

Digital Source Criticism: Evaluating YouTube as Historical Evidence of Javanese Traditional Wedding Ceremonies

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Abstract

This article criticism from internal and external sources on digital historical evidence in the form of YouTube videos. These videos complement printed historical evidence, including manuscripts, magazines, contemporary newspapers, and paintings, on Javanese traditional wedding ceremony traditions, especially those of the Yogyakarta and Surakarta Kratons. The research method employs the historical method, which includes heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. It primarily focuses on digital historical source criticism and is conducted through documentation studies utilizing YouTube and thematic coding analysis. This analysis is applied to data on traditional wedding ceremonies performed outside palace walls by government officials of the Republic of Indonesia at their children's weddings. The study's results show: (a) Difficulty in finding printed sources can be supplemented with digital historical sources, such as YouTube videos covering Javanese traditional wedding ceremonies. (b) Internal criticism encompasses evaluating the suitability of the event's broadcast time and date, the appropriateness of the title and content in photos, videos, or text, the validity and authenticity of the archives, and the video's purpose. (c) External criticism involves assessing the creator's account credibility, witnesses, sources, and reference materials in the videos. Videos are stored as historical evidence using links and metadata, including keyword specifications, synonyms, video title, channel name, and publication date, so the same video can be found again.

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Introduction

Historical sources, including those on YouTube, are incorporated into Digital Humanities, a new paradigm in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Digital Humanities (often abbreviated as DH) explores digital and digitized materials. History, as a branch of the Humanities, can use this study technique as a research design.

Human behavior today is increasingly influenced by social media. YouTube's social media platform serves not only as a video-sharing platform, but its features can also be utilized for interaction and community building, a process known as Netnography, which has become an integral part of everyday life. In the digital era, data that was once private has become increasingly accessible. Once uploaded to YouTube, this personal data can become publicly available, including information about marriages. It is now very easy for someone to create archives, photos, and videos in digital form, or print data digitized into digital archives for the public domain.

Even the YouTube comment section has become a platform for digital community interaction. Digital Humanities studies, in the future, will continue to develop considering social changes influenced by digital technology and the internet due to the increasing global population interacting and participating in networked communities in cyberspace, creating new spaces for participatory science (Amanullah, 2023; Carbajal & Caswell, 2021; Hawkins, 2022; Yuting et al., 2023). The 2015 European Union digitization survey of approximately 1,000 cultural heritage institutions reported that an average of 23% of European collections, cultures, and traditions in the region had been digitized (Colavizza et al., 2019, 2022; Kizhner et al., 2021; Woodford et al., 2023).

In reality, traditional historians view primary historical sources as written documents. Historical sources are collected through documents, witnesses, and facts, which serve as primary sources and are expanded by using secondary sources (Good, 1942). In line with technological developments, Law Number 43 of 2009, Article 1, paragraph 2 concerning Archives, states that archives are not only documents but also digital archives (PP RI Number 28, 2012). This means that written or printed documents, witness interviews, and other facts can be digitized if digitization is merely a change in media format. This change in media format will alter the way historians work, as text, visual, and audio data can be found more quickly, widely, and easily accessed. Historians work not individually, but in collaboration with computer experts who have access to a wider range of data.

Searching YouTube videos on smartphones is easier than finding historical evidence in print media, making YouTube videos more accessible and a choice for the younger generation. The wedding videos of the President's children on YouTube can serve as a reference for prospective brides and grooms who plan to use traditional Javanese wedding ceremonies, as the popularity of the President's children's names makes it easier for someone to recall them in the YouTube video using the search feature.

Experiences in developed countries demonstrate that their success in implementing historical thinking skills in history education is supported by easy access to primary sources and the availability of languages that are understandable to primary source users. Ultimately, this research led to the development of a website designed to facilitate access to primary sources for teachers and students in four schools, in line with the school curriculum (Widiadi, Aji Saputra, et al., 2022). A similar approach is applied in the study of the history of the struggle, utilizing the website as a historical learning medium (Lee, 2022).

