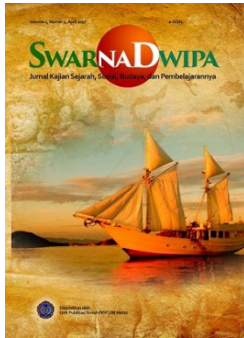


Analyzing Viewer Engagement with Historical Content on YouTube: Insights from Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara

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Abstract

In the digital era, historical education has evolved from traditional methods to embrace digital platforms like YouTube, revolutionizing public engagement with historical narratives. This study investigates viewer interactions with historical content on YouTube by analyzing comments on the video *Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara*. Through thematic analysis, four primary themes were identified: visual and narrative quality, historical accuracy, educational value, and personal connections. These findings highlight the importance of well-produced, accurate, and educationally valuable content that resonates personally with viewers. The insights derived provide valuable guidelines for educators and content creators aiming to enhance digital history education.

Keywords:

Digital platforms, YouTube education, historical content engagement, public history education.

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INTRODUCTION

The digital age has profoundly transformed the way we engage with history. Traditionally confined to textbooks, lectures, and physical archives, historical education has now expanded into the dynamic realm of digital platforms. These platforms, particularly YouTube, have revolutionized public interaction with historical content, offering a new dimension of accessibility and engagement. Imagine watching a captivating documentary about the Spice Route of the Nusantara on YouTube and then scrolling down to see a myriad of comments reflecting diverse thoughts and emotions. This transformation in historical engagement illustrates how digital platforms are reshaping education and public interaction with historical narratives.

Digital platforms have significantly impacted education by providing interactive and accessible learning tools. These platforms offer flexibility and personalization, allowing students and educators to access vast resources anytime and anywhere (Carretero et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of these digital tools, underscoring their importance in modern education (Guerrero-Quiñonez et al., 2023). Among these platforms, YouTube has emerged as a prominent medium for historical

education, transitioning from an entertainment site to a valuable educational resource (Joshua, 2022).

YouTube is widely recognized as a significant platform for sharing diverse video content, including educational and historical materials. It serves as a valuable resource for both general audiences and specific groups, such as students, in the learning process (Mahdar et al., 2023). YouTube's unique blend of visual and auditory experiences caters to different learning styles, making complex historical topics more engaging and comprehensible (Colin, 2023). Visual aids enhance this storytelling process by making it more dynamic and engaging, and their use on platforms like YouTube bridges traditional storytelling with modern educational practices, improving retention and comprehension (Ramli & Rahman, 2024). Therefore, YouTube continues to be a powerful tool in making education more accessible and effective.

The specific video *Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara* serves as an excellent case study for understanding public engagement with historical content on YouTube. This video delves into the rich history of the Spice Route in the Nusantara, providing viewers with a blend of historical facts and engaging storytelling. By analyzing the comments on this video, we can gain valuable insights into how the public perceives and engages with historical content presented on digital platforms.

Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara, uploaded on the Jalur Rempah RI YouTube channel on December 11, 2020, is a collaborative project between the Jalur Rempah Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology and the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI). The video explores vital historical events, such as the Dutch occupation of Ambon in 1605 under Steven Pandehen and the establishment of Batavia (now Jakarta) as the administrative center of the Dutch East Indies. It narrates the VOC's (Dutch East India Company's) efforts to monopolize the pepper trade, including conflicts with the Sultanate of Banten and the eventual control of Makassar.

Engagement through Visual Storytelling: The use of visual storytelling, such as in digital comics, can increase engagement by making historical content more relatable and easier to comprehend (Wardhani & Kuswono, 2023). This method can also be applied to YouTube content, where combining visual elements with storytelling helps capture the audience's attention and simplifies complex historical events. Through vivid storytelling and historical insights, *Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara* captures the maritime glory intertwined with the sad reality of colonialism. The video highlights how the spice route facilitated trade and united diverse ethnic groups and cultures, playing a crucial role in forming the Indonesian nation. This historical voyage provides viewers with a profound understanding of the spice trade's impact on Indonesia's past and its enduring legacy.

Despite the growing use of digital platforms for educational purposes, there is a need to understand how audiences engage with historical content on these platforms. This understanding can help educators and content creators tailor their materials better to meet the needs and preferences of their audience. The primary research problem addressed in this study is: How do viewers engage with and perceive historical content on YouTube, specifically in the context of the *Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara* video?

This research aims to analyze the YouTube comments on the *Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara* video to identify the main themes expressed by viewers. By doing so, we seek to provide insights into public perceptions and the educational impact of the video, contributing to the broader understanding of digital history education. This study will highlight viewers' diverse perspectives and engagement patterns by addressing these questions, offering valuable information for educators and content creators in digital history education.

The specific research questions are:

1. What are the main themes expressed by viewers in the comments on the *Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara* video?

2. How do viewers perceive the educational value of the historical content presented in the video?
3. What engagement patterns can be identified from the comments on the video?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to fill a critical gap in our understanding of digital history education on platforms like YouTube and offer novel insights into how digital media can enhance public engagement with historical content.

