

Volume 8 (1) (2025): 1-11

# The Indonesian Journal of Social Studies

Available at https://journal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/jpips/index

# BUILDING AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH VISUAL STORYTELLING: A Study Of The "Ujung Jalan" Segment On The Masrang Youtube Channel

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#### **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the visual storytelling strategy implemented in the Ujung Jalan segment of the Masrang YouTube channel. Using an organizational communication framework, the research explores how creative processes and communication decisions are shaped through interactions between the channel's creator and two collaborators involved in content production. Employing a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews, the findings reveal that the use of quiet, slow-paced, and narration-free visuals is a deliberate strategy designed to differentiate Masrang from typical travel vlogs. This strategy goes beyond delivering information; it also creates a reflective emotional space for the audience. The results show that Masrang operates through a collaborative communication model resembling a microorganizational structure, where content is developed through idea exchange, role coordination, and shared objectives. As such, Masrang serves as an example of how organizational communication can be applied within independent content creation rooted in a creative community.

**Keywords**: Organizational communication, Visual strategy, Non-verbal narrative, Content production, YouTube

*How to Cite:* Mujahid, M. W., Rahmawati, Y., & Setiawati, T. (2025). Building Audience Engagement Through Visual Storytelling: A Study Of The "Ujung Jalan" Segment On The Masrang Youtube Channel. *The Indonesian Journal of Social Studies*, Vol 8 (1): 1-11

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e-ISSN 2615-5966 (Online)

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#### INTRODUCTION

The advancement of information and communication technologies, particularly the internet and social media, has fundamentally transformed how people access and share information. In the digital era, visual content is no longer a supplementary element, but rather a primary medium for conveying messages. Modern communication strategies increasingly rely on approaches that foster emotional connection and capture audience attention. One such approach is visual storytelling, which conveys narratives through the combination of images, videos, and sound.

In Indonesia, YouTube has become the most widely used platform for accessing visual content. Recent data shows that 94% of internet users aged 16–64 watched YouTube in the past month, making it the most popular platform. Indonesians spend an average of 25.9 hours per month on YouTube, with a cumulative total of 69.9 billion hours watched in 2023 alone. These figures indicate that YouTube is not only a source of entertainment but also a significant space for expressing ideas and shaping culture.

Audience engagement refers to the extent to which individuals actively connect with media content emotionally, intellectually, or through concrete actions. According to Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel (2009), engagement involves three core dimensions: emotional affection during content consumption, cognitive processing of the message, and active participation such as commenting, liking, or sharing. In digital media contexts like YouTube, such participatory behavior becomes crucial in reflecting the depth of the relationship between creators and their audiences.

Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013) argue that engagement extends beyond mere attention or view counts. It encompasses active participation, co-creation of meaning, and strong emotional bonds. In digital spaces, audiences are not merely recipients of messages but also contribute to shaping narratives through responses and interactions with content and fellow viewers.

Similarly, Brodie et al. (2011) highlight engagement as a psychological state arising from interactive and participatory experiences between individuals and media. Engagement is not a passive response but an active involvement that allows audiences to feel part of the story. Media content thus becomes a shared space where meaning is constructed collectively.

Sashi (2012) further emphasizes that engagement reflects the intensity of relationships and individual participation in media experiences. The deeper the engagement, the more likely audiences are to develop a profound emotional attachment to the content.

Based on these perspectives, audience engagement in the *Ujung Jalan* segment of the Masrang YouTube channel can be understood as the result of a powerful and affective visual narrative strategy. Through its reflective and quiet storytelling style, viewers are not only visually entertained but also experience emotional and intellectual connection that prompts them to react and share personal reflections. In this way, Masrang content does more than entertain—it creates a space for shared meaning-making and participatory viewing.

YouTube, as a video-based social media platform, supports the development of visual storytelling. Li et al. (2020) argue that emotional responses to visual narratives significantly influence the level of audience engagement. Research by Sabaté et al. (2022) indicates that visual stories strengthen the relationship between message and audience by evoking emotions. Hanapiah and Md Nasir (2024) stress the importance of cinematic elements such as composition, lighting, music, and editing techniques in enhancing the effectiveness of visual storytelling. Similarly, Dessart and Pitardi (2023) find that narratives with clear plots and cultural proximity are more likely to capture audience interest. Broersma (2019) adds that in the digital era, the

combination of factual information and visual aesthetics creates stronger meaning. These findings illustrate how traditional narrative concepts evolve into more creative digital forms of storytelling.

