reframes readers as co-producers of value. Comments, saves, shares, and playlists amplify visibility by feeding platform signals (Jenkins et al., 2013). For digital literature, meaning and value are co-constructed. Audience practices alter evaluation and discovery pipelines by partially displacing traditional gatekeepers (Henson et al., 2025).

PLATFORM AESTHETICS AND THE ATTENTION ECONOMY

Platform studies show how algorithms and affordances orient cultural production; aesthetics become operational. Tiles, hooks, episode length, caption depth, and navigability are design constraints tied to visibility and retention. Short-form video rewards three-second hooks, affective pivots, and early interaction density. Text-led platforms reward serialisation, voting, and dense commentary. To compare across sites, this study employs five measures—opening fit, unit calibration, prosodic layout, affective timing, and navigability—consistent with analyses that document the shift from linear print logics to platform-specific devices (Andreini & Boccali, 2024; Trillò, 2023).

CRITIQUES OF PLATFORM CAPITALISM AND PLATFORMISED CULTURAL LABOUR

Critical political-economy work cautions that platformisation also intensifies forms of value capture through data extraction, opaque governance, and shifting risks onto cultural workers. Even when creators appear empowered, their labour can be made precarious through unstable monetisation rules, thresholded payouts, and algorithmic volatility; visibility becomes a contested resource rather than a neutral outcome of 'quality'. These critiques foreground exploitation and uneven value capture within platform capitalism (Casas-Cortés et al., 2023; Couldry & Mejias, 2020), and extend to cultural and influencer labour, where relational labour and constant audience care are required to sustain attention (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). Adding this counterpoint clarifies why policy levers, including transparency, fair discovery, and rights enforcement, matter for digital literature in Indonesia.

DIGITAL CAPITAL AND NEGOTIATED VALIDATION (ADOPTED CONCEPTS)

Recent scholarship extends Bourdieu by conceptualising digital capital as the accumulation of digital skills, resources, and competencies convertible into other capital and social advantages (Pitzalis & Porcu, 2024; Verwiebe & Hagemann, 2024). In literary platforms, digital capital appears in command of interface grammars, analytics literacy, and community operations. It co-evolves with cultural and social capital. Building on earlier treatments of capital validation in changing fields, we adopt negotiated capital to denote the work by which recognition is secured, and capital is converted under datafied conditions (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017). In this view, legitimacy is ratified through creator–community–algorithm interactions rather than inherited institutions.

INDONESIAN CONTEXT AND POLICY HORIZON

Within Indonesia's creative economy, digital literature functions as a cultural practice and as a story-IP feeder for adjacent sectors. Communities on Wattpad, Instagram poetry, BookTok, and BookTube foster serialisation, visual lineation, and long-form review-essay practices. Overviews position digital literature within national development and governance debates, underscoring the need for discoverability disclosures, revenue transparency, and rights protection (He et al., 2023; Magalhães-Timotio, 2024; Martial et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a multi-stage qualitative research design to examine how cultural, digital, and social capitals are negotiated and converted into symbolic and economic value within Indonesia's platformised literary field. The design is structured across four analytically linked stages: (1) platform mapping and selection, (2) data collection across creators and readers, (3) cross-platform analytical coding using platform-fit measures, and (4) model validation through an expert–practitioner focus group discussion (FGD). This staged design enables the study to systematically connect platform aesthetics, reader agency, and algorithmic habitus to observed practices of literary production and circulation, while analytically mapping monetisation pathways as outcomes of interactions within the Creator–Platform–Reader (C-P-R) system.

Within this multi-stage qualitative design, a qualitative descriptive approach was employed to map how cultural, digital, and social capitals accumulate into symbolic value and convert into monetisation within Indonesia's platformised literary field (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Santoso & Fajar, 2023). The research was situated among creators and readers active on Wattpad, Instagram, TikTok, Medium, and YouTube, reflecting a multimodal literary ecology shaped by contrasting platform affordances, including differences in literacy modes, interface grammars, and discovery mechanisms, and in line with scholarship on the platformisation of cultural production and the political economy of platform capitalism (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Srnicek, 2016). Observations were carried out following the principles of virtual and digital ethnography (Kozinets, 2015). Data collection spanned the project cycle documented in the most recent progress report, which was treated as authoritative in cases of divergence.

At the second stage of the research design, purposive sampling was applied to recruit ten creators (R1 to R10) across serial fiction and poetry, image-text micro-essays, short-form video, and long-form review-essays, together with a survey of one hundred readers aged 15–29 who regularly engaged with digital literature. Consent was obtained from interviewees; identities were anonymised, and only public artefacts were observed (Jenkins et al., 2013). The dataset comprised observational logs of artefacts and workflows, semi-structured interviews focusing on production design and community operations, an online reader survey addressing frequency, discovery, interaction, and visibility cues, and an expert–practitioner FGD used for validation and member checking (Denzin, 2017). The interview guide was designed to highlight opening engineering, unit sizing, captions, alternative text, hashtags, link hubs, and moderation routines, thereby reflecting both reader agency and platform aesthetics (Bucher, 2018; Seaver, 2017).

Observations include preview survival, retention checkpoints, caption depth, alt-text, hashtag stacks, and link hubs. Here, preview survival refers to a work's capacity to retain audience attention during the initial preview window prior to scrolling, skipping, or bouncing, before deeper engagement occurs. Interviews of 45–75 minutes were transcribed from audio recordings, survey

responses were cleaned and aggregated into descriptive summaries aligned with qualitative themes, and constructs and terminology were stress-tested in the FGD (Denzin, 2017).