The novelty of this research lies in the internal and external critique of YouTube videos as a source of historical wedding ceremonies, which can be combined with other forms of historical sources to ensure that events recorded on social media have an accurate meaning and are not misinterpreted as misinformation during cultural regeneration. Primary data on wedding ceremonies, available in the form of archives, manuscripts, photographs, or paintings, serve as historical evidence. The challenges with this data include its scarcity, personal ownership, and fragility. With the advent of YouTube, personal data, such as wedding photos, has been digitized and published on the platform. This personal data has become publicly available, accessible not only to historians but also to the broader public. Of course, the validation of the data as a historical source still requires internal and external scrutiny for authenticity.

The focus of this research is on YouTube channels as a historical source, specifically the weddings of the sons and daughters of Indonesian presidents, which have been published on YouTube. Traditional Javanese weddings were chosen because most Indonesian presidents married their sons and

daughters using Javanese traditional ceremonies, either derived from the Yogyakarta or Surakarta palaces.

When Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX permitted the public to use the Yogyakarta palace wedding ceremony in 1988, many government officials outside the palace walls performed the Yogyakarta or Surakarta palace wedding ceremonies for their sons and daughters, citing their noble ancestry or the perceived role of the palace as a place of origin for noble culture, as a form of regional cultural preservation. Critiques of historical analysis can be used to correct misinformation circulating in the community. Many research approaches in the digital era utilize YouTube as a platform for data visualization and exploration of phenomena (de Keulenaar, 2023; Liang et al., 2023; Werner et al., 2023), demonstrating life experiences, social practices, time series, and spatial relationships between periods, which in turn build new knowledge and experiences for humanity (Mustofa et al., 2022).

YouTube serves as a historical resource by recording data and converting it into digital form, thereby sharing life stories with a wider audience for learning (Emmitt, 2022; Werner & Vovchuk, 2023). Awareness of the digitization of oral history is related to preservation issues because traditional history still uses cassettes and analog recordings, making historical data vulnerable to fragility and damage. In Indonesia, digitization projects are still limited to archival and manuscript storage. YouTube is a social media platform that has 80 languages. YouTube reaches 95% of the internet population in various fields. YouTube videos are formatted in two forms: short, between 10 and 15 seconds, and long. This format enables YouTube to maintain its lead in video views, as other social media platforms struggle to match YouTube's video views.

Research on YouTube data acknowledged the existence of YouTube's recommendation system for problematic videos, based on a database of 1,187 studies.

This analysis ultimately resulted in a final sample of 23 studies, where YouTube's recommendation system provided users with viewing options based on their personal browsing and viewing history, as well as new content viewed through the channel. Channels are selected video spaces located next to YouTube videos watched by users (Yesilada & Lewandowsky, 2022).

Based on existing data, the 2025 policy, the YouTube algorithm also seeks to provide recommendations for creators' videos not based on quantity but quality, so that videos will continue to be recommended by YouTube if the video has a positive image, is watched by many people, and viewers share and save the video, so that the video is considered good. This indicates that the YouTube algorithm does not prioritize the accuracy of the content in videos recommended to users (Abul-Fottouh et al., 2020).

Data digitization efforts are not commensurate with the high level of data damage in libraries. The YouTube platform itself strives to maximize active online participation (Siregar & Anggriawan, 2021). Although YouTube data provides equal opportunities for everyone to write history, the validation of digital historical data, including authentication and authenticity, has not been thoroughly explored, which raises concerns about the accuracy of the conclusions. The YouTube community needs to be validated to ensure unbiased writing results.

The urgency of conducting history-based research by utilizing social media is considered to be a research that is very much needed at this time and can be carried out concretely for studies related to social, cultural, and contextual issues that require qualitative sources or case studies (Deori et al., 2022; Insani et al., 2023; Jumardi et al., 2023; Lomborg, 2020). The fit between digital and written sources is assessed by comparing the accuracy, timeliness, and consistency of their content. This helps ensure that information from digital sources remains useful in academic work and aligns with accepted historical standards.

Research Methods

This research focuses on the use of Source Criticism within the historical method to analyze YouTube videos as historical sources. It specifically examines videos documenting traditional Javanese wedding ceremonies from 2005 to 2024, which involve the children of Indonesian presidents. Selected videos pertain to Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono (2005), Ibas Yudhoyono (2011), Gibran Rakabuming Raka (2015), Kahiyang Ayu (2017), Guruh Soekarno Putra (2021), Titiek Soeharto (2024), and other relevant material.

