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RECONSTRUCTING LOCAL IDENTITY AND CHARACTER VALUES THROUGH DIGITAL HISTORICAL NARRATIVES: A NETNOGRAPHY OF TIKTOK'S *TELISIK PATI* COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

The development of digital space has led to local historical narratives being increasingly consumed by the younger generation, yet these narratives are not yet fully understood as a platform for character building. This situation has created a gap between the potential of digital historiography as a medium for teaching values and its practical application. This study aims to understand how historical narratives are produced by the TikTok account *Telisik Pati* shape character values through interactions within the online community. Using a netnographic approach, the study analyzed 19 videos and thousands of comments from October 2024 to December 2025. Digital observation, thematic analysis, and contextual interpretation were used to reveal the value patterns that emerge in the content and user responses. The results of the study reveal four main patterns of character formation: moral-religious values manifested through historical reflection; solidarity and *guyub-rukun* (harmony) reinforced by local identity narratives; the appreciation of Javanese traditions and ethics revitalized through digital dialogue; and ecological awareness that grows from the connection between history and natural space. Public interaction reveals a collaborative process of value internalization, in which historical narratives function not only as information but also as emotional and pedagogical media. The discussion confirms that digital historiography plays a significant role as a character-building tool within a strong local culture. This study concludes that digital historical narratives can be an effective strategy for strengthening character values in the social media era. The implications include the utilization of historical content for character education and the reinforcement of local identity in digital communities.

I. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of cultural transformation in the digital space increasingly shows that social media is not only an arena for entertainment but also a forum for identity reconstruction, historical learning, and the formation of character values among the younger generation (Melnik et al. 2025; Takhar, Bebek, and Jamal 2023). TikTok, one of the world's fastest-growing platforms, facilitates the creation of short narratives that combine visuals, sounds, local stories, and community expressions in an accessible, viral format (El Sayed and Hotait 2024; Kułaga 2024; Vizcaíno-Verdú 2024). Through its algorithmic mechanisms, TikTok creates a new space for users to interpret the past and reconstruct collective memory. In historical philosophy, this process is understood as a fundamental human attempt to give direction and meaning to historical experiences (Cervi and Divon 2023; Ricoeur and Thompson 2016; Zulli and Zulli 2022). In the Indonesian context, particularly within Java, digital spaces have become a meeting point for long-standing local values, cultural ethics, and religious traditions. This phenomenon has been increasingly highlighted by recent studies on digital heritage and cultural identity (Buragohain et al. 2024; Burkey 2022; Gunagraha and Kholilurrahman 2024). Consequently, digital platforms like TikTok function not merely as channels for information dissemination, but as active cultural environments where historical meaning, identity, and core values are continuously reconstructed through participatory interaction.

Recent digital anthropology studies emphasise that local historical narratives—once oral—now circulate on fast media like TikTok (Ismail 2025; Iturrealde de Bracamonte and Fragosó Mora 2025). This shift transforms how young people understand solidarity, respect for tradition, ecological connections, and spiritual awareness. Furthermore, global research links history-based digital content to a stronger sense of local identity (Purkis 2017; Rahayu et al. 2025). However, TikTok's interactive features generate new meanings that may diverge from traditional perspectives. Consequently, deeper study is required to understand how these values are formed and disseminated online.

The primary challenge lies in understanding how ethical values are formed on fast-paced, content-heavy digital platforms (Mayrita et al. 2025; Nurhayati et al. 2025). While character development is traditionally studied within schools or physical social groups, digital media introduces a novel paradigm: values are now negotiated through short-form narratives, digital symbols, and unstructured comments. Consequently, the challenge is to trace the underlying patterns of these digital narratives and examine how online communities interpret them (Hnit and Almanna 2025; Liguori 2020; Quiroz, Hawasly, and Vellojín 2025). To address this, netnographic analysis serves as a vital tool to reveal these practices and interactions within digital spaces.