At the third analytical stage, observations and interview data were coded using five platform-fit measures: opening fit (P1), unit calibration (P2, prosodic layout (P3), affective timing (P4), and navigability (P5). These measures translated platform logics into operational definitions for descriptive comparison and content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013; Nieborg & Poell, 2018). Thresholds for each measure were derived from observations, interviews, and survey results, then validated through the FGD, with external sources used only to frame the conceptual and analytical approach.

The fourth stage consisted of an expert–practitioner FGD, which functioned not only as a validation exercise but also as a reflexive checkpoint to assess coherence between observed practices, creator narratives, and the proposed Creator–Platform–Reader (C-P-R) system model. All transcripts, logs, and survey summaries were subjected to thematic analysis and consolidated into a cross-platform matrix that structured the Results and yielded testable propositions. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation and member checking. Creator identities were anonymised, and quoted material was paraphrased or de-identified to minimise risks of reverse identification (Denzin, 2017).

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study by addressing four research questions, each examined within the Indonesian context of digital literature and the creative economy. The subsections below are organised according to the respective research questions to clarify how each is empirically answered. The discussion begins with reader engagement and visibility drivers, followed by form and practice, platform logics, and creator strategies with algorithmic habitus. Monetisation pathways and the Creator-Platform-Reader (C-P-R) system are mapped, concluding with risks, policy levers, validation, and limitations. Findings are organised into eight subsections, drawing on the latest consolidated dataset for numerical summaries and anonymised interviews for qualitative vignettes. Unless otherwise noted, descriptive figures follow the consolidated dataset, and the five platform-fit measures, such as opening fit, unit calibration, prosodic layout, affective timing, and navigability, are recalled. Propositions presented later are referenced as P1 to P5.

READER ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Reader engagement in Indonesia is routine: 54% read ‘often’, 20% ‘always’, 15% ‘sometimes’, and 11% ‘rarely/never’ (Figure 1). Participation is likewise substantial, with 63% having commented or reacted at least once (Figure 2). Creators report that interpretive prompts (end-of-episode questions, caption cues, pinned comments) raise comment quality and increase saves and shares.

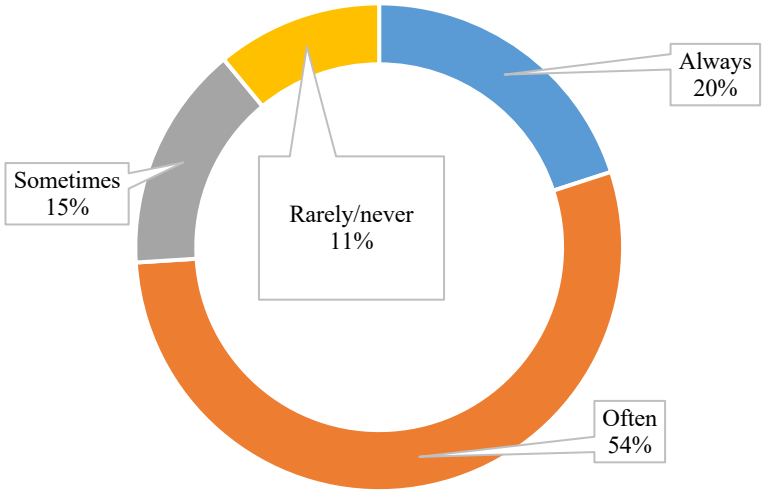

FIGURE 1. Reader Intensity (N = 100)

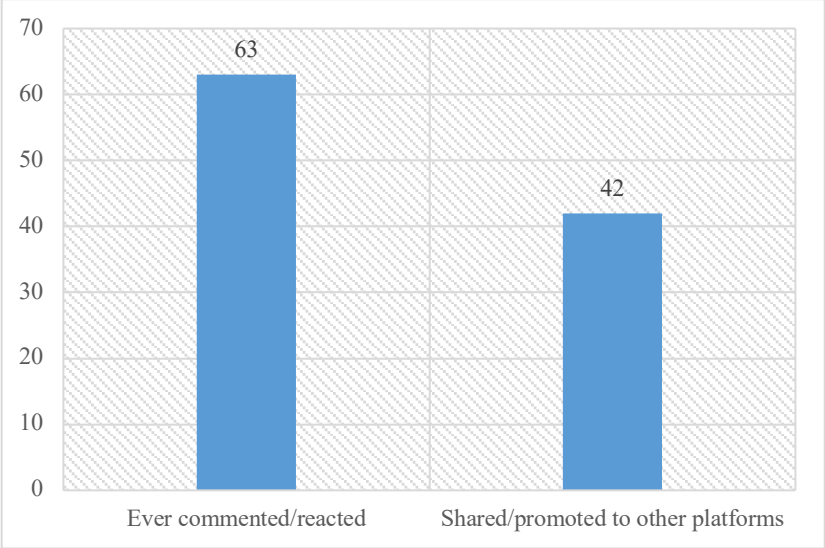

FIGURE 2. Reader Participation (N = 100)

Two demand-side patterns follow. First, routine reading plus active participation positions readers as public co-legitimators whose commenting, sharing, and saving accumulate symbolic recognition. Second, because attention is already close, small packaging changes, precise openings, calibrated unit length, caption depth, and navigability (i.e., chapter markers, link hubs) can materially influence discovery and retention. These dynamics underpin the paper's focus on platform-fit aesthetics and visibility drivers, and they motivate later analyses of monetisation pathways: symbolic signals (e.g., save-to-share ratios, dense interpretive comments) commonly precede outreach for curation, sponsorship, or adaptation.