YouTube functions not only as an entertainment platform but also as a space for self-expression, learning, and social interaction. On an individual level, YouTube is often used for relaxation, information-seeking, or introspection. Haridakis and Hanson (2009) note that people turn to YouTube for various reasons, including self-soothing, identity exploration, and building emotional connections with content. Narrative and visual content, particularly reflective segments, provide opportunities for deep, personal engagement.

Conversely, YouTube also operates as a collective space where diverse users engage in dialogue, discussion, and meaning exchange. Lange (2007) explains that YouTube facilitates social interaction wherein users are not merely passive viewers but also actively shape the dynamics of digital culture through comments, uploads, and participation in communities. This indicates that YouTube is inherently dialogic, blending individual experiences with social interactions. Burgess and Green (2009) describe YouTube as part of a participatory cultural ecosystem, allowing users to build relationships, engage in dialogue, and contribute to meaning-making processes collaboratively.

In the context of this study, the *Ujung Jalan* segment on the Masrang channel illustrates how YouTube serves as both a personal and collective experiential space. Viewers consume the content individually yet actively participate in comment sections, sharing thoughts, experiences, and mutual support. This pattern demonstrates that the storytelling visualization employed in the content fosters dual engagement on a personal level through introspection, and on a social level through participation in digital conversations. Hence, YouTube use cannot be separated from its accompanying psychological and social dimensions.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### The Concept of New Media

New media signifies a fundamental shift in the way people produce, disseminate, and interact with information in the digital era. This concept refers to technology-based platforms that are interactive, dynamic, and enable two-way communication among users. According to Manovich (2001), the core characteristics of new media include data digitization (numerical representation), modular structure, automation in content production, adaptability (variability), and the convergence of digital media with computational logic (transcoding). With these features, platforms like YouTube function not only as content delivery channels but also as participatory spaces where users can create and manage their own media experiences.

Jenkins (2006) further introduced the concept of participatory culture within the context of new media, in which audiences are no longer merely passive consumers but also active contributors in the processes of distribution and meaning-making. This is evident in how YouTube is used, where content creators such as travel vloggers not only share information but also invite dialogue through comment sections, viewer reactions, and other forms of interaction. In this environment, the boundaries between producers and consumers are blurred, forming a responsive media ecosystem shaped by both.

New media theory is essential in understanding how a channel like Masrang fosters emotional connections with its audience through contemplative and cinematic visual narratives.

Unlike traditional media, YouTube allows for a more personal and flexible viewing experience, which is open to audience intervention. This theory thus provides a useful framework for understanding how content is not merely consumed in a linear fashion but also collectively interpreted by the community engaging with it.

# **Organizational Communication Theory**

Organizational communication theory posits that organizations are formed, operated, and sustained through continuous communication practices. In this view, communication is not merely a tool for conveying messages but a constitutive element that shapes the social structure, values, and culture of an organization (McPhee & Zaug, 2015). One of the key approaches in this theory is the Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO), which asserts that an organization is essentially the product of communication processes among its members (Koschmann, 2012).

In the context of this study, the *Masrang* YouTube channel can be seen as an informal digital organization formed through the interaction between its creator and audience. The *Ujung Jalan* segment functions not only as a space for sharing travel visuals but also as a symbolic communication channel between the creator and the viewer community. Through a calm visual style, slow pacing, and minimal verbal narration, *Masrang* builds strong emotional and cultural bonds with its audience. Viewers are not passive recipients of information but actively participate in meaning-making, reflection, and even share personal experiences in the comment section.

This interaction exemplifies the core principle of organizational communication, wherein meaning and values are co-constructed through symbols, narratives, and participation. Even in the absence of formal structures such as hierarchies or job descriptions, the channel demonstrates how communication fosters community and strengthens engagement. This aligns with Shockley-Zalabak's (2014) assertion that organizational communication involves the construction of identity, the transmission of shared values, and the creation of a sense of belonging within a group or community.

Therefore, organizational communication theory provides a solid foundation for understanding how *Masrang* does not merely deliver travel stories, but also cultivates social and emotional bonds between creator and audience. The communication process is not one-directional but participatory, symbolic, and reflective gradually shaping a strong digital community through informal micro-organizational structures.

