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ANALYSIS OF VIEWERS' COMMENTS ON A VIRAL VIDEO ON YOUTUBE

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Abstract

YouTube is a medium for two-way communication, where a variety of videos are shared on social media every day. Viewers are making various videos viral by sharing on social media and those videos are also becoming the focus of discussion at the national and international levels. In this study, the comments on YouTube have been investigated to understand the viewer's opinion, ideology and their thinking. Active audience theory has been used as the theoretical framework of the study. The study has been conducted by the discourse analysis method. As a sample of the qualitative research, a viral video is selected by purposive sampling from YouTube and all comments (N=365) of the viewers have been analyzed from the YouTube comment box. The results of the study show that viewers have responded extensively to the viral video and the issues. Some comments are very informative which create a huge meaning for thinking and learning and show many unknown and hidden issues which are not directly available in the video. In the comment box, viewers post some data visual evidence to prove their argument and sometimes share an information source. Most of the comments are in Bangla, but there are also comments in English sentences using English words. There are memes, photos, data visual, screenshots, other video links, and Emoji which shows emotion like anger, and sarcasm in the comments. The average word count of the comment is one to three words. But the word count of the meaningful comment is 10-20 words. Viewers provide comments on the entire video, focus on specific parts and related issues, or sometimes even comment on irrelevant matters using slang and meaningless words; considering those issues, commenters are divided into three categories. Below the video, the light and deep natures of comments have been found in the comment box. It is essential to understand the natures of comments and viewers in order to prevent disinformation and misinformation. Recently, social media has witnessed an increase in rumors, hatred, and bullying through comments, and such comments should be minimized to promote a decent and more positive society.

Keywords: Comment analysis, Youtube video, Viral, Social media

Introduction

Many prevailing notions of the mass media have changed with the advancement of social media. Social media is used by 2.4 billion people around the world and has fast become one of the defining technologies of recent times (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2023). Social media has evolved over the last decade to become an important driver for acquiring and spreading information in different domains, such as business, entertainment, science, crisis management, and politics (Stieglitz et al., 2018). At present, the audience has a big role to play in creating the content of the media, and its significance. Many times these videos or discussions of the viewers on social media have a huge positive or negative impact on society. The impact of a viral video and its accompanying comments can be significant in both a global and local context. The popularity of a viral video can make it a topic of discussion at the national and international levels, bringing attention to the issues it raises.

In recent years, Bangladesh has witnessed the proliferation of viral videos, drawing viewers to the comment section. These comments represent a new social phenomenon that offers insights into society. While mainstream media had limited opportunities to engage with their audience, social media's two-way communication system has exposed a unique aspect (Chaffee & Metzger, 2001).

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In recent times, several cases of social media comments in Bangladesh have come into national discussion through newspapers. In this study, comments analysis is to understand the nature of viewers responding to the video through social media as well as to know what issues have come up in the discussion of social media viewers and know about the nature of social media viewers. Recently, rumors, misinformation, disinformation, cyber bullying, and cybercrime have been highly noticeable in social media.

In this study, comment analysis emphasizes the importance of comments as they are not a trivial matter. This encourages users to use them with awareness, while also prompting other stakeholders to pay attention to them. Social media literacy is recommended for the proper use of comments and that should be added to the education system. A campaign should start when good people post good comments and bad people post bad comments. This study helps to build a good society because many anomalous activities have been noticed in social media including comment boxes. Users share a variety of topics in the comment box, and they include both good and bad information. By analyzing these comments, user patterns and characteristics were explored. The purpose of this study is to analyze the comment and to find patterns of comments as well as to check the information and explanations. As comment analysis is a new trend in research, so this study will play an important role in communication research

Various negative comments on Social Media

The rise of YouTube and other video-sharing platforms has created a new landscape of online communication, where users can share their thoughts and opinions on a variety of topics. YouTube is the second most-used website in the world (Szmuda et al., 2020) and Google is number one. One of the different content on YouTube is viewer comments. There has been a lot of research on the analysis of audience comments on social media. Alhabash and his colleagues demonstrated that viewers tended to watch and comment more on provocative videos, while they engaged less with videos that were less provocative (Alhabash et al., 2015). Thelwall found that YouTube had successfully identified patterns related to gender and sentiment through comment analysis. However, he also pointed out generic limitations in social media analysis (Thelwall, 2017). In many instances, users do not maintain a neutral stance; they are inclined to leave both negative and positive comments.