RESEARCH METHODS

The data for this study were collected from the YouTube comments section of the video *Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara*, uploaded on the Jalur Rempah RI YouTube channel on December 11, 2020. A total of 100 comments were selected as the sample for analysis. The selection criteria included identifying comments relevant to the historical content presented in the video to ensure that the sample accurately reflected the audience's reactions and insights. This approach aligns with previous studies that have utilized YouTube as a rich source of user-generated content to explore social behaviors, sentiment, and engagement with historical narratives (Noman et al., 2021; Silva & Barbosa, 2019). The primary materials used in this study included the YouTube platform for accessing the comments section of the specified video and manual data extraction techniques to compile comments for analysis. The selected comments were manually compiled into a document, which served as the primary dataset for analysis.

While this study shares similarities with previous research in terms of using YouTube as a data source, it differs in its focus on historical content, particularly in the context of Indonesian cultural heritage and the Jalur Rempah (Spice Routes). Previous studies have primarily focused on political discourse (Silva & Barbosa, 2019), abusive content detection (Noman et al., 2021), and general sentiment analysis (Shekhar et al., 2021), whereas this research aims to examine how viewers interact with and interpret historical narratives through the lens of Indonesia's spice trade history. By concentrating on audience engagement with specific historical themes, this study contributes a new perspective to the broader body of work on YouTube comment analysis.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. This process involved several steps. First, familiarization entailed reading and re-reading the comments to become thoroughly acquainted with the data. Second, coding involved systematically coding interesting features of the comments in a meaningful and organized manner. Third, theme development included collating codes into potential themes and gathering all relevant data for each theme. Fourth, reviewing themes involved checking if the themes worked with the coded extracts and the entire dataset. Fifth, defining and naming themes required ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells. Finally, reporting involved producing the final analysis and presenting the themes with supporting data extracts. Cernasev and Axon (2023) highlight the utility of thematic analysis in offering a structured approach to interpreting complex information, while Liauw (2022) discusses the method's applicability to dynamic online content like YouTube comments.

The study employs a qualitative content analysis approach to understand viewer engagement with historical content on YouTube. This method is based on inductively generated categories due to the unpredictable nature of user comments (Ernst et al., 2017). The focus was on thematic analysis to uncover patterns and themes within the comments. This approach was chosen for its effectiveness in interpreting rich, qualitative data and providing insights into viewers' perceptions and engagements. A classification scheme for content analyses of YouTube video comments can be applied to understand viewer interactions with historical content. This involves categorizing comments into various themes such as opinions, descriptions, and information seeking and supply (Madden et al.,

2013). This aligns with the introduction's emphasis on exploring digital platforms' role in reshaping historical education and public interaction with historical narratives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the 100 comments on the *Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara* video revealed four main themes: visual and narrative quality, historical accuracy, educational value, and personal connections. These themes provide significant insights into public engagement with historical content on digital platforms.

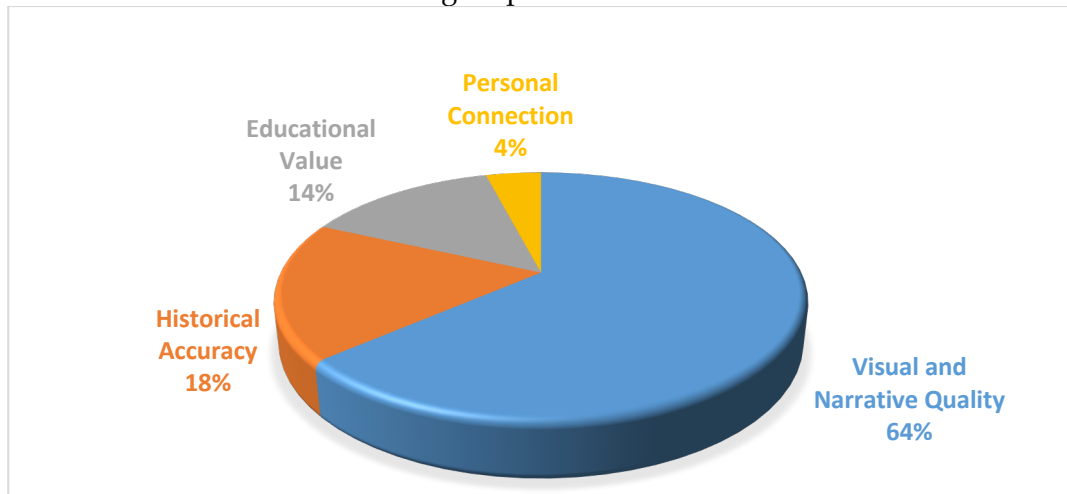


Figure 1. Analysis of the 100 comments on the *Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara* video

1. Visual and Narrative Quality (63%)

The dominant theme was visual and narrative quality, with 63 comments (63%) focusing on these aspects. Viewers frequently praised the high-quality visuals, engaging storytelling, and creative presentation style, which enhanced their understanding and enjoyment of the historical content. This finding suggests that the aesthetic and narrative elements of educational videos are critical in capturing and maintaining audience interest. High production values, including clear visuals, professional editing, and compelling narratives, can make complex historical content more accessible and enjoyable for a broad audience.