The study focuses on ceremonies outside palace settings and spans the period from YouTube's introduction in Indonesia (2005) to the end of the seventh president's term and the discovery of Titiek

Soeharto's 2024 wedding video. Heuristics were used to collect primary sources, including YouTube videos. Searches used keywords such as the names of the presidents' children. The results show that not all weddings appear on YouTube.

Therefore, tools like Google Search, Google Trends, or <https://keywordtool.io> help facilitate thorough searches. Such bias can influence the visibility and representativeness of search results, as algorithms prioritize content based on personalization and popularity metrics. To mitigate these limitations, researchers employed multiple accounts, incognito browsing, API-based data retrieval, and triangulation with external sources to ensure balanced and contextually reliable findings.

Secondary data consists of literature related to historical source criticism, video analysis methods, and studies of cultural representation in digital media (Gardner & Turner, 1971; Welbourn & Turner, 1971; Work, 1969). The second step, which is the main objective of source criticism, is to assess the validity, credibility, and reliability of YouTube videos as sources of historical data (de Sousa Mendes & Barbosa, 2022).

Source criticism plays a crucial role in identifying, analyzing, and evaluating historical sources that can be trusted as valid (Heller, 2023). Documentation is carried out by storing video links and video metadata, including upload date, number of views, duration, video description, and relevant comments, as part of the contextual analysis (Berg, 2021; Povroznik, 2021). This is important because when searching for videos again without links and video metadata, historical sources can be lost because YouTube lacks dedicated storage.

Historical criticism studies are narratives that contain historical information about facts, interpreted logically and researchable, so that the research results have educational value. This enables the reconstruction, reduction, and comparative analysis of historical events (Marshall, 1977). The specific stages of YouTube source criticism are: (a) Authentication process, whether the YouTube broadcast matches the actual wedding date (a live show) or is a re-upload with a different broadcast time. Then, does the content match the title?, (b) Originality, meaning whether the video content was created by an individual or institution with official authority to broadcast the broadcast and did not alter content from other channels, (c) Integrity, meaning the completeness of the video data in the form of written text and audio text from professionals who understand cultural content, and (d) Credibility, namely the legality of the video and the accountable professional content creator, or appropriate reference sources. The purpose of the video, whether it is educational, informative, or commercial, is taken into account.

This research aims to establish the validity and reliability of digital historical sources by systematically comparing data from YouTube videos and written materials. The main argument is that while YouTube videos offer accessible content, they require corroboration with written sources to serve as credible historical evidence. Written data and videos should mutually reinforce each other, with print media generally offering more accountable authorship. Reliability is strengthened by utilizing videos from official accounts and triangulating findings with prior studies (Palocz, 2021; Pandey, 2023).

The next step is interpretation and historiography. Historical interpretation is conducted by connecting YouTube video data with broader historical events, as well as understanding how Javanese traditional weddings are presented in digital media and how this influences public understanding of tradition. Analysis of various data and facts has been selected, clarified, and classified to facilitate historical writing, considering whether source criticism has been carried out appropriately and correctly to reach valid conclusions.

The historian's work process in this paper, using digital source data, provides an alternative historical source to the classical work of historians who rely on analog text data. Historians receive the results of Digital Humanities work based on videos published on YouTube, and their task is to conduct internal and external source criticism on these results.

Result

The content in this YouTube link about Yogyakarta Palace weddings includes a presentation by Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X and Prof. Joko Suryo (Historian), summarizing the following: For Javanese people, marriage is the building of a *Balai Somah* (House of Representatives), a happy household. Therefore, the wedding ceremony is a very important event, conducted with religious and sacred significance, rich in cultural symbolism and values. Marriage is a crucial part of the tradition within the palace, as it fosters the succession and regeneration of the dynasty. The wedding ceremony

adapts to the challenges of the times, unlike past traditions that should not be abandoned. Within the palace itself, the wedding ceremony has been significantly simplified, but no part of it should be omitted. The Javanese traditional wedding ceremony is a tradition interpreted as a symbol of domestic life in the Yogyakarta or Surakarta Palace, along with its parent kingdom, the Mataram Kingdom (Safitri, 2019). This is consistent with the following analysis based on text and audio from YouTube (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. One of the videos on YouTube Kraton Yogyakarta (Kraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat) Dhaup Ageng