So far, several related studies have highlighted the role of social media in shaping cultural and historical values; however, most remain focused on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram (Panchal and Mago 2024; Tang and Chan 2020). Fewer studies have critically examined how TikTok, with its fast-paced, algorithm-driven nature, serves as a space for reconstructing historical and philosophical narratives. While existing research demonstrates that digital storytelling can foster new moral values rooted in local contexts, such as community solidarity, social empathy, and environmental concern (Jordaan and Mennega 2025; Nisi et al. 2023). very few studies combine this value analysis with a Javanese historical-philosophical and cultural-ethical approach. Consequently, the reflective dimension of these digital narratives remains largely unexplored.

In Indonesia, existing research on the digital preservation of local culture focuses heavily on documentation rather than on how digital community interactions shape core value (Irwanto, Bahfiarti, and Unde 2025; Rochayanti et al. 2019). Furthermore, studies addressing character education on social media often emphasize digital literacy or media ethics rather than the emergence of *unggah-ungguh* (cultural etiquette), *guyub-rukun* (communal harmony), or ecological awareness driven by online local histories. This gap necessitates studies that synthesize historical philosophy, value systems, and digital practices, particularly within localized contexts such as Pati, Central Java.

With more than 4,800 followers and millions of likes on just 19 videos produced between October 2024 and December 2025, the TikTok account *Telisik Pati* exemplifies how youth and local communities interact with regional history (https://www.tiktok.com/@telisik_pati). Its content does not merely convey historical information; it offers deep reflections on cultural values and moral meanings, thereby fostering a stronger sense of local identity. Furthermore, public interaction through comments, responses, and engagement patterns demonstrates how core values are spontaneously negotiated within digital communities. Ultimately, this phenomenon presents a critical opportunity to examine the intersection of historical narratives, public meaning-making, and value formation within fast-paced digital media.

Given this gap, our study addresses the following central question: How are core values reconstructed and disseminated through the digital historical narratives of the *Telisik Pati* account? Specifically, how do these narratives foster ethical values, how do online communities interpret them, and how does this interaction contribute to the formation of moral identity among youth? This study offers significant novelty by integrating netnography, historical philosophy, and value frameworks within Javanese digital culture. In doing so, it provides both theoretical insights into digital historiography and practical guidance for leveraging digital platforms in character education.

II. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach (Creswell and Creswell 2022). Netnography is selected for its capacity to provide a deep understanding of community meaning-making within the digital realm, particularly on platforms like TikTok (Asname and Berrada 2024). This method enables researchers to observe interactions, interpret digital symbols, and analyze how users negotiate values through short-form historical videos. Following Kozinets' (2002) guidelines, netnography allows sensitive, participatory observation that fits the digital context and community dynamics.

The research was conducted on the TikTok account *Telisik Pati*, a digital channel that produces local historical narratives, legendary stories, and philosophical reflections on the Pati Regency in Central Java (https://www.tiktok.com/@telisik_pati). From October 13, 2024, to December 2, 2025, this account uploaded 19 videos featuring a combination of visuals, narration, and background music deliberately designed to evoke a historical and emotional atmosphere. During this period, *Telisik Pati* grew into a digital community with more than 4,800 followers and millions of interactions, including likes, comments, and shares.

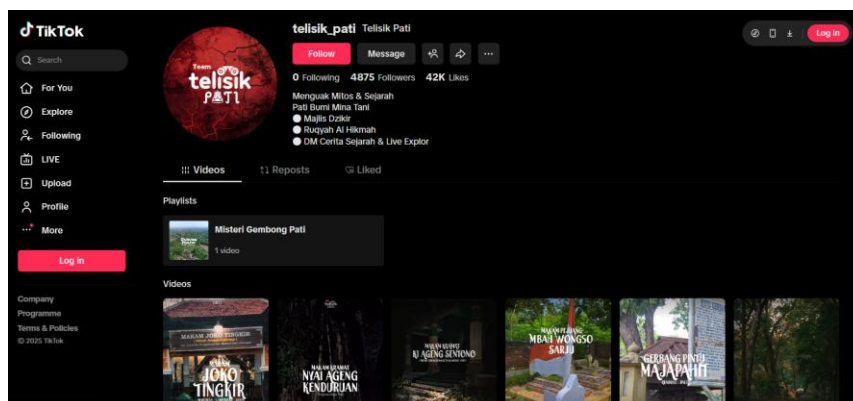


Figure 1. TikTok's Screen "Telisik Pati"

Participants in this study include two main groups: (1) creators of the *Telisik Pati* account as producers of digital historical narratives, and (2) TikTok users who interact through comments, likes, and content-sharing practices. In accordance with digital research ethics, user identities were not recorded, and all comments were anonymized (Walsh 2020).