2. Historical Accuracy (18%)

Comments on historical accuracy, which constituted 18 comments (18%), highlighted the importance of factual correctness in educational content. Most viewers praised the video for its detailed and accurate portrayal of historical events, enhancing the credibility of the content. However, some comments pointed out minor inaccuracies or oversimplifications, indicating a demand for even more precise historical representation. This suggests that while viewers appreciate engaging content, they value accuracy and depth, essential for maintaining trust and educational integrity. Content creators should ensure thorough research and fact-checking to meet these expectations.

3. Educational Value (15%)

The educational value theme, highlighted by 15 comments (15%), underscored the video's potential as a teaching tool. Viewers recognized the informative nature of the content and its suitability for educational purposes. Comments suggested that the video could be used in classrooms or as a supplementary resource for history lessons. This aligns with the broader trend of utilizing digital platforms for educational purposes, where videos can serve as engaging and practical tools for learning. The ability to convey historical information clearly and engagingly makes such content valuable for formal education and self-directed learning.

4. Personal Connections (4%)

Although less frequent, comments mentioning personal connections to the content significantly highlighted the video's emotional impact, with 4 comments (4%) reflecting this theme. Viewers who related the historical narrative to their family histories or personal experiences expressed a more profound emotional engagement. This theme indicates that educational content that resonates personally with viewers can enhance their connection to the material, making the learning experience more meaningful. Such connections can also encourage viewers to share the content with others, thereby expanding its reach and impact.

The thematic analysis of YouTube comments on the *Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara* video provides valuable insights into public engagement with historical content. The identified themes highlight the diverse ways viewers interact with and appreciate digital educational content. These findings emphasize the importance of high production values, factual accuracy, educational potential, and personal relevance in creating impactful historical videos on digital platforms.

1. **Visual and Narrative Quality:** The significant focus on visual and narrative quality underscores the need for content creators to invest in high production values. Engaging storytelling and professional visuals can greatly enhance viewer interest and satisfaction, making educational content more effective.
2. **Historical Accuracy:** The emphasis on historical accuracy indicates that viewers expect educational content to be well-researched and accurate. This finding suggests that creators should prioritize thorough research and fact-checking to maintain credibility and trust with their audience.
3. **Educational Value:** The recognition of the video's educational value suggests that digital platforms like YouTube are valuable tools for both formal and informal education. Educators and content creators should explore opportunities to integrate such videos into teaching materials to enhance learning experiences.
4. **Personal Connections:** The presence of personal connections in comments highlights the potential for educational content to resonate on a personal level. Content that reflects viewers' personal histories or experiences can create deeper engagement and encourage sharing, broadening the content's impact.

Future research could expand on these findings by exploring a larger sample of comments or analyzing additional videos on similar topics. Comparative studies between different digital platforms could also provide insights into how various media influence public engagement with historical content. Additionally, investigating the long-term educational impact of such videos on viewers could offer valuable information for educators and content creators aiming to enhance digital history education.

CONCLUSION

This study provides significant insights into how audiences engage with historical content on digital platforms, specifically YouTube. By analyzing comments on the *Perjalanan Jalur Rempah Nusantara* video, four key themes emerged as critical for effective digital history education: visual and narrative quality, historical accuracy, educational value, and personal connections.

Firstly, high production values, characterized by engaging storytelling and professional visuals, were frequently praised by viewers. The emphasis on visual and narrative quality underscores its role in making complex historical topics accessible and enjoyable for a broad audience. Well-crafted visuals and compelling narratives are essential for capturing and maintaining viewer interest.

Secondly, historical accuracy was highlighted as crucial for maintaining the credibility and educational integrity of the content. Viewers appreciated the detailed and accurate portrayal of historical events, though some noted minor inaccuracies. This

indicates a continuous need for thorough research and fact-checking by content creators to ensure trustworthiness.

Thirdly, the educational potential of the video was widely recognized. Viewers acknowledged its suitability for both formal and informal educational settings, reflecting the broader trend of utilizing digital platforms for educational purposes. Such videos serve as effective teaching tools, enhancing the learning experience by making historical information more engaging and accessible.

Lastly, personal connections to the content, though less frequently mentioned, significantly enhanced viewer engagement. When historical narratives resonate with viewers' personal histories or experiences, the content becomes more meaningful. This emotional engagement encourages viewers to share and discuss the content, extending its impact.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of high-quality production, historical accuracy, educational value, and personal relevance in creating impactful digital historical content. Future research could expand on these findings by analyzing a broader range of comments, exploring different videos and platforms, and examining the long-term educational impacts of digital historical media. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of digital history education and offer practical guidance for enhancing public engagement with historical narratives through digital media.

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