

Utilizing Tiktok as an Alternative Media for Learning History among General Z

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ABSTRACT

The development of digital technology demands innovation in history learning to suit the characteristics of Generation Z, who tend to be visual, interactive, and familiar with social media. One platform that has the potential to be used as an alternative medium for history learning is TikTok. This study aims to analyze the use of TikTok in history learning among Generation Z, including the forms of use, the types of historical content preferred, the effectiveness of use, and the challenges faced. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with an internet search method as a data collection technique through the exploration of relevant digital sources. The results show that TikTok is effective in increasing student interest, motivation, and engagement through short, narrative, visual, and contextual historical content. However, its use still faces challenges such as limited video length, the risk of material simplification, the potential for distortion of historical facts, and limited digital competence of educators. Therefore, pedagogical planning, digital literacy, and policy support are needed so that TikTok can be used educationally and responsibly.

Keywords: *Tiktok, History Learning, Generation Z, Digital Media*

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the world of education, particularly in the learning patterns of Generation Z, who were born and raised amidst the rapid flow of information and social media. This generation tends to be visual, interactive, and prefers short, communicative content (Prensky, 2001). In the context of history learning, this presents a unique challenge because history is often perceived as a monotonous subject, requiring memorization, and lacking relevance to students' daily lives. Therefore, innovative learning media are needed to bridge the learning needs of Generation Z with the characteristics of historical material. One potential medium to utilize is TikTok, a short video based social media platform currently experiencing high usage among the younger generation (Montag & Elhai, 2021). Theoretically, the use of social media in learning aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed through interaction, experience, and social context (Vygotsky, 1978).

TikTok enables contextual, collaborative, and multimodal learning through a combination of visuals, audio, text, and short narratives. Furthermore, the concepts of digital learning and microlearning also support the use of TikTok as an alternative learning medium, as the presentation of material in a short duration is considered to increase student focus, engagement, and retention (Hug, 2007). In history learning, TikTok can be utilized in various

forms, such as presenting brief historical facts, reconstructing historical events, biographies of prominent figures, and even storytelling-based educational content relevant to the lives of Generation Z.

However, the use of TikTok as a history learning medium is not without its challenges. These challenges include limited video length, which can oversimplify historical material; the risk of historical fact distortion; students' low critical literacy regarding digital content; and the tendency for TikTok to be used more for entertainment than for education (Saragih et al., 2021). Furthermore, not all educators possess sufficient digital competency to develop educational, engaging, and scientifically accurate historical content. This issue highlights the need for in-depth academic research into how TikTok is used in history learning, the types of historical content that Generation Z is interested in, and its effectiveness as an alternative learning medium. Based on these issues, this study was designed to analyze the use of TikTok as an alternative medium for history learning in among generation Z. The problem-solving plan is carried out through an examination of the forms of TikTok utilization in history learning, identification of the types of historical content most in demand by generation Z, analysis of TikTok's effectiveness in increasing historical interest and understanding, and revealing the challenges and limitations of its use in educational contexts. Thus, the purpose of this study is to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of digital-based history learning media, as well as to serve as a reference for educators in optimizing the use of TikTok in an educational, critical, and responsible manner.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to describe and understand social phenomena in depth based on data obtained without manipulating variables (Moleong, 2019). This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for studying emerging phenomena in the digital space, particularly the use of the TikTok platform as a history learning medium by Generation Z, which emphasizes the meaning, context, and dynamics of digital media use. The data collection technique used in this study was internet searching. According to Sugiyono (2020), internet searching is a secondary data collection technique conducted by exploring various data-based information sources relevant to the research topic. The data collected came from various credible digital sources, such as scientific articles, research reports, educational institution publications, and social media related to history learning on TikTok.

The use of the internet searching method enabled researchers to obtain extensive, up-to-date, and contextual data, aligning with the characteristics of Generation Z, who are closely connected to digital technology and social media (Prensky, 2001). Furthermore, this method also reflects the dynamics of the digital space as the primary arena for interaction, production, and consumption of information by Generation Z. Therefore, the internet search method is considered relevant for uncovering how TikTok is utilized as an alternative medium in the process of learning history in the digital era.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of TikTok Utilization in History Learning

The use of TikTok as an alternative medium for history learning is highly relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z, who grow and develop in a digital environment. This generation tends to prefer information that is delivered quickly, visually, and interactively rather than through long texts. Therefore, social media platforms such as TikTok can serve as an effective bridge to present historical materials in ways that align with the learning styles of digital natives without eliminating academic substance (Prensky, 2001).

One of the main benefits of using TikTok in history learning is the increase in students' interest and learning motivation. Learning media that present attractive visual and audio elements are able to capture students' attention more effectively. In the context of history learning, the use of creative short videos can reduce the monotonous impression often

associated with the subject and make students more interested in understanding past events (Arsyad, 2019). In addition to increasing learning interest, TikTok also helps students understand historical material in a simpler and more focused manner. The short duration of videos encourages the presentation of material in the form of concise summaries, making it easier for students to grasp the core events, chronology, and cause-and-effect relationships in history. Audio-visual media are considered effective in supporting the understanding of narrative and complex concepts (Daryanto, 2016).