Source(s): <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=uRTgMadpLSM>

This account is the official account of the Yogyakarta Palace filled by Sultan Hamengkubuwana IX, Gusti Kanjeng Ratu Hemas, GBPH Prabukusumo (Palace Administrator), GBPH H. Yudhaningrat (Palace Administrator), GBPH Jayakusumo (Palace Administrator), Prof. Joko Suryo (Historian), Timbul Haryono (Archaeologist), and many more. In addition to the narrative above, this broadcast confirms that the wedding ceremony originated from the Yogyakarta Palace, despite experiencing simplification during the event. Considering the accuracy of the series of photos, positions, and professions of the sources, as well as the accuracy of the channel name, this video can serve as a historical source that confirms the tradition of a series of wedding ceremonies at the Yogyakarta Palace.

During its implementation outside the palace walls, on September 20, 2002, the first President Sukarno's son, Guruh Soekarnoputra, was documented on the official YouTube daily news account. Meanwhile, the weddings of President Sukarno's other children were uploaded to unofficial accounts. Therefore, they were not used for analysis in this study to determine the credibility of the research. Screenshots show the reception, with Guruh wearing Palembang songket and the bride, Sabina, wearing makeup and a palace-style velvet kebaya. Her wedding attire was assisted by Miko Hamojiyo of the Mangkunegaran Palace, as shown in the following video analysis:

The video (Figure 2) is a re-recording uploaded on March 12, 2021, 19 years after their wedding on September 20, 2002. This video can be used as a source for research analysis because it accurately presents the events in chronological order. The video of Guruh Soekarno Putra's wedding was broadcast on the official RCTI Files account, a national television station, although its duration is short (2 minutes and 23 seconds).



Figure 2. Analysis of research results through YouTube Official Daily News on RCTI Television

Source(s): <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=pa5Lg9jI7W0>

Furthermore, a video of the wedding reception of the daughter of Indonesia's second president, Soeharto (Figure 3), between Titiek Soeharto and Prabowo Soemitro (now Prabowo Subianto), was broadcast by the official Tribun Singkawang account as a collage of old photos and video clips, combined into a video with accompanying text. This family archive has been digitally transformed, shifting the private sphere into the public sphere, as once the video is published, it becomes publicly accessible.



Figure 2. Analysis of research results through YouTube Official Daily News on RCTI Television
Source(s): https://www.YouTube.com/shorts/g_K74LUIJ28

The search results video shows that the two's attire reflects a dynamic and multi-ethnic city in Java, a center of economic and cultural growth (Irsyada, 2023; Mulyana, 2023). The narrative tells the family background of Prabowo and Titiek, the meeting of the bride and groom until the marriage that united two famous families, namely the Soeharto family (the 2nd President) and Soemitro Joyohadikusumo, and experienced a storm of conflict between families leading up to 1998.

Analysis based on different videos reveals that in May 2024, the National Archives of Indonesia broadcast a 4-minute video of a wedding ceremony titled "The Marriage of Prabowo Subianto with Titiek Soeharto" (<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/g4zTiD01uPQ>). The name used was changed to match the current name, namely Prabowo Subianto. Both videos demonstrate the ease with which family archives, after being transformed and published on YouTube, can be used as historical sources by historians and the wider public.

Marriage ceremonies provide insight into both cultural identity and political significance (Chesser, 1980; Jafarova & Ozkaleli, 2024; Siregar & Rochelman, 2021; Tohari & Azizah, 2022). However, the absence of wedding videos for the children of Presidents BJ Habibie, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Megawati Soekarnoputri on YouTube highlights a limit of relying solely on digital platforms for historical research. The main point is that while digital data from official accounts can enhance historical research, it cannot fully replace missing primary sources.