VISIBILITY DRIVERS ON PLATFORMS

Across platforms, discovery is governed by five proximate signals: likes/comments (72%), watch/read duration (61%), follower count (67%), shares (55%), and posting frequency (48%), based on a reader survey (N=100) triangulated with ten creators (Figure 3). Qualitative evidence aligns: on Wattpad/Medium, serialisation, voting, and dense comments shape recommendations; on TikTok/Instagram/YouTube Shorts, performance in the first 3–10 seconds and early interactions decisively affect exposure.

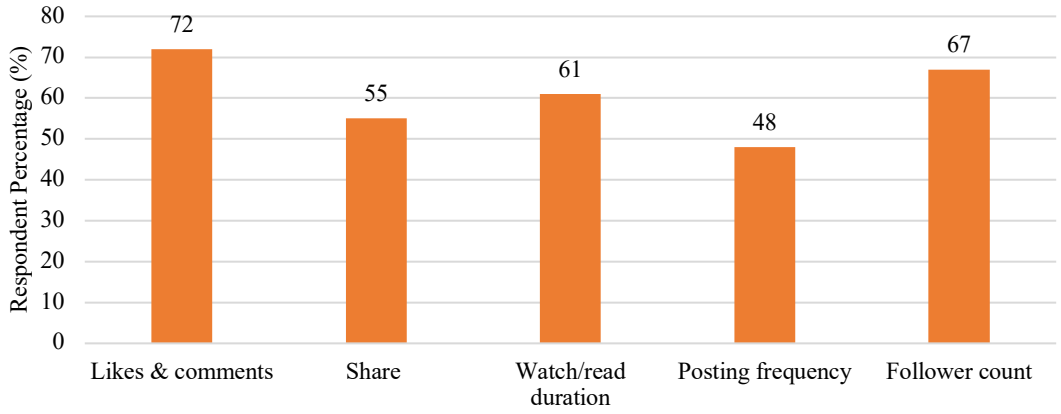

FIGURE 3. Platform Visibility Drivers (N = 100; triangulated with 10 creators)

Practical implications can be drawn. Creators who design for early retention through precise openings, compact units, and immediate stakes, and who improve interaction quality with interpretive prompts and pinned references, tend to gain higher comment density, stronger save-to-share ratios, and longer view duration, which are the inputs platforms prioritise. Portfolios that maintain predictable posting schedules, apply curated tags, and channel audiences across platforms stabilise visibility despite algorithmic volatility. These patterns are consolidated into operational heuristics and testable propositions.

PLATFORM LOGICS AND AESTHETIC FIT (COMPARATIVE EVIDENCE)

Across platforms, interface grammars shape literary construction and turn chapters and stanzas into tiles, beats, and episodes. Works must align with these logics before they can be read as literature.

Wattpad uses micro-chapters of 600 to 1,200 words with cliffhangers, which lift comments and votes but risk pacing fatigue. Medium prefers thesis-first essays with scannable subheads that improve preview survival. Instagram relies on visual lineation and whitespace with caption micro-essays that drive saves and shares. TikTok rewards a strong three-second hook with a 12 to 15-second pivot to secure retention. YouTube benefits from framed openings of 20 to 30 seconds and chapter markers supporting long-form discussion.

Table 1 summarises these mappings and specifies indicative measures such as retention at three, five, and ten seconds, read-through rates, caption click-through rates (CTR), and average view duration.

TABLE 1. Platform, Fit Measures, and Indicative Signals

Platform	Affordances / Interface Grammar	Literary Unit & Form	Core Fit Measures (P1 to P5)	Indicative Signals / Metrics	Typical Risks
Wattpad	Serial feed, votes & comments per chapter, notifications, season or part structuring	Micro-chapters (600 to 1,200 words), cliffhangers, recap tiles	P1: first 100 to 150 words, P2: calibration, P5: TOC, parts	Comment & vote velocity, read-through, saves to reading lists	Pacing fatigue, spoiler cascades, hiatus penalties
Instagram	Carousel tiles, caption depth, saves and shares, Explore	Visual prosody (lineation and whitespace), image-text caption micro-essays	P3: tile sequence plus caption depth, P5: pin/link hub	Saves/Share ratio (> likes), caption CTR, revisit from Explore	Over-design of tiles, thin captions reduce depth signals
TikTok	Vertical video, FYP, duets/stitches, early-window retention	Three-second hook; 12-to-15-second narrative pivot; beat-driven episodes	P1: 0 to 3 seconds, P4: pivot at 12-15 seconds	3/5/10-second retention, completion rate, duet/stitch threads	Clickbait without payoff, drop after pivot
YouTube	Long-form video, suggested playlist, chapter markers, pinned comments	Framed openings (20 to 30 seconds), chapters & segments; "public seminar" threads	P1: 20 to 30 seconds, P5: chapters, P4: emotional arc	Avg. view duration, % viewed, playlist inclusion, pinned-thread depth	Early bounce, meandering intros, wall-of-text descriptions
Medium	Preview gate, highlights, scannable subheads, recirculation	Thesis-first essays, scannable subheads, pull-quotes	P1: opening strength, P5: subheads, P2: section granularity	Read time, scroll-depth, highlight, and save, external CTR	Buried thesis, long, unscannable blocks, lower depth

*Note: The operationalisation reflects field data (observations, interviews, surveys) with FGD validation. Core fit measures are coded P1 to P5 (see **Method**).*

Deferred aesthetics show that works often resurface after release through suggested feeds, reposts, playlists, or cross-media drift. Late increases in save-to-share ratios and interpretive comments demonstrate that symbolic value builds over time rather than being exhausted at first encounter. Figure 4 illustrates this loop from Encounter to Interaction to Curatorial Uptake and finally to Re-encounter, with indicators such as delayed interactions, stitched threads, playlist inclusion, and a rolling 28-day decay.