Following Kozinets' netnographic procedures (see Figure 2), this research was conducted through six main stages. The first stage was research planning and cultural entrée, which involved identifying TikTok as a relevant digital field and selecting the *Telisik Pati* account based on its focus on local historical narratives and active community engagement. This stage also involved familiarisation with the platform's interaction patterns, content structure, and cultural context. The second stage was data collection, which involved systematic digital observation and documentation of relevant content. The main data sources included: (a) 19 videos uploaded during

the research period; (b) user comments and interaction threads; (c) engagement metadata, such as likes, views, and shares; and (d) digital field notes documenting contextual observations and researcher reflections. All relevant content was archived and organized to ensure analytical transparency.

The third stage was data immersion and cultural understanding, in which the researcher repeatedly observed videos, read user comments, and examined interaction patterns to understand the meanings, emotions, and cultural expressions embedded in the digital narratives. This immersion enabled the identification of recurring symbolic patterns related to character values, and cultural identity.

The fourth stage was data coding and thematic analysis, conducted using a thematic approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2019; Squires 2023). The analysis began with data familiarisation, followed by inductive coding to identify emerging themes from the narratives and user interactions. These inductive codes were then complemented by deductive interpretation based on theoretical frameworks, including digital historiography, character value theory, and Javanese cultural ethics.

The fifth stage was interpretation and contextual analysis, which involved grouping codes into broader thematic categories such as moral-religious values, social solidarity, appreciation of tradition, historical awareness, and ecological concern. These themes were interpreted in relation to the cultural context of Pati and the dynamics of digital interaction, enabling a deeper understanding of how character values were constructed and negotiated within the online community.

The sixth stage was ethical reflection and representation, ensuring that all data were used responsibly, anonymised, and interpreted respectfully in accordance with digital research ethics (Walsh, 2020). The final stage involved presenting the findings in a way that accurately represents the cultural meanings and social dynamics observed in the digital community. Through these systematic steps, netnography enabled an in-depth understanding of how digital historical narratives function as cultural and pedagogical spaces for the reconstruction and dissemination of character values in online communities.

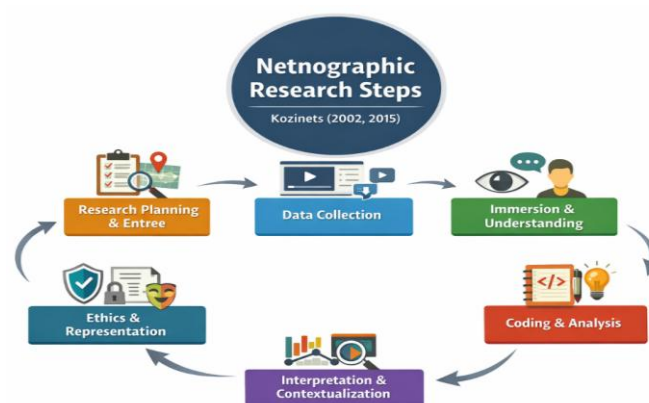


Figure 2. netnographic research steps by Kozinets

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings, which are organised around research questions about how character values are represented in digital historical narratives and how the community interprets and negotiates these values through public interaction. The analysis was conducted thematically, taking into account the Javanese cultural context, historical philosophy, and the dynamics of social media as a space for meaning production.

Moral-Religious Awareness in Digital Historical Narratives

The historical narratives uploaded by *Telisik Pati* often present moral and spiritual dimensions, both explicitly and implicitly. Many videos link stories from the past with religious teachings, gratitude, ethical advice, and reflections on the relationship between humans and God. User comments show that these moral-spiritual elements are accepted as reminders, identity reinforcements, and spaces for personal reflection. These values are consistent with the literature, which demonstrates that digital media can evoke moral cues that reinforce religious orientation in online communities (Campbell 2010; Ding et al. 2025; Ma'rof and Abdullah 2025).