Diverse behavior of users

Chung (2015) demonstrated that anti-smoking videos can be evaluated by analyzing comments, likes, and views. In their study, (Rauchfleisch & Kaiser, 2020) examined the behavior of YouTube users and the diversity of topics they discussed, revealing shifts toward conservatism in certain communities. Edgerly et al. (2013) conducted a content analysis of a campaign video, emphasizing its impact on audience comments. Social media serves as a powerful tool for promotion. (Marcon & Caulfield, 2017) conducted research on a medical-related video and analyzed the comments it generated. These comments unveiled various aspects of user behavior and provided insights into their personalities. Comments, indeed, serve as a window into user behavior and personality traits.

Users on New Media offer different opinions

Viewers provide different opinions through comments. There are various debates in the comments and users share information about the health sector in the comments box of various health-related videos (Marcon & Caulfield, 2017). Hough showed that the mainstream media creates discourses for those in power. New media, on the other hand, challenges these discourses. As a result, the role of the two types of media in creating discourse is different here. Audiences are expressing their views in web-based new media which is challenging the discourses of traditional media (Hough, 2015). Although there are different types of research on YouTube comments in many parts of the world, there are more research opportunities with YouTube comments. Commenters share a variety of opinions with and without information.

Theoretical Framework

Active Audience theory has been used as the theoretical framework for the study. Although the theory of mass communication was initially thought to be inactive in audiences, later research has raised the issue of audience activism (Ross & Nightingale, 2003). Readers and viewers show different reactions verbally and non-verbally when

they see and read different media content. On social media, viewers and readers reacted differently through comments in the comment box. Active Audience theory states that the audience actively selects, sees, and interprets any content in the media (Steensen et al., 2020). The theory helps to explain the audience's comments by the audience activation theory. This theory is helpful in understanding and explaining what kind of attitudes, thoughts, or discussions they are actively making about the report. While this study shares methodological and theoretical structural similarities with other studies, it specifically focuses on the analysis of YouTube comments. Many users post their comments and it is an interesting and new phenomenon in media research. In this study, the commenters' texts were analyzed for genre and meaning.

Materials and Methods

In this qualitative study, textual analysis is used as a research method to study the linguistic and communicative aspects of written or spoken language in a particular context (Barton, 2003). The objective of this method is to uncover the underlying meaning and the relationships between text, context, and discourse participants. To carry out the analysis, the researcher uses the qualitative method. Materials used in textual analysis typically include written or spoken texts, such as books, articles, interviews, transcripts, or social media posts and comments. As part of a qualitative research study, a viral video which name is 'I am GPA 5' that is published in 2017 *Maasranga TV* channel and later upload to *Redwan Rony channel*, is purposively selected from YouTube and the URL is "<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkwiEWm43X8&list=PL1>" and it was one of the viral videos in Bangladesh, according to some features of a viral video. The video was uploaded on May 30, 2016, and the data collected spans from that date until May 30, 2021. YouTube personality Kevin Nalty set some criteria for being a viral video which are the number of views, offline-online discussion, parody, and longevity (Cantina & Alvarico, 2022). This sample video satisfies those criteria. When the video is published, many media in Bangladesh report it as a viral video, this video is one of the most discussed viral videos in Bangladesh on that time (Report, 2016) and the comments below the video are very discussed and important, so the comments of this video are taken as a research sample.

From May 30, 2016 to May 30, 2021, during this period, all comments posted below the video were sampled for research and subjected to textual analysis. Different types of comments and elements of comments have been analyzed.

Results

The results indicate that the majority of the comments were either written in Bengali using Bengali characters or transliterated into English letters.