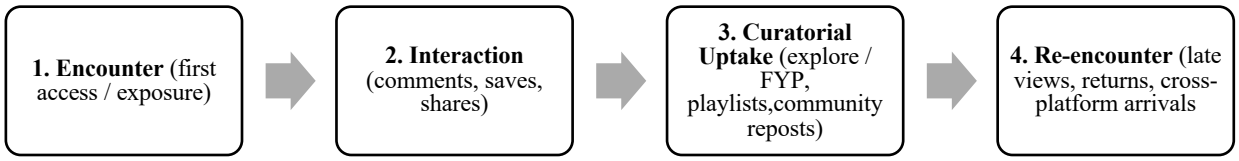

FIGURE 4. Deferred-Value Cycle

Taken together, the evidence clarifies five operational measures that link creative practice to visibility and depth: opening fit through preview survival, unit calibration balancing unit size, retention and navigability, prosodic layout combining lineation, whitespace, and caption depth, affective timing with an early narrative pivot in short video, and navigability through chapter markers, subheads, and link hubs. Each is platform-specific yet comparable, forming the basis for the testable propositions outlined later and the design heuristics that creators can apply in practice.

Algorithmic habitus is a durable yet adaptive disposition through which creators internalise platform heuristics and translate them into day-to-day craft. Portfolios are clustered into production design, distribution design, maintenance, and community operations; metrics reported by creators and observed across platforms indicate that small packaging changes can materially shift visibility and depth.

PRODUCTION DESIGN

Creators treat form as parametric, tuning length, segmentation, and revealing timing to retention checkpoints and preview gates. Typical moves include micro-chapters and cliffhangers on Wattpad; thesis-first openings and scannable subheads on Medium; three-second hooks with a twelve-to-fifteen-second pivot on TikTok; a framed opening and chapter markers on YouTube; and visual prosody with caption depth on Instagram.

> **Illustrative cases**: splitting a long chapter into micro-chapters increased comment and vote velocity (R1, Wattpad); moving the narrative pivot to 12 to 15 seconds improved early retention (R3, TikTok); tightening a 20-to-30 second opening reduced bounce on a long video (R9, YouTube).

DISTRIBUTION DESIGN

If production designs the work, distribution designs its findability. Strategies emphasise disciplined metadata through curated and narrow tag sets, paratexts such as alternative text and pinned bibliographies, navigability through chapter markers and link hubs, and cross-platform funnels that connect discovery posts to longer forms.

> **Illustrative cases**: Adding alternative text with a three-paragraph caption micro-essay raised the save-to-share ratio above likes, as reported by R7 on Instagram. A pinned bibliography and chapter markers increased average view duration, according to R9 on YouTube. A short-form teaser consistently channelled readers towards a serial hub, as illustrated by R3 on Wattpad.

MAINTENANCE AND COMMUNITY OPERATIONS

Day-to-day practices include cadence discipline, prompting for interpretive comments, moderation routines, and collaboration. These act as boundary scripts that protect voice while remaining legible to feeds.

> **Illustrative cases**: An end-of-episode prompt increased the proportion of substantive comments and reduced one-word replies, as reported by R5. Predictable posting cadence stabilised engagement during algorithmic shifts, according to R4. Collaborative co-posting encouraged discussion across communities, as illustrated by R8.

FROM STRATEGY TO CAPITAL

The Strategy-Metric-Capital mapping links these choices to targeted signals such as comment density, save-to-share ratios, average view duration, playlist inclusion, and the forms of capital they seek to build, including symbolic, digital, and social. Table 2, which presents strategies, targeted signals, capital effects, risks, and mitigations, follows this subsection to make the mapping auditable.

TABLE 2. Strategy, Targeted Signals, Capital Effects, Risks, and Mitigations

Strategy Bundle	Primary Metric Targeted	Capital Effect (Primary)	Typical Risk	Mitigation
Opening engineering	Retention at early checkpoints	Symbolic (visibility via watch or read-through)	Clickbait hollowing	Reveal earlier; align promise/payoff
Unit calibration	Comment density, vote, or clap velocity	Social to Symbolic (community signals)	Fragmentation fatigue	Season arcs; recap tiles
Metadata discipline	CTR, saves/shares, search hits	Digital to Symbolic (discoverability)	Tag spamming	Narrow topical sets; audit monthly
Cross-platform funnel	Conversion to long-form or serial	Symbolic to Economic (loyalty to sales)	Drop-off at jumps	Clear CTAs; pinned wayfinding
Collaboration	New audience overlap	Social to Symbolic (borrowed status)	Theme drift	Co-edit brief; shared outline
Community operations	Comment quality, return visits	Social capital depth	Moderation load	FAQ pins; community guidelines

Table 2 shows how each strategy in production, distribution, or community operations is linked to the targeted signals it is designed to influence, the forms of capital it aims to build, and the risks and mitigations observed in practice. **Read from left to right**: what creators do, which metrics shift, why these shifts matter for value formation, what could go wrong, and how risks are contained. A brief anonymised vignette illustrates each pattern; for example, a caption micro-essay combined with alternative text on Instagram lifted saves and dwell time, while the risk of caption fatigue was mitigated by a quotable first tile and one clear interpretive prompt.