Table 1. Representation of Moral-Religious Values in User Narratives and Interactions

Value Code	Narrative Representation	User Response (Anonymous)	Interpretation
Gratitude & Hope	Stories of historical figures surviving disasters	"Remember to always be grateful, sir."	Historical narratives are used as a medium for moral learning.
Taqwa & Self-Reflection	Stories about the origins of the tombs of saints and religious figures	"MasyaAllah, the video gives me goosebumps."	The video stimulates users' spiritual awareness.
Values of Patience & Sincerity	Folk legends about life's trials	"It really suits my current life situation."	Users link historical stories to personal experiences.

The interpretation of historical narratives shows that users not only consume information but also internalise values through emotional association and personal reflection. This reinforces findings in the literature regarding the moral function of digital storytelling.

Social Solidarity and *Guyub-Rukun* as Collective Identity

The second finding that emerged strongly was the representation of the values of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and *guyub-rukun*. Many videos depict the community's role in preserving historical sites, agrarian traditions, and cultural rituals. User interactions show pride in local identity and the hope that the younger generation will preserve the value of togetherness.

Table 2. Patterns of Social Solidarity in Videos and Public Comments

Social Theme	Visual/Narrative	User Response	Interpretation
Mutual Cooperation	Video of historical site restoration	"Proud, there are still many who care about culture."	Solidarity is built through cultural collectivity.
Pride in Identity	Story of the village's origins	"I love Pati even more now."	Local identity is strengthened through digital narratives.
Community Harmony	Traditional harvest rituals	" "This is a tradition that must be preserved together."	Harmonious values are seen as social capital.

These findings align with research on social media as a space for the formation of culture-based collective identity (Jordaan and Mennega, 2025; Nisi et al. 2023). TikTok allows users to celebrate local identity while reinterpreting social solidarity in a digital context.

Appreciation of Javanese Traditions and Ethics (*Unggah-Ungguh*)

The third prominent finding is the representation of Javanese ethical values such as *unggah-ungguh*, respect for elders, manners, and politeness in communication. Many users emphasised that historical stories made them "eling" (remember themselves) and encouraged respect for their ancestors. The comments reveal a pattern of moral education that occurs organically among users.

Table 3. Representation of Javanese Ethics in User Narratives and Interactions

Ethical Values	Video Narrative Source	User Responses	Interpretation
Respect for Elders	Stories of wise village figures	"we must be more polite to older people"	Historical narratives as a medium for character education.
Manners	Explanation of traditional legends	"The culture of politeness must not be lost."	Tradition is considered the moral foundation of society.
Digital Politeness	Encouragement to discuss politely	"Thank you, admin, for the very subtle narrative."	Javanese ethics are brought into digital ethics.

These findings support literature showing that digital platforms can be spaces for revitalising local values and traditional ethics (Buragohain, et al. 2024; Burkey 2022; Gunagraha and Kholilurrahman, 2024; Purkis, 2017; Rahayu et al. 2025). *Telisik Pati* shows how historical narratives can reinforce politeness in online conversations.

Historical Awareness and Ecological Concern

Many videos highlight the close relationship among humans, historical spaces, and natural landscapes, such as mountains, rivers, and forests. Users respond to these narratives with comments expressing admiration, a sense of loss over environmental damage, and a desire to

preserve natural heritage. This pattern shows the integration of historical and ecological awareness, two mutually reinforcing dimensions of character.

Table 4. Patterns of Ecological Awareness in Digital Historical Narratives

Ecological Aspect	Narrative	User Response	Interpretation
Nature Conservation	Sacred forest stories	"It's such a shame that the forest is becoming increasingly deforested."	History triggers ecological concerns.
Human-Nature Relationship	The origin story of a river	"Nature is part of our lives."	Users see nature as a moral entity.
Social Criticism	The current condition of natural sites	"Hopefully, the government will pay more attention."	Digital narratives become a medium for ecological advocacy.