# **Theoretical Framework**

This study applies audience engagement theory as articulated by Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel (2009), Jenkins (2006), and Brodie et al. (2011), which conceptualizes engagement through three dimensions: emotional, cognitive, and participatory. Emotional engagement refers to feelings of closeness, comfort, or personal resonance with the content. The cognitive dimension involves attention, meaning-making, and personal reflection on media content. Participation is observed through actions such as commenting, subscribing, or sharing content. These three dimensions serve as indicators to analyze how audiences respond to and construct meaning from the visual storytelling in *Masrang's Ujung Jalan* segment.

To understand how this strategy was developed, the study also incorporates organizational communication theory, specifically the Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO) model by McPhee and Zaug (2000), and the symbolic-interpretive approach in organizations by Eisenberg & Goodall (2001). The CCO model emphasizes that organizations are not merely structural entities but are continuously constituted through communication

practices. In the case of *Masrang*, the interaction between the creator and collaborators during content production reflects a collaborative communication pattern resembling a microorganization. Meanwhile, the symbolic-interpretive approach explains how meaning is shaped through visual symbols, music, and the emotional atmosphere presented in the content.

Thus, this study's theoretical framework integrates two main perspectives: (1) audience engagement as a consequence of non-verbal visual storytelling strategies, and (2) creative communication practices among production team members as reflections of organizational dynamics shaping those strategies. Together, these perspectives provide a basis for answering how and why specific visual strategies are selected, and how they facilitate emotional and reflective audience engagement.

#### RESEARCH METHOD

To strengthen the integration between theoretical frameworks and field data, this study adopts not only a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews but also incorporates analytical frameworks derived from audience engagement theory and organizational communication theory. The audience engagement framework employed draws on the work of Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel (2009), Jenkins (2006), and Brodie et al. (2011), who conceptualize audience engagement along three primary dimensions: emotional, cognitive, and participatory. These dimensions serve as the basis for analyzing the responses of the creator and collaborators toward the audience, as well as their influence on the visual strategies applied in the *Masrang* channel.

In addition, the study refers to the Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO) framework as proposed by Taylor and Van Every (2000) and expanded by Koschmann (2012), which posits that organizations are formed through repetitive and meaningful communication practices. Through this lens, the interactions between the main creator and two collaborators on the *Masrang* channel are understood as constituting a micro-organization, built through idea exchange, role coordination, and strategic consensus in the development of visual content. This approach is particularly relevant for examining informal organizational contexts that, despite lacking formal structures, possess clear workflows and shared objectives.

#### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study reveals that the visual storytelling presented in the *Ujung Jalan* segment of the *Masrang* YouTube channel successfully fosters audience engagement not only at the cognitive level but also emotionally and reflectively. The findings are derived from data gathered through video observation and in-depth interviews with the channel's creator and key collaborators who consistently contribute to the przoduction process.

#### **Video Observation Results**

Video Title	Descirption	Views	Comment	Link
				YouTube

ARUS BALIK LEBARAN 2025   Jawa Timur Masih Sepi   MSRG 2025	Presents a serene atmosphere during the post-Eid return in East Java, showcasing rural landscapes, roads, and rice fields with a slow tempo and minimal ambient music evoking feelings of reflection and nostalgia. Captures the departure	52K 60K	360 360	https://yo utu.be/hs w3sL5FNZ o?si=AlAVI oKLiMteuR UC
MENINGGALKA N JAWA   Kapal Laut Tanjung Perak   Ujung Jalan 2024	from Tanjung Perak Port ferries, passengers, and the evening light. Without narration, the visual experience generates a melancholic emotional resonance.			utu.be/FO dRM_clm9 g?si=oTPR QV19h2ty NsbH
EPS 1 - Selatan Menuju Yogyakarta   MSRG 2023	Depicts the journey from the southern region to Yogyakarta. Viewers are presented with calm countryside routes, narrow asphalt roads, and tranquil natural scenery. Slow and stable visual pacing reflects a contemplative travel mood. Accompanied by ambient music with no verbal narration, inviting viewers to experience each moment personally.	287K	954	https://yo utu.be/Ae EYq2YmD OM?si=tEu d1jaYz8fsu dj8
Makmoer Djaja X Cling Wash Yogyakarta   MSRG 2024	Demonstrates <i>Masrang</i> 's strong visual storytelling by blending local information (Makmoer Djaja & Cling Wash Yogyakarta) with an emotional journey. Despite being informative, the quiet tone, slow tempo, and nonverbal interaction create a reflective atmosphere, allowing viewers to feel involved. Comments reflect admiration for the local experience and a sense of shared presence.	106K	571	https://yo utu.be/Am YiG7VglR8 ?si=60uOX gpkvQ2l7t p1