The use of TikTok also contributes to increasing students' creativity and activeness. Through assignments that involve creating historical content, students are encouraged to search for information, construct narratives, and re-present historical material in their own style. This process positions students as active subjects in learning rather than passive recipients of information (Rusman, 2017).

Another benefit is TikTok's ability to connect history learning with students' daily lives. Presenting historical material that is linked to contemporary social and cultural phenomena helps students understand the relevance of history to the realities they face. This approach is important so that history is not perceived merely as a story of the past, but as an ongoing social process (Hasan, 2012). TikTok also plays a role in expanding history learning resources beyond textbooks and classrooms. Students can access various historical content from multiple perspectives, including local history that often receives limited attention in textbooks. Digital media as learning resources encourage independent learning and enhance students' digital literacy (Nasrullah, 2017).

Furthermore, the use of TikTok in history learning enhances students' visual literacy skills. History is not only understood through written texts but also through images, symbols, and visual representations of events. TikTok content that combines narration with visuals helps students develop the ability to read and interpret visual information critically (Arsyad, 2019). TikTok also has significant potential in introducing and strengthening local history learning. Locally based historical content presented through digital media can foster students' sense of identity and belonging to their social and cultural environment. Local history becomes more meaningful and relatable when delivered through media that are familiar to students' daily lives (Kuntowijoyo, 2005).

TikTok can also be utilized as a medium for reinforcement and enrichment of historical material. Students can re-access historical content for review or deeper understanding outside classroom hours. The flexibility of digital media allows students to learn according to their own needs and learning pace, making learning more personalized (Munir, 2017). From the educators' perspective, the use of TikTok provides opportunities for innovation in history learning. Teachers are required to adapt their instructional strategies to technological developments and student characteristics. The utilization of social media as a learning medium represents an effort to create history learning that is more relevant, communicative, and adaptive to the demands of 21st-century education (Munir, 2017).

Types of Historical Content Preferred by Generation Z

Generation Z has unique characteristics in accessing and interpreting information, including historical learning materials. Growing up in a digital environment rich in visual and interactive media, this generation tends to be more interested in content that is concise, communicative, and relevant to daily life. Therefore, the types of historical content preferred by Generation Z are generally those that creatively package past events without sacrificing historical substance and accuracy.

One of the most preferred types of historical content among Generation Z is short-form historical videos. This type of content presents historical information concisely by emphasizing key events, figures, or important facts. The short video format is considered effective because it aligns with Generation Z's relatively short attention span while remaining responsive to visual stimulation. Dewanta (2020) states that the use of TikTok as a learning medium increases students' interest because of its brief, visual, and easily understood presentation.

In addition, storytelling-based historical content is also highly favored. Presenting history in narrative form allows students to understand historical events in a more coherent and contextual manner. This approach helps reduce the perception that history is merely about memorizing facts and dates. Putra & Aisiah (2023) explain that creative narrative-based historical content on TikTok can increase students' interest in learning history by encouraging them to grasp the deeper meaning of events.

Another popular type of content is biographical narratives of historical figures, both national and local. Generation Z tends to be interested in the life stories of historical figures when they are linked to values such as struggle, role modeling, and relevance to contemporary life. Research by Zahwa et al. (2024) shows that TikTok content discussing national historical figures and events, such as the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence, has a positive effect on students' interest in learning history.

Visual-reconstructive historical content, such as event illustrations, animations, and short reenactments, also holds strong appeal for Generation Z. This type of content helps students build historical imagination and understand past events more concretely. According to Arsyad (2019), audio-visual-based learning media are highly effective in delivering historical material because they can visualize abstract and narrative events.

Besides national history, local history content is also gaining interest among Generation Z when presented through digital media that align with their daily lives. Creatively packaged local history content can foster identity awareness and a sense of belonging to the local social and cultural environment. Singh & Ahmad (2022) emphasizes that social media plays an important role as an innovative medium in introducing local history to younger generations.

Another preferred content type is contextual historical content that connects past events with contemporary social, cultural, or political phenomena. This approach makes history learning more meaningful because students are able to understand the relevance of history in modern life. Hasan (2012) states that history learning should not only focus on the past but also help students understand the connections between the past, present, and future.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that Generation Z tends to favor historical content that is concise, visual, narrative, and contextual. The use of digital platforms such as TikTok enables historical materials to be presented in various engaging formats that align with Generation Z's learning characteristics. Therefore, educators are required to develop historical content that is creative, accurate, and suited to the needs of digital learners.

Effectiveness of TikTok as an Alternative Learning Medium

The rapid development of digital technology has brought significant changes to learning methods in the modern era. One platform that has become increasingly popular in educational contexts is TikTok. Initially known as an entertainment-based social media platform, TikTok has been revitalized as a learning medium due to its short, visual, and easily accessible content for Generation Z and millennials. The use of TikTok as an alternative learning medium is considered effective because it aligns with the characteristics of Generation Z, who are familiar with digital technology and social media. Generation Z tends to prefer visual, concise, interactive, and easily accessible content, making TikTok a relevant platform for delivering learning materials, including history. The short video format supported by audio-visual elements allows historical events to be presented concisely yet attractively, thereby increasing students' attention and learning interest (Dewanta, 2020).

