

Narasi empowers investigative reporters and community correspondents, and drives channel growth

Founded by influential journalist Najwa Shihab in 2017, Narasi.tv is an Indonesian new media company. Najwa Shihab started her journalism career a decade ago as a news anchor on national television. She established Narasi in order to branch out into digital platforms and engage the younger generation of Indonesia through hard-hitting, well-researched news in an educational yet engaging way. Narasi publishes investigative journalism and also produces signature content generated by its nationwide community of journalists and creators.

OPPORTUNITY

In advance of the 2019 Indonesian Presidential and Legislative elections, Narasi wanted to empower journalists to create more high-quality new media, encourage public participation in news content creation, and publish engaging information. It saw an opportunity to strengthen its own internal investigative journalism team, as well as run journalism training workshops across Indonesia to support a broader community of creators and citizen journalists. Ultimately, Narasi's objective was to improve the quality, integrity, and output of videos on its YouTube channels.

APPROACH

There were two parts to Narasi's project: 1) it invested in resource capabilities to strengthen the investigative journalism abilities of its in-house news team, and 2) it organized workshops for young citizen journalists across various provinces in Indonesia so they could improve their storytelling and news video production skills, as well as their media literacy.

1) Strengthening investigative journalism: Narasi wanted to step up the investigative journalism effort of its two flagship news programs so it could better deliver quality reporting that serves the public interest. The shows are: "Mata Najwa" (Najwa's Eyes), a talk show where Najwa Shihab interviews Indonesia's movers and shakers, which aired on a national news TV network for the past decade, but is now broadcast as video-on-demand (VOD) on YouTube. And "Buka Mata" (Open Eyes), an investigative journalism program that was started in 2017, and airs exclusively on YouTube.

- **Building up the team:** Narasi conducted an advanced investigative journalism workshop so its staff could gain hands-on experience in monitoring electoral transparency, investigating cases of corruption, and fact-checking. Journalists took the competence test and certification program co-organized by IJTI (Association of Indonesian TV Journalists) and became certified in accordance with their experience (junior, mid-level, or senior). This gives them recognition and protection under Indonesian Press Law. Staff were then divided into four teams, each with a producer, reporter, researcher, and video journalist, so they could focus on strengthening the flagship shows.
- **Complementing full-length programs with bite-sized clips for sharing:** The teams tried out different formats of the two flagship programs by broadcasting full-length and bite-sized versions — for example, the normally 90 minute "Mata Najwa" show was cut into eight segments, each ranging from 10-15 minutes. In addition, the most interesting 30 second clips were put into a playlist. This way, the team could cater to two audiences: those who will sit down and watch the entire episode, and those who are only keen to know the key points. It also facilitated viral sharing of the specific clips. By creating different formats, Narasi more than doubled channel traffic.
- **Cross-promoting content:** Narasi implemented a cross-channel strategy to drive better relationships across its TV and online audiences. It has the best results when the shows and channels amplify each other — for example, when its investigative work on "Buka Mata" is amplified by "Mata Najwa", online and via TV. On digital channels, they developed explainer videos from 3 to 10 minutes long called "Buka Data" (Unlock Data) in order to provide additional context to Mata Najwa and Buka Mata segments.

Narasi creates content that drives change

One of the cornerstones of "Mata Najwa's" mission is to expose official corruption, so during the 2019 election many episodes closely investigated evidence of transactional politics and influences on campaigns amongst candidates. In several cases, this reporting helped Indonesia's Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) apply sanctions to candidates. Narasi's investigative journalism, under the aegis of the "Suara Penentu" ("Determining Voice") editorial campaign, gave voters a more informed picture of where parties and candidates got their money and how they spent it, and assisted civil society organizations and journalists to hold them accountable.

The investigative reporting for "Buka Mata" also made waves, breaking viewership records with its most-viewed story about fraud in the electoral process. Significantly, the team also broke a story about corruption and match fixing in the Indonesian Football Association, which resulted in the arrest of the head of the Association.

2) Organizing workshops for creators and citizen journalists: Narasi wanted to bring digital video skills to its broader community and train up new content creators.