SAATNYA KITA	Although featuring extreme	59K	413	https://yo
PULANG KE	travel challenges, this video			utu.be/5-
JAKARTA   Jalur	avoids adrenaline-driven			p1dw45Fo
Selatan Jawa	tropes and instead			0?si=R6Ks
Barat Yang	maintains <i>Masrang</i> 's			btUR7cCsT
Ganas   MSRG	signature contemplative			<u>cP2</u>
2024	tone. Emotional			
	engagement is evoked not			
	through dramatic action but			
	through quiet visuals that			
	elicit tension and empathy.			

Tabel 1. Identification Scene

Among the five most highly engaged videos observed, it is evident that *Masrang*'s visual narrative heavily relies on tranquil landscapes, slow pacing, and minimal verbal narration. Soft background music and stable, cinematic camera work dominate each segment. These elements collectively create a contemplative atmosphere that stands in contrast to conventional travel vlogs. Rather than being verbally guided, viewers are left to interpret the visuals on their own. This observational insight suggests that *Masrang* prioritizes "showing" over "telling" a narrative technique that emphasizes experiential immersion rather than explicit information delivery (Koblin, 2020).

The analyzed videos elicited strong emotional responses from viewers. Many comments contain expressions such as "soothing," "like being invited to reflect," or "like finding oneself." Some viewers even shared personal stories or life reflections after watching, indicating a level of engagement that goes beyond mere entertainment. One viewer commented: "This video feels like therapy amid the city's chaos." Such responses reveal that *Masrang*'s content provides a contemplative space for audiences a phenomenon rarely found in typical travel vlogs, which tend to be more informative or exploratory. In the context of Jenkins' (2010) participatory culture theory, the comment section becomes a collaborative space where audiences actively construct meaning and extend the narrative of the content they consume.

# In-Depth Interview Findings with the Creator of the Masrang Channel

This study reveals how the visual storytelling strategy in the *Ujung Jalan* segment of the *Masrang* YouTube channel is consciously designed and implemented by a small team operating within an informal yet functional communication system. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with M, the channel's main creator and manager, as well as two collaborators R (video editor) and F (field visual contributor) who play complementary roles in shaping the channel's distinctive narrative style.

Data collection involved a comprehensive interview with M, who serves as both the founder and the primary content producer for the *Masrang* channel. Conducted virtually via Zoom on July 4, 2025, the interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. M is responsible for the entire production process, including visual planning, filming, editing, and distribution. In this study, M was selected as the key informant due to his direct authority over the visual communication strategies employed on the channel, especially within the *Ujung Jalan* segment, which is the central focus of this research. His position as an independent creator and sole producer provided authentic insights into the background, motivations, and strategic considerations behind his visual storytelling approach. M's role as the primary informant enhances the validity of the data, given his deep involvement across all stages of content development, allowing him to articulate the rationale behind *Masrang* distinctive narrative identity in detail.

M explained that the decision to avoid verbal narration and adopt a slow visual tempo was not merely a stylistic choice but a deliberate strategy to distinguish the channel from conventional travel vlogs. He recognized that amid the trend of fast-paced, information-heavy, and verbally dominant content, there exists an audience need for calm, contemplative spaces. M remarked: "Most travel content feels too noisy. I wanted to create a quiet space. My videos are more like pauses than entertainment."

This statement indicates that the strategy is a response to an oversaturated and homogeneous digital content landscape. M consciously chose a different path one that invites rather than instructs. His approach rests on the assumption that not all viewers are seeking information; some are searching for emotional experiences, escapism, or moments of reflection.

Moreover, M emphasized that the minimal use of verbal narration is intended to leave room for personal interpretation. "If I talk too much," he said, "viewers won't be able to feel the video in their own way." This reflects a communication strategy designed to be open-ended and non-prescriptive, allowing each audience member to construct their own meaning.

Elements such as ambient music, muted color palettes, and slow, extended narrative structures are all part of a comprehensive communication design. This strategy is not just about technical editing choices it relates to how the video functions as an emotional experience rather than just a visual source of information. According to M, such structure invites viewers not to "understand" but to "be present emotionally."