MONETISATION LANDSCAPE IN THE INDONESIAN CONTEXT

The monetisation of digital literature in Indonesia is multi-channel but uneven in returns. Survey and interview data confirm five main pathways pursued by creators: (1) book publication and print commercialisation, (2) endorsement and brand collaboration, (3) platform monetisation, (4) tips and crowdfunding, and (5) film/Over the Top (OTT) adaptation. Field data show that the most common form is book publication and print commercialisation (70%), followed by endorsement and brand collaboration (60%), platform monetisation (50%), tips or crowdfunding (40%), and film/OTT adaptation (30%). These proportions are visualised in Figure 5. Distribution of Monetisation Forms (N = 10 creators).

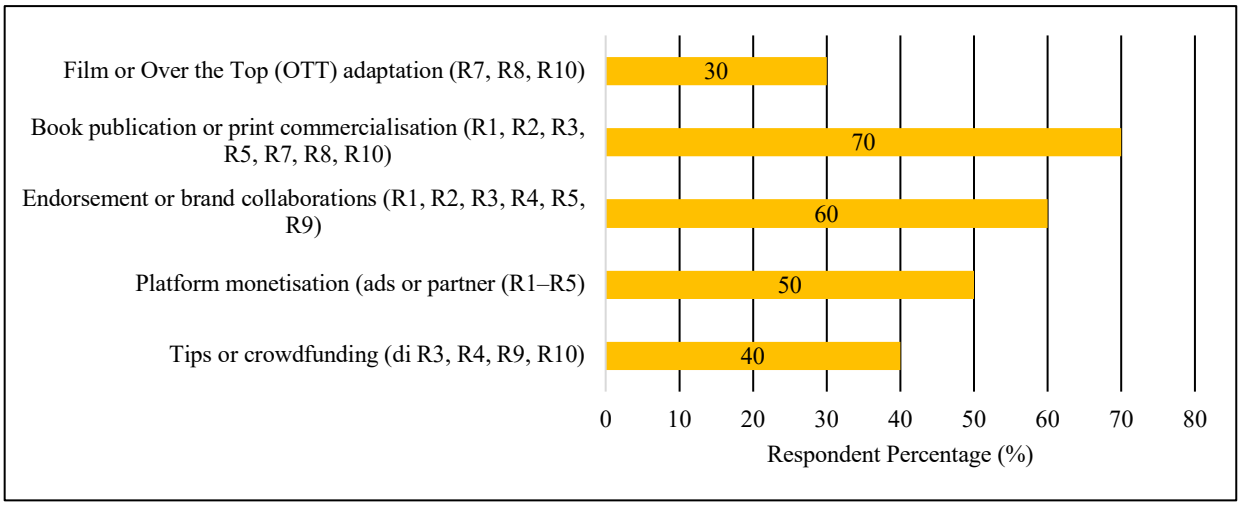

FIGURE 5. Distribution of Monetisation Forms

BOOK PUBLICATION AND PRINT COMMERCIALISATION

The majority of creators convert digital texts into printed anthologies or novels. Wattpad authors (R7, R8, R10) emphasised that community-driven metrics such as votes and serialisation speed often determined publisher interest. While royalties are modest, print circulation continues to provide legitimacy and remains the dominant revenue stream.

ENDORSEMENT AND BRAND COLLABORATION

Around 60% of creators have engaged with brands, integrating poems, micro-stories, or reviews into campaigns. Instagram poets (R2, R9) and TikTok performers (R4) stressed that alignment between aesthetic style and sponsor identity was crucial. Risks include over-commercialisation and audience fatigue, mitigated by selective partnerships.

PLATFORM MONETISATION

Half the respondents reported income via AdSense (YouTube), TikTok Creator Funds, or Wattpad 'coin' schemes. R3 and R5 described modest but recurring returns, while R9 voiced frustration with opaque revenue-sharing. Success depends on metrics such as retention time, average view duration, and engagement ratios, which remain volatile due to algorithmic shifts.

TIPS AND CROWDFUNDING

About 40% of creators receive direct reader support through tip jars, the Buy Me a Coffee platform, or small crowdfunding campaigns. Although less predictable, this pathway fosters intimacy and signals community loyalty. Respondent 5 noted that sustained moderation and interaction are required to maintain such supporter ecosystems, reflecting broader concerns about creator burnout.

FILM/OVER THE TOP (OTT) ADAPTATION

Although only 30% of creators have experienced this pathway, adaptation yields the highest symbolic capital. Case studies include R7 and R8, whose Wattpad serials drew interest from publishers and production houses, and industry collaborations highlighted by PFN (see Vina Alfia R's FGD input). Risks involve copyright clarity, rights management, and maintaining artistic integrity in cross-media translation.

OVERALL PATTERN

Across all forms, symbolic recognition precedes monetisation. Works that gain high visibility through likes, retention, community discussion, and interpretive depth reflected in comments, saves, and playlisting attract offers. R1 described how a widely circulated Medium essay led to consultancy invitations, R3 noted that YouTube visibility channelled audiences to Wattpad, and R9 emphasised ethical considerations in partnership selection. These cases reinforce the systemic link between symbolic capital and economic opportunities in Indonesia's platform-based literary field.

Beyond these pathways, creators also highlighted systemic concerns extending beyond individual practice. R3, R6, and R9 explicitly noted the lack of intellectual property safeguards and the absence of taxation clarity for small-scale creators. Survey responses (23%) likewise emphasised the need for transparent revenue splits and protection against unauthorised copying. These concerns point to emergent policy levers voiced directly by practitioners, indicating that the sustainability of digital literature in Indonesia depends not only on creative strategies and audience engagement but also on regulatory frameworks and governance infrastructures.