The effectiveness of TikTok as an alternative medium for history learning can also be explained from a pedagogical perspective, particularly through learning style theory. Learning style theory suggests that each student has different tendencies in receiving, processing, and interpreting learning information (Ritonga & Rahma, 2021). One widely used classification is the Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic (VAK) model. TikTok has advantages as a multimodal learning medium because it combines visual, audio, text, and motion elements in a single presentation. Multimodal learning media are considered more effective because

they stimulate multiple senses simultaneously, enhancing comprehension and memory retention (Arsyad, 2019).

Short history videos on TikTok allow for the visualization of past events, concise narration, and engaging audio-visual illustrations, helping students develop historical imagination and understand contexts more concretely. Additionally, TikTok's interactive features—such as comments, duets, and content creation—encourage active student engagement in the learning process. This active involvement aligns with student-centered learning principles, where learning involves not only receiving information but also expressing understanding through discussion and content creation (Munir, 2017).

TikTok is also effective in simplifying abstract and narrative historical material into contextual content. Through visualization, illustration, and creative narration, historical topics that were previously considered boring can be packaged in a more communicative manner. This contributes to increased student participation and motivation. Features such as comments and content sharing support collaborative and reflective learning, which is essential in history education to foster critical thinking skills (Putri & Suryani, 2021). Interview results with Harmiati, a Sociology student at Sriwijaya University, indicate that TikTok has strong potential as an alternative medium to support learning, especially in providing initial understanding of course material. She stated that TikTok content helps reduce learning fatigue from lengthy and theoretical readings by offering concise summaries that provide an initial overview before engaging with more comprehensive academic sources. Educational content appearing on TikTok's For You Page (FYP) is considered highly beneficial when packaged attractively through visual elements, storytelling, and informal language (Interview, Harmiati, January 27, 2025).

However, Harmiati emphasized that TikTok should not be positioned as the primary learning source but rather as a complementary medium. Information obtained from TikTok content needs to be verified through credible academic sources to avoid misconceptions. TikTok's flexibility allows learning to occur both passively through algorithm-driven content and actively through independent searches. Overall, TikTok can be considered effective as an alternative medium for history learning among Generation Z when used in a planned and directed manner. Its integration into history learning can increase motivation, understanding, and student engagement. Despite its limitations, TikTok remains a promising innovative learning medium that is relevant to technological developments and the characteristics of today's younger generation.

Challenges and Limitations of TikTok as a Learning Medium

Despite its significant potential, the use of TikTok in history learning also presents several challenges and limitations. One major limitation is the short duration of videos, which typically range from 15 to 180 seconds. While effective for capturing attention, this time constraint becomes problematic when explaining complex, chronological, and analytical historical concepts. History requires comprehensive narratives and logical cause-and-effect explanations, which are difficult to convey fully within short video formats. This limitation can lead to oversimplification of historical material and fragmented understanding among students. When historical narratives are presented in isolated short clips, students may develop partial and superficial understanding without grasping broader contexts. Furthermore, the emphasis on visual appeal and viral potential can shift learning orientation from educational depth to entertainment value, potentially weakening historical understanding and critical thinking skills.

Other challenges include distractions from entertainment content, the risk of misinformation, and varying levels of digital competence among educators. Without proper guidance, students may struggle to differentiate between accurate and inaccurate historical information. Therefore, strong digital literacy and academic supervision are essential. To address these challenges, TikTok should be integrated with other learning strategies such as project-based assignments, classroom discussions, and reflective writing. Educational institutions and policymakers also need to develop clear guidelines, provide educator training,

and encourage collaboration between historians, academics, and content creators. With proper planning, policy support, and pedagogical integration, TikTok can become an innovative, meaningful, and academically responsible medium for history learning in the 21st century.

CONCLUSIONS

TikTok has strong potential as an alternative medium for history learning, particularly for Generation Z, who are accustomed to visual, interactive, and fast-paced digital content. Its short audio-visual format increases students' interest, motivation, and engagement by presenting historical topics through storytelling, event visualizations, biographies, and contextual narratives. TikTok also promotes student-centered learning by encouraging learners to analyze, discuss, and create historical content. In addition, it accommodates visual and auditory learning styles while supporting kinesthetic learning through creative participation. Historical content connected to everyday life, contemporary issues, and local history further enhances relevance, historical awareness, cultural identity, and digital literacy. However, TikTok also has limitations. Short videos may oversimplify complex historical concepts, while entertainment-oriented content and misinformation can reduce learning quality without proper guidance. Therefore, TikTok should complement rather than replace formal classroom instruction. Its effective implementation requires careful instructional planning, reliable academic sources, and active teacher facilitation. Supported by appropriate educational policies, social media guidelines, and continuous teacher training, TikTok can become an innovative, meaningful, and relevant tool for 21st-century history education.

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