These findings are consistent with the theory that digital historiography can expand the space for ecological discussion based on cultural memory (Purkis, 2017; Rahayu et al. 2025). The four themes show that *Telisik Pati* is not just a historical entertainment channel, but an arena for the collective reconstruction of character values. Moral-religious values, social solidarity, Javanese ethics, and ecological awareness are not only present in video narratives but are also reinforced, debated, and reinterpreted by the digital community. This process aligns with the literature, which demonstrates that social media serves as a space for cultural and moral negotiation (Hatef, 2022; Storie and Marschlich, 2025).

The strength of this research lies in the finding that digital historiography is not only a process of remembering the past, but also a practice of character building. *Telisik Pati* shows how local history can be processed into contemporary moral values through algorithmic mechanisms, emotional interactions, and public participation. This finding extends the theories of netnography and digital heritage by showing that character can emerge from a dialogue between past narratives and community responses within a highly dynamic digital ecosystem.

The first finding regarding the emergence of moral-religious values in digital historical narratives shows that cultural heritage-based content can serve a dual function as a spiritual and ethical medium. This aligns with Campbell's (2010), who found that digital spaces can give rise to new religious practices that combine tradition with technology (Bosch and Micó, 2023). *Telisik Pati* TikTok users not only consume historical narratives but also respond to them with religious expressions and moral reflections, indicating a process of value internalisation. In Javanese tradition, gratitude, *eling*, and awareness of the relationship between humans and the Divine are part of daily life, and this study's findings show how these values migrate into the digital space.

However, unlike other studies that tend to view digital religiosity as an individual expression, *Telisik Pati* shows a pattern of communal religiosity, in which users' comments reinforce each other's spiritual awareness in the context of historical stories. This pattern confirms Campbell

(2010); Ding et al. (2025); Ma'rof and Abdullah (2025)'s argument regarding community-based moral networks in social media, but expands it through a local context rich in Islamic traditions and Javanese culture.

The second finding regarding solidarity and *guyub-rukun* reinforces previous research on social media as a space for the formation of culture-based collective identities. Jordaan and Mennega (2025), Nisi et al. (2023), Hatef (2022), and Storie and Marschlich (2025) found that digital platforms can reactivate local identities through narratives that trigger pride, nostalgia, and a sense of belonging. The findings of this study show that social solidarity does not only arise from visual representations or historical stories, but also from user interactions that affirm the values of mutual cooperation and togetherness. The uniqueness of the Pati context, with its agrarian traditions and strong communities, gives the patterns of digital solidarity observed a distinctive flavour.

The difference with previous studies lies in the mechanism of value internalisation. In many cases, the literature notes that collective identity is formed through contemporary or reactive viral content that addresses social issues. In contrast, *Telisik Pati* reveals a pattern of identity formation that relies on narratives of the past, making the construction process more historical-cultural than political or situational. Thus, this study emphasises the importance of digital historiography in strengthening social cohesion at the local level.

Regarding the third theme, namely respect for Javanese traditions and ethics, the findings of this study show that historical narratives can be a tool for revitalising cultural values that have been considered to be fading. Purkis (2017) and Rahayu (2025) state that digital culture often brings cosmopolitan values that weaken traditional bonds. However, *Telisik Pati* shows the opposite pattern: Javanese ethics such as *unggah-ungguh* (respect for elders) and polite language reappear in public discussions. Active users remind each other to maintain manners and even appreciate the subtle and civilised style of narrative delivery.

This finding supports Almeida and Buzady (2022); Barber and King (2016); Ottó (2021); and Veluri et al. (2025)'s hypothesis that digital spaces can become a new locus for "soft pedagogy," which is a cultural education process that occurs informally but consistently. However, the added value of this study lies in integrating historical narratives as the primary medium for conveying ethical values, unlike studies that focus solely on user interactions without considering narrative structures.