CREATOR–PLATFORM–READER (C-P-R) SYSTEM MODEL

Findings across engagement, visibility, platform logics, strategies, and monetisation indicate that value is not produced by creators alone, but through systemic interaction between creators, platforms, and readers. This C-P-R model makes explicit the interdependence of the three actors.

Creators contribute craft, labour, and cultural capital. They adapt form and cadence to platform grammars (e.g., hooks, micro-chapters, caption depth) and rely on community operations to convert attention into symbolic recognition. Several interviewees highlighted that algorithmic shifts forced them to hedge across formats: R3 diversified to YouTube long-form, while R8 experimented with Novalomi to avoid dependence on Wattpad alone.

Platforms provide infrastructures and algorithmic logics that co-author literary form and visibility. Survey evidence showed that discovery is overwhelmingly mediated by likes and comments (72%), follower counts (67%), duration (61%), shares (55%), and posting frequency (48%). Respondents frequently described platforms as gatekeepers: R9 stressed opacity in revenue-sharing, and R7 noted the influence of Wattpad's ranking system on narrative pacing.

Readers act as public co-legitimators. Engagement data indicate that 54% often and 20% always read digital literature, with 63% commenting/reacting and 42% sharing across platforms. Interpretive comments, playlists, stitches, and reposts all accumulate symbolic recognition that precedes economic conversion. R5 reported that interpretive prompts at the end of episodes consistently generated longer comment threads, while R2 emphasised that saves/shares on Instagram carried more weight than likes.

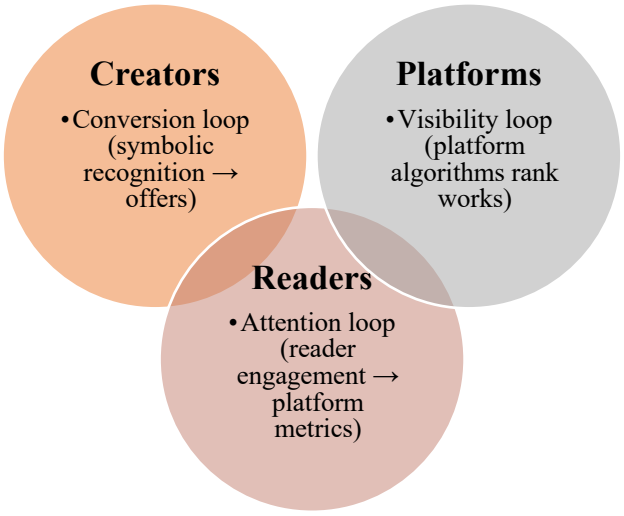

FIGURE 6. Creator–Platform–Reader (C-P-R) System Model

In this model, value circulates through three linked loops: 1) attention loop (reader engagement feeding platform metrics); 2) visibility loop (platform algorithms ranking works based on signals); and 3) conversion loop (creators leveraging symbolic recognition into offers). Breakdowns occur when one loop fails, e.g., platform shocks (algorithmic changes), community fatigue, or rights leakage in adaptation.

The C-P-R model has an implication. This model underscores that literary value in the digital economy is a co-production: creators supply craft, platforms supply infrastructural logic, and readers supply symbolic legitimacy. Therefore, any future policy or applied model must address all three nodes simultaneously rather than focusing solely on creators.

VALIDATION AND LIMITATIONS

VALIDATION

Findings were triangulated from four sources: observational logs of cross-platform creative practice, semi-structured interviews with ten creators (R1 to R10), a reader survey of one hundred respondents aged 15-29, and an expert-practitioner FGD. First, demand appeared consistent, as reading practices were routine and supported by substantial interaction. Second, creators stressed the coupling between form and signal, with opening strength, unit calibration, caption depth, early narrative pivot, and navigability functioning as key cues for visibility. Third, conversion required symbolic recognition, as saves, shares, interpretive comments, and playlisting regularly preceded monetisation opportunities.

ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

Simple consistency tests were applied: (a) percentages from the survey were replicated in a separate charting pass; (b) a subset of interview vignettes was re-read blind to platform to verify whether strategy-to-signal links still held; (c) qualitative cases mentioning ‘late resurfacing’ were checked to confirm the presence of deferred indicators that were tracked (post-72-hour interactions, playlisting, stitches or duets); and (d) creator claims about monetisation pathways were examined for alignment with the distribution reported in the progress materials.

LIMITATIONS

First, the study covers specific platforms and a capped sample (10 creators, 100 readers). The Indonesian digital literature field is characterised as observed, without claims of universal generality. Second, platform policies and ranking inputs are subject to change over time; some measures (such as retention checkpoints) may shift after data collection. Third, interview excerpts are anonymised (R1 to R10) and selected to prevent re-identification; while ethics are improved, traceability to public handles is reduced. Fourth, the descriptive statistics are cross-sectional, with associations reported rather than causal effects. Finally, the visualisations are presented as summaries rather than raw dashboards and should be interpreted as evidence-grounded guides rather than exact operational thresholds. Within these constraints, the triangulated patterns are internally consistent and practically interpretable in that readers co-legitimate value, platform grammars co-author form, creators’ packaging choices move proximate signals, and monetisation follows symbolic recognition. These validations seem to have framed the concluding section by specifying what can travel beyond this study and what requires follow-up in applied research.

DISCUSSIONS

A natural bridge is provided by these empirical concerns to the following discussion, in which the findings are situated within broader theoretical debates on platform governance, cultural capital, participatory literacies, and policy levers. In this way, a shift is made from documenting observed practices and challenges to interpreting their implications for theory and the sustainability of Indonesia's digital literary field in the creative economy.