- **Designing workshops:** Narasi started by designing programs and modules for the workshop. The internal team established workshop objectives, target participants, expected outcomes, workshop format, budget, and participant eligibility criteria.
- **Selecting locations:** Narasi selected 10 cities where it would run workshops. It chose the cities based on Bawaslu's (Indonesia's Election Supervisory Agency) and the National Police's 2019 Election Vulnerability index of each province or city's susceptibility to election irregularities, such as influence payments or voter fraud. Believing that journalism and media literacy were the best ways to guard the local populace against these dangers, Narasi recruited large numbers of content creators in each city, inviting graphic artists, video producers, writers, photographers, illustrators, etc. to get involved in the training. It also addressed the hot-button issues of each city to tailor the training to each audience, which would in turn help the immediate communities. For example, In Pontianak City, West Borneo, it inserted an environmental topic, as the city is one of the most affected by the haze from forest fires every year.

- **Choosing participants:** Narasi established a submission procedure to ensure participants met the expected knowledge, skills, and experience prior to taking the workshop. The team worked together with universities and local communities to connect with more potential candidates. Narasi received over 2K submissions nationwide, and selected 25 eligible content creators per city, for a total of 250 participants.
- **Conducting workshops:** Narasi held five workshops in five cities before the elections, and the remaining five afterward. [The workshops](#) emphasized mobile journalism, critical thinking, storytelling, and personal branding. After completing all the workshops, Narasi made all its training and materials available online in high-quality videos so everyone could access and learn from almost 20 content creation experts. Since they were launched at the end of 2019, these materials have attracted over 5K views.
- **Collaborating with participants:** After the workshops, Narasi invited participants to work as collaborators on the Narasi channels. They had opportunities to cover hot and pressing issues in their own creative work that would help amplify Narasi's editorial campaign. Narasi established a department dedicated to managing collaborators.
- **Showcasing young voices:** Narasi launched its election editorial campaign, called #SuaraPenentu ("Determining Voice"), ahead of the elections to promote the voices of young people to drive change. In addition to creating journalistic content under that campaign brand, Narasi invited the general public to convey their aspirations, opinions, and actions about the upcoming election, with the idea that this would help counter negative content, false news, and misleading information before and after voting day. To raise awareness of the campaign and encourage more young people to create content with key messages, Narasi launched a user-generated content (UGC) program that brought in the 250 workshop participants, as well as others who could submit online using their project hashtag #SuaraPenentu.

RESULTS

Narasi's strategy resulted in an increase in views, subscribers, and impressions across its YouTube channels. From February to April 2019, during the election season in Indonesia, Narasi's YouTube channels saw:

- **Over 100M** views.
- **44% increase** in subscribers (~700K new subscribers added).

LEARNINGS

Make news relevant and engaging for younger audiences: Traditional news is often serious, dry, and technical, which can discourage younger people from engaging. Narasi tried a different approach, whereby they created lighter 'edutainment' and UGC content to appeal to younger viewers. The team created integrated campaigns across different formats and platforms, including YouTube, so audiences could get the context and depth they needed in an entertaining and comprehensive way.

Have a dedicated team to manage collaborator content creators: Narasi has around 250 content creators who are alumni of the workshops from 10 cities across Indonesia. The brand realized the importance of better managing the creators so it could curate content to drive business goals, as well as help the collaborators reach wider audiences. It established a dedicated department called Content Creator Management, which is made up of creative staff, content editors, producers, and administrators.

Apply hashtags to all content output: Narasi recognized that a great hashtag was a vital element in linking its in-house content with UGC. For the #SuaraPenentu campaign during the 2019 general elections, Narasi used the hashtag to help spread its campaign message and increase audience participation. It also made it easier to accurately measure metrics like reach, volume, amplification, and engagement (e.g., retweets, replies, comments, etc.).

“ **Investigative journalism is important for strengthening democracy and for shining a spotlight on societal issues. However, it is just as important to ensure that high-quality investigative journalism represents the voices of young people.**

By bringing together journalism and youth, we hope to drive lasting change and help democracy thrive today and into the future.

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