The fourth theme, ecological awareness, places this study in dialogue with the literature on eco-digital storytelling. Gladwin (2020); McCormack, K. Martin, and Williams (2021); San Cornelio, Martorell, and Ardèvol (2023) found that visual narratives on social media can increase users' ecological empathy and motivation to take pro-environmental actions. However, this study provides more complex findings: ecological awareness arises not from environmental information alone, but from the connection between local history and ecological space. Many user comments

expressed concern about environmental damage after viewing historical narratives that positioned the environment as an integral part of Pati's cultural identity.

Thus, this study expands the concept of eco-digital memory by showing that ecological memory is shaped not only by present experiences but also by interpretations of the past. The human-nature relationship visualised through local history produces a deeper emotional meaning, as discussed by (Ekelund, 2023) in his theory of connective memory.

At this point, the synthesis of the four main themes shows that the Telisik Pati account serves as a cultural and moral pedagogical tool that works through historical narratives. This mechanism shows that digital historiography can be an effective medium for character building, especially when narratives are presented in visual and emotional formats that are easily accessible to the younger generation. In addition, reflective and collaborative user responses show that digital space is not merely a place for the reproduction of values, but also an arena for the negotiation of meaning.

A comparison between this study's findings and the previous literature reveals both similarities and differences. The similarities can be seen in the function of digital media in shaping identity and values. However, the differences lie in the source of these values: *Telisik Pati* uses local history as its main basis, rather than contemporary issues or public figures, as in many previous studies. In addition, this study shows that character values do not arise solely from content but also from digital interactions that involve the internalisation, reinforcement, and reinterpretation of values. These findings point to an important novelty: digital historiography grounded in local narratives can serve as a model for character-building that combines moral-religious values, social solidarity, cultural ethics, and ecological awareness. This model works through the mechanisms of visual narrative, emotional resonance, and community interaction, as demonstrated by the dynamics of *Telisik Pati*.

Table 5. Novelty of Research Compared to Previous Literature

Aspect	Previous Literature	Findings of This Research	New Contributions
Sources of Value Formation	TikTok as a space for individual expression or contemporary issues	Local historical narratives as a source of character values	Integrating digital historiography with character education
Dimensions of Identity	Digital identity based on global trends or communities	Local identity based on cultural memory	Strengthening the concept of digital local identity
Digital Ecology	Ecological empathy based on natural visuals	Ecological empathy based on natural history	Expanding the theory of eco-digital memory
Ethics and Tradition	Ethics arise from social interaction	Ethics arise from historical narratives and community responses	Affirming the pedagogical function of narrative in digital spaces

Overall, this discussion shows that this study enriches the literature by introducing a new model of character formation in digital spaces through mechanisms of local historiography, community participation, and the interpretation of values rooted in Javanese culture. Despite the rapid dynamics of digital platforms, historical narratives have proven to remain a relevant source of morality and identity for online communities.

IV.CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that digital historical narratives produced by the TikTok account *Telisik Pati* play a significant role in reconstructing and strengthening character values within online communities. The findings reveal four central dimensions of character formation, religious-moral awareness, social solidarity, appreciation of Javanese cultural ethics, and ecological awareness, indicating that digital historiography functions not merely as a medium for conveying historical information but as an interactive cultural space where moral reflection, emotional engagement, and identity construction occur. User interactions through comments and shared responses illustrate an organic and participatory process of value internalisation, confirming that character values are co-constructed through narrative exposure and digital dialogue. Theoretically, this study contributes to the integration of netnography, digital historiography, and character education by demonstrating how cultural memory and ethical values are reproduced and negotiated in digital environments, particularly within the context of Javanese local wisdom. Practically, these findings highlight the potential of digital historical narratives as an innovative strategy for character education in digital-native societies. However, this study is limited by its reliance on publicly available interaction data and the absence of direct interviews with content creators and core audiences, which may restrict deeper insight into intentional value construction and audience interpretation. Therefore, future research is recommended to incorporate in-depth interviews, cross-platform comparative analysis, and longitudinal designs to examine the evolution of digital narratives and the influence of platform algorithms on the dissemination and internalisation of character values. Such efforts will further strengthen the theoretical and practical development of digital historiography as a transformative medium for character education in contemporary digital culture.

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