MONETISATION PATHWAYS IN INDONESIA'S DIGITAL LITERATURE

Our field data indicate that creators rarely depend on a single income stream; instead, they orchestrate a portfolio that blends ad revenue, tipping, affiliate links, brand collaborations, and platform-native shops. Such hybridity is not merely opportunistic; it reflects an emergent professional norm in which cultural production is entwined with ongoing audience care. Notion of relational labour helps explain why creators in our sample invest time in community management, for instance, replying to comments, polling readers, hosting live Q&A, even when these activities are not directly monetised: the labour sustains trust, which in turn enhances conversion (tips, merchandise, or paid episodes) and stabilises attention between release (Baym, 2015). At the same time, the alignment between narrative form and monetisation affordances matters. Short serial instalments with cliffhangers, carousel poetry with sharable typographic frames, and micro-essays optimised for Medium's recommendation system are natively commercialisable because they align with platform rhythms. In line with studies of social media entertainment (Cunningham & Craig, 2019) and platformised cultural commodities (Nieborg & Poell, 2018), creators who align format length, posting cadence, and calls-to-action with platform metrics report more predictable payouts. Regulatory and policy dynamics remain a structural variable. Sudden shifts in e-commerce rules or recommendation policies can alter payout conditions overnight. This underlines the value of diversification, such as building email lists or maintaining multiple platforms, as a hedge against platform risk (Napoli, 2014; Nieborg & Poell, 2018).

PLATFORM AESTHETICS AND ALGORITHMIC MEDIATION

The aesthetic signature of each platform subtly governs what counts as literary. Instagram privileges the visual punch of typographic poetry and carousel narratives, whereas TikTok's sound-motion grammar rewards first-three-seconds hooks and voice-over micro-stories. Medium continues to valorise reflective essays with clear argumentative arcs. Wattpad foregrounds serial fiction with paragraph-level comments. These observations resonate with Poell et al.'s scheme of (Poell et al., 2019) 'social media logic' where programmability, popularity metrics, and connectivity steer circulation. Further, it is conceptualised as platformisation, seen as a way in which infrastructures and business models condition genre evolution (Helmond, 2015; Nieborg & Poell, 2018).

Creators in our sample routinely analysed the algorithm by combining vernacular analytics with peer lore. In practice, this might have meant that the notion of interpreting platform metrics such as views, likes, and retention curves while drawing on community-circulated stories and tips about maximising visibility is of central importance. This resonates with Bishop's (Bishop, 2019) notion of 'algorithmic gossip', in which creators collectively generate and share vernacular theories of how recommendation systems work, even without official transparency. They

experiment with thumbnails, captions, and posting windows, then infer causal stories from fluctuating impressions and screen time. While such inferences are often speculative, they shape creative decisions, reflecting the broader politics of algorithmic governance (Bucher, 2018). This means that success is partly an editorial competency (for instance, story craft) and partly an infrastructural one (for example, metric literacy).

CULTURAL CAPITAL, DIGITAL LITERACY, AND FIELD DYNAMICS

Bourdieu's lens shows how creators and readers manoeuvre within a platform-mediated field. Embodied cultural capital, including taste, style, and intertextual repertoire, helps creators maintain a distinctive voice under metric pressure. Institutionalised cultural capital, such as academic degrees and literary awards, still signals legitimacy in captions, bios, and media kits. Readers use digital literacies to distinguish quality from clickbait, citing plot coherence, regular updates, and production polish as value markers. Capitals interact dynamically: social capital in the form of audience attention is converted into economic capital through memberships, paid chapters, or sponsorships, and then reinvested in better production, reinforcing the creator's position in the field (Bourdieu, 2010). In Indonesia's creative-economy frame, the micro-dynamics between creators, readers, and platform interfaces intersect with policy narratives that treat culture as a growth engine. This can be productive by unlocking training programs, incubation, and cross-subsector collaboration. However, it can also introduce new hierarchies, for example, funders' Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that might privilege specific formats.

READER PRACTICES AND PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

Survey responses and comment ethnography show that readers are not merely consumers but curators and co-promoters. Likes, shares, and follows accumulate into algorithmic signals that extend reach; paragraph-level comments on Wattpad or threaded replies on Instagram transform reading into social annotation. This aligns with participatory culture and the idea of 'spreadable media' (Jenkins et al., 2013), where circulation and appraisal generate value. Under this scheme, readers report a preference for serial consistency and narrative momentum. When creators maintain predictable release schedules and communicate delays transparently, readers perceive the relationship as reciprocal, strengthening loyalty. Empirically, our sample highlighted the importance of clear genre expectations, such as romance serials built around familiar tropes, and a sense of co-presence with the author through behind-the-scenes reels or community polls. These practices channel audience energies into symbolic legitimacy as well as measurable engagement.

CREATOR STRATEGIES: SERIALISATION, VISUAL-TEXT HYBRIDS, AND VOICE-OVER HOOKS

Across platforms, three families of tactics recur. First, serialisation with episodic cliffhangers sustains anticipation and return visits, a logic at home on Wattpad and Instagram carousels. Second, visual-text hybrids, for instance, typographic poetry, annotated screenshots, and cinemographs, operate as scroll-stoppers, translating literary nuance into image-led frames that travel well in algorithmic feeds. Third, short-video storytelling with voice-over hooks condenses exposition, escalates conflict early, and leverages trend sounds for discoverability (Poell et al., 2019). These tactics convert relational labour into artefacts, such as live sessions, AMAs (Ask Me Anything) events where audiences pose open questions to creators, and polls that gather insight

and keep the 'relationship warm' between releases (Baym, 2015). Their efficacy, however, is conditional. Over-optimising for metrics can induce formal homogenisation; creators, therefore, balance platform templates with signature style to avoid brand dilution. In our interviews, the most resilient creators articulate a dual horizon: firstly, short-term alignment to trends and secondly, long-term cultivation of an identifiable voice.