To deepen the understanding of how this strategy operates within a micro-organizational communication context, the researcher also interviewed two key collaborators. R, the video editor, explained that his communication with M takes place regularly through editing notes and online discussions. This process ensures that the intended atmosphere in each video remains aligned with the channel's core values. "We have a standard format for each segment, but it's flexible depending on the mood we want to convey," R explained (Interview, July 6, 2025).

F, a travel companion and visual contributor, contributes ideas on shooting locations and authentic visual elements. According to F, discussions with M are often open and collaborative, with attention paid to how local atmosphere is authentically and sincerely conveyed. "Sometimes I help shape the narrative visually, even if I'm not seen on screen," F noted (Interview, July 9, 2025).

The interaction among M, R, and F reflects a collaborative workflow structure which, although informal, maintains shared goals, clear role divisions, and ongoing communication practices. Within the framework of the Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO) theory, such practices effectively constitute an organization even if on a small and informal scale (Taylor & Van Every, 2000; Koschmann, 2012).

Findings from the in-depth interviews demonstrate that *Masrang* intentionally designs its visual communication strategy to create a distinctive and meaningful viewing experience. One of its core approaches is to depart from the typical travel vlog format, which tends to rely on verbal narration and destination explanations. Instead, *Masrang* employs a silent, slow-paced visual delivery that defines the channel's calming and non-directive character. This strategy reinforces the channel's identity as an alternative space of tranquility within the fast-paced digital media landscape. It also aims to provide a reflective viewing experience.

This intent is reflected in the use of balanced compositions, gentle transitions, neutral color tones, and soft ambient music all crafted to evoke deep emotional resonance. Another key strategy is to give audiences interpretive freedom. By omitting narration or explicit guidance, *Masrang* allows viewers to construct their own meanings from each visual scene. This fosters a

more intimate connection, as the audience actively engages in meaning-making. Additionally, the final strategy identified is to address the emotional needs of viewers who seek calm amidst the noise of social media. By portraying rural settings, quiet roads, or natural landscapes, *Masrang* succeeds in delivering profound impressions that evoke personal introspection.

Collectively, these strategies suggest that *Masrang* visual composition is not merely aesthetic but is part of a communication effort to establish sustainable emotional closeness with its audience. To better understand how audience engagement is constructed, the study expands its conceptual framework through visual discourse analysis and narrative semiotics found in *Ujung Jalan* content. The visual style characterized by balanced compositions, silent rhythm, and warm color tones functions as a sign system that conveys emotional meaning without the use of words. In semiotic terms, these elements serve as signifiers that trigger internal emotional responses (signified) that vary depending on each viewer's personal background (Chandler, 2017).

Furthermore, this study defines audience engagement not merely as surface-level reactions such as comments or likes, but through three structured dimensions proposed by Calder et al. (2009): (1) emotional affection toward the content; (2) cognitive involvement such as personal reflection or meaning-making; and (3) active participation, including sharing experiences or reinforcing the narrative via social media. All three dimensions are evident in the interviews and in viewer comments. For example, many comments describe contemplative experiences or a sense of "coming home" prompted by the channel's slow and tranquil visuals.

In terms of organizational communication, the interaction between the creator and his production team represents a collaborative practice that continuously shapes the channel's meaning, values, and identity. *Masrang* does not operate through one-way communication with its audience but involves its internal team in ongoing creative discussions and narrative evaluations. Thus, the study not only identifies how the strategy is executed but also explains why it is deliberately chosen as a differentiating response to the oversaturation of hyperactive and noisy digital content. This reinforces the idea that *Masrang* functions as a micro-creative community structured by participatory, reflective, and symbolic communication practices.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that the visual storytelling strategy employed by the creator of the *Masrang* YouTube channel is the result of a structured and deliberate process of collaborative communication. Through a visual approach characterized by minimal narration, slow pacing, and a contemplative atmosphere, *Masrang* strategically constructs a viewing experience that is both reflective and emotionally resonant. These visual choices are not merely aesthetic preferences, but rather consciously selected communication strategies intended to address audience fatigue with the dominance of fast-paced and noisy digital content.

Moreover, the involvement of two collaborators in the production process indicates the presence of micro-organizational communication practices, wherein each team member contributes meaningfully to shaping the channel's narrative identity and quality. As such, *Masrang* functions not only as a platform for personal expression but also as a collaborative workspace that consistently implements principles of organizational communication at the scale of a creative community.

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