Table 1. Various categories of comments

Various categories of comments based on linguistic characteristics.	
Bengali comments by Bengali letter	96
Bengali comments by English letter	204
English comments by English letter	63
Bengali and English mixed letter	16
Comments by picture and cartoon	3
Total	365
Various categories of comments based on word length	
One word comment	26
One line comment	94
Two line comment	116
Three-four line comment	60
Five-six line comment	56
Seven-nine line comment	12
Ten lines or more line comment	4
Comments by pictures and cartoons	3
Total	365

A smaller number of comments were made in English letters, and a few comments used a combination of Bengali and English characters. In terms of comment size, the majority of comments were one or two sentences,

with a smaller number of comments ranging from three to ten sentences or more. The research findings provide insights into the nature and patterns of viewers who share their comments on viral videos on YouTube.

Three types of commenters

After analyzing 365 comments, it was observed that viewers' comments can be categorized into three types. These three categories encompass a wide range of comments made by the viewers.

First type commenter: Viewers of this section have commented on the specific information in the video. Many viewers have highlighted a specific part of the video. Some viewers used the quotes or answers of the students interviewed in the report as comments. Many viewers have highlighted specific parts and added their own comments to it. But one thing in common with this type of comment is that everyone here uses sarcastic expressions or exclamation marks. Instance for: *"I am GPA of 5."*, *"Neptune is the capital of Nepal."*, *"Pythagoras is a novelist."*

Second type commenter: Viewers of this section have commented on the report. Many viewers are saying the report is good. Many have again criticized the report. In this section, viewers have made both positive and negative comments about the report. They have tried to interpret the report critically. The video has various comments on various good or bad aspects. Such as: *"the report is sorted."*, *"The report has been good."*, *"It was not right to make the appearance of the students clear."* Those are noticed in these types of comments.

Third type commenter: The viewers of this section have made various critical comments on various issues or topics in the report. They have commented on the reasons and problems responsible for the current condition of the students rather than the statement or structure of the report. At the center of the report, viewers of this section have commented on many complex issues. This section of the audience criticized the students and commented on the education system and the quality of education. Besides, parents, teachers, government, politics, and other issues have been blamed for the deterioration of the education system. Example *"The education system of the country is responsible for this condition of the students."*, *"Now, GPA-5 is available by getting questions the night before the exam."*, *"The government is increasing the pass rate and GPA-5 to make the people happy."*

Two types of comments in nature perspective

Analyzing all comments, it is found that two types of comments are noticed from a nature perspective. Viewers have written a variety of comments on their critical points of view.

Light nature comments

Most of the light-type comments were one or two words. However, some of the light-hearted comments were one or two lines, but they were centered on the wrong answers given by the students. Some of the comments were light in nature. Students have been ridiculed in comments of a light nature. Besides, jokes were made about wrong answers to various questions given to the students in the interview. These comments are said to be light because there is no detailed information in such comments. For example: *"Too funny"*, *"THAT JUST MADE MY DAY....."*, *"I am GPA 5"*, *"Speechless"*

There are four common patterns found in light-type comments: comments lacking information and explanation, the use of obscene or vulgar language, comments related to entertainment, and comments that are in fewer words. Comments without information and explanation often contain clichéd phrases like *"Best funny video ever,"* *"I am also GPA 5 :),"* *"LMAO,"* and *"Students! Wow."* The use of obscene or vulgar words includes indecent language such as *"Broiler generation"* and *"What the fuck."* Comments related to entertainment often feature phrases that reflect amusement, like *"Stop, please, I am laughing,"* *"Give them a Nobel prize,"* and *"Doya kore eder abar class 1 theke poran"* (please admit them back to class 1), or *"Hayre Allah bachayse ami I AM GPA-5 pai nai"* (God saved me, I didn't get GPA-5). Comments in fewer words are typically very concise, with examples like *"Darun?"* (Nice), *"Hababa,"* *"Moja paici"* (Having fun), and *"lol."*