CROSS-PLATFORM HYBRIDITY AND TRANSMEDIA FRANCHISING

Several cases in our dataset scaffold intellectual property (IP) across media: micro-videos seed interest; medium essays deepen world-building; limited-run zines or e-books consolidate the arc; live readings and workshops monetise community. This tracks with Jenkins' transmedia principles and the subsequent articulation of spreadability. Individual nodes, i.e., platform or Medium in the transmedia network, contribute distinctive value rather than merely duplicating content (Jenkins et al., 2013). Cross-subsector collaboration between literature and music for spoken-word sets and literature and design for typographic merch further diversifies revenue and audiences, echoing broader creative-economy arguments for interlinkages. Such hybridity also functions as risk management. When a platform changes its rules or demotes a format, adjacent nodes help preserve the story world's continuity and the audience's relationship. The strategic challenge is sequencing, which generally refers to the notion of deciding which medium anchors canon and structuring pricing so that entry points remain low.

POLICY LEVERS, GOVERNANCE RISKS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE OF OPPORTUNITY

Policy levers, governance risks, and the infrastructure of opportunity collectively shape monetisation outcomes in Indonesia's digital literary field. From the analysis of creators and reader survey signals, three levers emerge. First, literacy upskilling that goes beyond story craft to include metric literacy and fundamental media law, enabling safer participation in platform markets. Second, more explicit rules on intellectual property and taxation for micro-entrepreneurs to reduce compliance frictions, particularly for single-person operations moving between on- and off-platform incomes. Finally, more substantial alignment between platforms, regulators, and creator associations to temper abrupt shifts that disproportionately harm small creators and serialised literary work (Napoli, 2014; Poell et al., 2019). Global reports also note that intangible assets and digital trade are expanding, but value capture remains uneven (UNCTAD, 2024). For literary creators, targeted micro-grants, incubation for story-tech tools such as voice-over, captioning, and A/B testing utilities, and cross-subsector labs can convert scattered practices into an infrastructure of opportunity, provided evidence-based policy incorporates vernacular knowledge circulating among creators and links it to formal support.

Findings further indicate four governance risks that condition monetisation. First, regulatory volatility, such as sudden e-commerce or content rule changes, dissolves revenue streams. Second, platform opacity, since limited transparency around recommendation signals and payout formulas forces reliance on vernacular analytics and peer lore. Third, intellectual property leakage and weak enforcement, where repost chains complicate originality claims. Finally, payment frictions are typically caused by thresholded payouts, cross-border fees, and inconsistent disclosures. Together, these risks confirm the need for transparent and auditable pathways from symbolic legitimacy, attention, saves, and shares to economic value that can be contracted and sustained. Therefore, consolidation of fragmented practices through micro-grants, incubation,

legal–tax clinics, disclosure pilots, and cross-sector collaboration across literature, design, music, and education might be required. Such measures might reduce uncertainty, diversify revenues, and stabilise small-scale literary entrepreneurship while reinforcing Indonesia's streamlined copyright registration system (UNCTAD, 2024).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Our mixed-methods design provides a textured snapshot of platform-era literary practices but remains limited by platform scope and urban skew. While the triangulation of interviews, surveys, and artefact documentation strengthens validity, the study still lacks experimental causality testing. Future work might better (a) run field experiments to test causal links between micro-features (hook phrasing, caption length) and completion rates; (b) examine emerging modalities where authenticity and intimacy are re-engineered, such as virtual influencers and paid fan communities (Abidin, 2023), and (c) integrate platform analytics (impressions, retention curves) with panel surveys to model longitudinal trajectories (Latzer & Festic, 2019). Comparative studies across Southeast Asia could illuminate how policy regimes and language markets mediate the portability of tactics.

CONCLUSION

The creation, circulation, and monetisation of Indonesian digital literature within platform ecosystems were analysed through interviews with ten creators, a reader survey (n = 100), and documentation of creative practices. Two conceptual contributions are posited in this article: firstly, negotiated capital, which explains how cultural, digital, and social capitals are converted into symbolic and economic value. Secondly, algorithmic habitus, which captures the adaptive dispositions through which craft is adjusted to the tactics of feeds and previews. Through these lenses, the intersections of platform logics, reader agency, and creator strategies in the Creator-Platform-Reader system are clarified, and the ways relational labour is stabilised into artefacts such as serialisation, visual-text hybrids, and hook-driven videos are made visible.

Practically, our findings highlight policy levers required for sustainability. Literacy upskilling might be extended to metric literacy and fundamental media law, intellectual property, and taxation clarity for micro-entrepreneurs, which might reduce compliance burdens, and platform–policy alignment could mitigate abrupt regulatory shifts. Beyond these levers, an infrastructure of opportunity, including micro-grants, story-tech incubation, awareness of Indonesia's simplified copyright system, transparency pilots, and cross-subsector labs, might support creators while integrating grassroots practices into formal governance. The research, however, is limited by platform scope and an urban respondent base. Future studies might better test causal effects of micro-features through field experiments, integrate platform analytics with longitudinal survey panels, and examine emergent modalities such as virtual influencers or paid fan communities. Comparative work across Southeast Asia could further reveal how different policy regimes shape the portability of Indonesian creators' strategies. Digital platforms now seem to co-author literary form and value; recognising and governing this condition, therefore, might be vital to sustaining the Indonesian literary field's aesthetic and economic futures.

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