Videos and photo collages of Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono's Javanese wedding are available, but their usefulness is limited because they were not uploaded by an official source. For Edhie Baskoro Yudhoyono, official YouTube sources about his wedding, which blends Javanese and Palembang traditions, are lacking, and there is no analysis of the Javanese cultural elements. This exemplifies how the reliability and scope of digital sources for historical research largely depend on provenance and content verification.

The wedding videos of Joko Widodo's children, especially Kahiyang's, demonstrate the preservation of Javanese traditional rituals through widely accessible media. The easy availability and national coverage of Kahiyang and Bobby's wedding exemplify how recent, digitized ceremonies contribute to the documentation of cultural and historical events. This highlights the increasing significance of digital archives in capturing contemporary practices.



Figure 4. Passing on history through Javanese traditional wedding rituals for the son of the 7th President of the Republic of Indonesia

Source(s): <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=uwCxzMkWxfM>

Javanese traditional wedding ceremonies can be used as a source of history, and the event can be a forum for socialization, internalization, and education about the application of family values according to Javanese culture that are passed down from generation to generation through wedding customs and rituals (Hartono & Prasetyo, 2023; Sutikno et al., 2022). Similar to manually written data as a historical source, it has been found that digital data is also increasingly older and difficult to find. The more recent the historical data, the easier it is to use digital data as a source of historical research data (Assidiqi et al., 2023; Hastuti et al., 2021; Kurniawan, 2020; Umami et al., 2022).

Discussion

History has become an open space for anyone to engage in the study of historiography. The openness of personal archives and the ease of searching on YouTube have transformed the way historical research is conducted. Data limitations can be quickly bridged through manual search features or search tools. A wealth of data is scattered across social media, both digital and digitally transformed, and historians must master it to be more adaptive to changes in human behavior in cyberspace. This also provides ample opportunities for anyone to write history through social media data like YouTube. History can be written by many people, so the flow is not just top-down but bottom-up. As a community, nothing can stop the growth of the digital world; therefore, we must prepare to adapt to these changes. Online communities continue to grow in tandem with the expansion of platforms in Indonesia. Platforms in Indonesia that continue to grow include Facebook and Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok (Klassen & Fiesler, 2022).

The YouTube platform has not been abandoned by its users and remains popular to this day, as other social media platforms have yet to match the power and flexibility of YouTube videos as a source of information (Jamiludin & Darnawati, 2022; Mambang et al., 2022; Ziaulhaq, 2022). The way history is shared and interpreted for the future is evolving (McShane et al., 2021).

YouTube allows individuals to publish historical content, which serves as research material; however, researchers must always consider the credibility of these sources (Maziriri et al., 2020). YouTube can be practically utilized as research data by fulfilling the search strategy requirements, documenting search results, adjusting the research design, and collecting relevant data according to the research, while also acknowledging that YouTube as research data has contextual limitations (Breuer et al., 2023; Khan & Malik, 2022).

YouTube offers a wide variety of video categories (Halim et al., 2022; Li, 2022; Raza et al., 2024). If someone is looking for video resources, YouTube is a top choice because it can be used as a repository (Rieder et al., 2020). In addition to providing educational content, many researchers have begun using YouTube to search for research data (Rahmatika et al., 2021).

Furthermore, in the classroom, it has been explained that the most practical and effective way to introduce historical sources is through digital primary sources, thereby shifting the learning approach from teacher-centered to student-centered (Widiadi, Sheehan, et al., 2022). In Indonesia, YouTube (Fontoura, 2020; Soriano & Gaw, 2022), Facebook (Kouros et al., 2023), and TikTok (Alonso-López & Sidorenko-Bautista, 2022; Liu, 2023) are the most popular social networks.

YouTube itself offers a video-sharing feature, allowing users to share short and long videos with others, both publicly and privately. Videos are presented in the form of moving images, making them easy for viewers to understand (Irfani & Yefterson, 2021; Zafri et al., 2022). Access to YouTube data is affordable, requiring only a smartphone and internet connection, and can be obtained by using existing links or searching for keywords in the search box (Hu, M., Luo, X., Chen, J., Lee, Y. C., Zhou, Y., & Wu, 2021; Zhang et al., 2022).