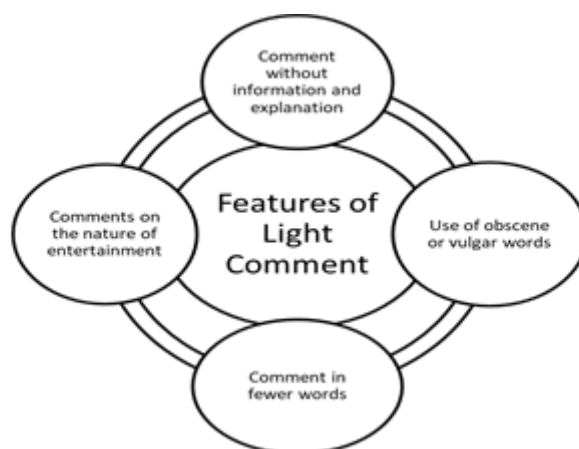


Figure 1. Features of light comment

Deep nature comments

Many of the comments from the audience were deep in nature. Comments of a deeper nature were two or more sentences. The in-depth comments contained explanations, information, and arguments. Such comments were full of critical thinking. Students faced to criticize in deeper nature comments. But there were information, explanations, and arguments. Journalists and media have also been criticized for focusing on the report. However, some have praised the report, citing problems. The deep-seated remarks criticized the country's education system and the quality of education. This kind of comment criticizes parents, teachers, and the government.

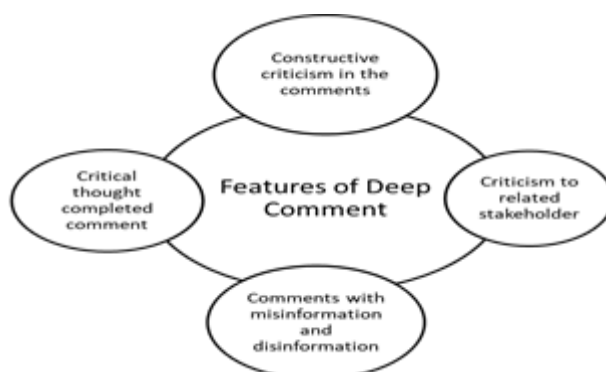


Figure 2. Features of deep comment

There are four common patterns found in deep-type comments:

Constructive criticism in the comments

In this type of comment, users criticize the education system and share information about issues related to videos. For example, *"Everyone needs basic knowledge, especially those who receive A+ grade"*. *"We applaud the reporter for shedding light on the current state of our education system. While this report is facing criticism, we all recognize the grim reality. I wholeheartedly thank the reporter"*. To my dear students, I want to convey, *"This is just a glimpse of the challenges awaiting you, akin to various forms of harassment. The reporter is your true ally; he unveils your future"*. *"In our country, a majority of students now receive A+ grades. But are they truly deserve of such scores?"*

Criticism of related stakeholders

In comments of this nature, users share criticism aimed at teachers, parents, and the government. For example, *"Guardians often instruct students to focus solely on achieving good results. Mrs. Guardians, can you tell us what our future holds if we lack broader knowledge?"* *"Teachers also bear a share of the responsibility alongside students."*

Critical thought-related comments

In this category, users discuss education politics, history, and business. For instance, *"The government is undoubtedly responsible for our current predicament. The emphasis on the core curriculum leaves little room for exploring supplementary materials".* *"Let's not blame the students; let's hold the education system accountable".* *"It's disheartening. In the past, people attended school to acquire knowledge. However, times have changed. Insecurity is so rampant in our country that people prioritize jobs over knowledge."*

Comments with misinformation and disinformation

These comments provide information about issues related to the report. For instance, *"Perhaps this is an instance of yellow journalism".* *"In 2009, the passing rate was 40-50%, but after 2009, it surged to 85-95%, which is quite unusual."* Various types of misinformation and disinformation have been found in such comments. For instance, user "mamunroshid7159" shared false information about individuals within the education system in Bangladesh, claiming that *Hindus are among the top 17 posts related to education in Bangladesh*. However, upon rechecking the information, it is evident that this assertion is not accurate. Furthermore, these comments contain religiously hateful information and explanations, as well as various rumors and misconceptions. For example, some commenters suggest that *exam questions will be available before the actual test*, rendering studying unnecessary. The government is introducing *Hindu-centric education by excluding Muslim writers and Islamic writings in the education system*. Additionally, some individuals propagate the belief that *all jobs are solely for monetary gain and not based on educational qualifications*. These comments not only disseminate a wide range of information and explanations but also include disinformation, misinformation, and instances of bullying.