Researchers will spend less time and money than searching directly at the data location. However, users must understand and be competent with social media technology because security is not guaranteed. If a social media platform is shut down due to bankruptcy or other reasons, as experienced by Path on October 18, 2018, the archives stored there will be permanently deleted by the platform in question. Personal archives generated and stored on social media can include text, photos, or videos (Cannelli & Musso, 2022; Laurell et al., 2020; Liebermann, 2021). YouTube's potential as a research tool and data source is enormous, so several considerations need to be taken into account when deciding whether YouTube is appropriate for a research question, determining the research design, determining the amount of data to extract, developing a robust search strategy for YouTube data, and how to interpret/use the data (Sui et al., 2022).

The alignment of research objectives, methodology (qualitative, quantitative), design, population, and outcomes or data of interest must be convincing (Shaikh et al., 2023). Social media often contains manipulated or carelessly interpreted historical facts. The use of social media in history teaching must be approached critically (Marpelina et al., 2024; Sariyatun & Marpelina, 2024; Scott, 2022; Zulkarnain, 2022). When searching for data using only keywords in the YouTube search bar, videos relevant to those keywords will appear. Therefore, we need applications on Google Search, Google Trends, or tools like <https://keywordtool.io> to facilitate searches.

The use of this event as a form of preserving traditional Javanese wedding ceremonies is clearly evident in the videos of Gibran and Selvi or Kahiyang and Ayu. However, culture can be preserved if the community still recognizes and utilizes it in weddings (Dekavalla, 2012; Janah, 2020; Ridwan & Basith, 2021; Suyadi & Sabiq, 2021), so that wedding ceremonies, as part of Indonesia's cultural heritage, can be witnessed by future generations (Poeroebaja, 2021; Poeroebaja. B. P. H., 1939).

YouTube views can become historical facts if the creator or content producer can provide valid evidence to support the event. In the absence of valid evidence, the creator's credibility can be a factor in determining the veracity of the video data. Digitizing research sources can be used in multidimensional science (Salleh & Bushroa, 2022) (Salleh & Bushroa, 2022). However, the epistemological challenges of using digital evidence require critical scrutiny. (a) The nature of digital evidence differs from textual evidence, as digital materials are highly mutable, temporally fluid, and often shaped by platform algorithms rather than direct authorial control. (b) Research on digital content inevitably depends on the credibility, intentions, and context of the content producer, raising questions about bias and selective representation. (c) Verification mechanisms must therefore involve triangulation, cross-checking digital data with archival documents, media reports, or official records to establish historical reliability and reduce interpretive uncertainty.

This research generally examines culture and describes the experiences and identities of individuals with varying characteristics. The limitations of finding scientifically relevant data make YouTube an unlimited source of data, namely data that is first filtered and then used according to the design and variables to be studied (Atay, 2020; M. Dunn, 2021; T. R. Dunn & Benjamin Myers, 2020). History requires numerous strategies to produce useful research information. Digitizing historical sources is a starting point for making history more accessible (Dyer, 2021; Romein et al., 2020).

This study interprets wedding receptions as historical sources using digital data from the YouTube platform. When digital sources are used as historical records and produce publications based on history, both qualitatively and quantitatively (König, 2021; Wettlaufer, 2023), this can be considered a digital-based historical research design (Bhat, 2023; Freeth, 2023; Smyth et al., 2023). YouTube is a social network that provides video-sharing services, where users share videos publicly and privately with others (Kuzmina & Borisov, 2021).

Conclusion

YouTube videos can be a starting point in the search for data regarding the weddings of the sons and daughters of the Presidents of the Republic of Indonesia as a whole. YouTube channels accelerate the discovery of data, works, and other information. Collaborative use of manual text data and YouTube videos is necessary to complete the writing of the history and traditions of the wedding ceremonies of the Presidents and Vice Presidents of the Republic of Indonesia. YouTube, as a historical source, must still provide accurate reference sources and have complete and reliable account ownership data to be considered a historical source. Textual data, such as *Pranatan lampah-lampah*, *Serat*, *Rijksblad*, Berita Negara (State News), contemporary magazines, contemporary newspapers, and scholarly articles, are still necessary to complete the historical narrative.

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