Upon analyzing the comments on the video, it's evident that there were both light-hearted and profound remarks. However, the prevalence of deep comments outweighed the light-hearted ones. Light comments predominantly served as a source of entertainment and sarcasm, whereas the deeper comments centered on discussions and critiques. Within the deep comments, several significant dialogues emerged, shedding light on crucial societal issues and concerns. Notably, these comments underscored various problems within the country's education system. Viewers critically examined the report, reflecting their deep-seated concerns. The audience placed blame on the education system for the poor condition of students, leading them to highlight and criticize multiple issues within this system. Additionally, questions regarding media ethics and construction were raised. While the comments lacked an in-depth exploration of these issues, they nevertheless brought critical concerns to the forefront.

The comments from YouTube viewers contained substantial depth. These comments exhibited characteristics of intense critique, criticism, and entertainment, which were prevalent in the lighter comments. Many viewers made humorous remarks and used various comedic elements when discussing the report and the students. While some serious issues were addressed in the light comments, they were presented in a light manner, lacking in-depth analysis. Consequently, a sense of levity permeated many viewers' comments, with one group providing a more casual analysis of the report. Viewer discussions extended beyond the report's content to its construction, with many expressing criticism. Some viewers believed that the report failed to adhere to journalistic ethics, while others suspected premeditation in its creation. As a result, the discussion among YouTube viewers expanded beyond the report's topic to include its overall structure.

Discussion

This study analyzed the comments on a viral video discussing the education system in Bangladesh. Upon analyzing the comments, it was observed that the commenters shared a wide range of views on various genres and topics. The comments encompassed both positive and negative sentiments, as well as constructive and critical thinking comments. Commenters in this study often expressed their opinions about specific information presented in the video, sometimes reiterating the information, additionally, Madden and others noted that commenters (Madden et

al., 2013), played a role in presenting certain information related to the video. Ethical considerations regarding the use of footage in the video and the privacy of the interviewees who provided information were prominent themes in the comments section, with a substantial number of comments and commenters engaging in discussions on these topics. Furthermore, Marwick's research suggests that audiences frequently critique the various principles of videography and photography in social media within the comment section (Marwick, 2015).

In this study, two distinct types of commenters were identified, each holding different opinions about the entire video and its associated issues. This finding aligns with Lee and colleagues' discovery that there is considerable diversity within the comment section, although a majority of commenters expressed similar views regarding the educational video (Lee et al., 2017). Additionally, it was observed that, as described by Madden and others, most comments were directly related to the video's content and the issues it raised (Madden et al., 2013). However, it's important to note that commenters did not solely focus on the video's issues and information; they also shared a multitude of irrelevant topics and information in the comment section. These unrelated comments were frequently noticed throughout the study.

Conclusion

The role of viewers on social media is pivotal for nurturing two-way communication, as their comments frequently initiate crucial discussions on various topics such as politics, economics, and society. To combat disinformation and misinformation while promoting the positive utilization of social media, it is imperative to scrutinize the nature of these comments and the individuals who post them. Recent incidents involving rumors, hate speech, and bullying in social media comments underscore the necessity of reducing such adverse interactions and constructing a more constructive online community.

Researchers propose several recommendations for analyzing research data. Firstly, social media literacy should be incorporated into the education systems of every country, enabling individuals to learn how to use social media responsibly and exhibit appropriate behavior. Secondly, governments should establish guidelines for social media usage, especially considering that people of all age groups use it without a structured framework. Additionally, a global campaign should be launched, emphasizing that good people contribute positive comments while bad people tend to produce negative ones. Lastly, user awareness regarding the responsible use of social media is imperative and can be achieved through systemic measures.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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