

Construction of Digital Communication Messages in Ferry Irwandi's Youtube Content Through John Fiske's Semiotic Approach in the Formulation of Communication Strategies

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital communication and the increasing use of YouTube in Indonesia have transformed the ways individuals produce, distribute, and interpret messages. YouTube is no longer merely an entertainment platform but also serves as a space for education, public discussion, and opinion formation. This study aimed to analyze the construction of digital communication messages in Ferry Irwandi's YouTube content using John Fiske's semiotic approach. A qualitative method with semiotic analysis was employed to examine the verbal, visual, and ideological signs contained in the selected content. The analysis was based on John Fiske's three levels of semiotics: reality, representation, and ideology. The findings showed that Ferry Irwandi constructed his digital communication messages through a casual appearance, relaxed gestures, rational language, a transparent live-streaming format, bright visual presentation, and the use of visual evidence. At the ideological level, the content promoted rationalism, empiricism, critical thinking, and education as means of challenging mystical claims and irrational beliefs. The study also found that the construction of messages in Ferry Irwandi's content could serve as a basis for formulating digital communication strategies, particularly through credibility, transparency, humor, evidence-based argumentation, and audience engagement. Therefore, Ferry Irwandi's YouTube content could be understood not only as digital entertainment but also as a form of public communication that educates, critiques, and encourages audiences to think critically.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital communication has transformed how people produce, distribute, and interpret messages. Communication is no longer centered solely on conventional mass media but has expanded to digital platforms that enable individuals to become message producers, opinion leaders, and public communicators. This transformation is closely related to the increasing use of the internet in Indonesia. APJII reported that the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 221.56 million in 2024, representing approximately 79.5% of the national population (APJII, 2024). This condition indicates that digital communication has become an

important part of social life, particularly in accessing information, following public issues, and participating in digital discourse (Bouvier & Machin, 2018; Fuchs, 2021; KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016; Parnes, 2016; Silverstone, 2017).

One of the most influential platforms in digital communication is YouTube. YouTube is no longer used solely as an entertainment medium but also as a platform for education, public discussion, identity construction, and opinion formation. DataReportal reported that YouTube reached 139 million users in Indonesia in early 2024 (DataReportal, 2024). This large user base indicates that YouTube has a strong position in shaping patterns of information consumption. Messages delivered through YouTube are presented not only through spoken language but also through images, sound, facial expressions, gestures, editing techniques, titles, thumbnails, comments, and interactions between content creators and audiences (Alek et al., 2020; Benson, 2015, 2016; Finlayson, 2022; Li et al., 2023).

The role of YouTube as a communication medium has also become an important subject in recent communication studies. Mujiono and Dianthi (2024) explained that YouTube can function as an agricultural extension medium because it is capable of delivering information widely through audiovisual formats. This finding strengthens the view that YouTube has educational and persuasive functions beyond its entertainment value. Similarly, Naja et al. (2024) found that the success of educational content on YouTube is determined not only by the information delivered but also by communication strategies, message structure, presentation style, and the relationship between the communicator and the audience. These findings demonstrate that digital messages need to be understood as constructed messages shaped through language choices, visual elements, narrative patterns, and communication techniques (Danesi, 2017; Gualberto & Kress, 2019; Reyna et al., 2018; Sofkova Hashemi, 2017).

In this context, Ferry Irwandi's YouTube content constitutes an important object of study because it demonstrates a distinctive construction of digital communication messages. Ferry Irwandi is known as a content creator who frequently discusses social issues, education, politics, philosophy, finance, and criticism of social phenomena. His content not only delivers information but also seeks to shape how audiences understand and interpret social issues. Through a reflective, argumentative, and critical communication style, Ferry Irwandi positions himself as a digital communicator who encourages audiences to understand social realities more rationally and critically.

The construction of messages in digital content cannot be separated from systems of signs. Elements in a video, such as verbal language, facial expressions, intonation, gestures, visual backgrounds, camera techniques, editing, visual illustrations, and supporting text, have the potential to produce meaning. In this context, John Fiske's semiotic approach is particularly relevant because it views media texts as sites of meaning production that can be analyzed at three levels: reality, representation, and ideology. Recent studies have applied John Fiske's semiotic approach to audiovisual media because it can reveal meaning not only from what appears on the surface of a media text but also from how reality is represented and how ideology is constructed within that text (Firzatullah, 2024).

The use of John Fiske's semiotics in this study enables a more comprehensive analysis of Ferry Irwandi's content. At the level of reality, the analysis examines expressions, gestures, speaking style, appearance, setting, and visual background. At the level of representation, it examines camera techniques, narrative structure, editing, music, visual text, and patterns of argumentation. At the ideological level, the analysis explores values, social criticism, moral positions, and worldviews constructed within the content. This analysis is important because digital messages are not neutral; rather, they are constructed through selected signs, symbols, communication styles, and particular representational choices.

This study is also relevant to the formulation of communication strategies. In the digital era, communication strategy involves not only identifying the communicator, the message, and the medium but also determining how messages are constructed to attract attention, build trust, foster a sense of connection, and encourage audience engagement. Pasaribu (2024) stated that the use of YouTube content as a communication medium requires attractive message presentation, audience-appropriate language, and information packaging that is suitable for the characteristics of digital media. This indicates that the analysis of message construction can serve as a basis for developing more effective communication strategies.

The urgency of this study lies in the importance of understanding how digital creators construct messages that can influence public opinion. Contemporary digital audiences are not passive recipients; they actively comment on, share, reinterpret, and reproduce meanings across multiple platforms. A video uploaded to YouTube can develop into public discussions, short clips, quotations, reaction content, and debates on other social media platforms. This situation demonstrates that digital messages have broad dissemination potential and are open to multiple interpretations. Without critical analysis of message construction, audiences may perceive content merely as ordinary digital material, even though it may contain complex systems of signs, representational choices, and ideological meanings.

Despite the growing body of literature on digital communication and semiotics, several research gaps remain. Studies of YouTube as a communication medium have been conducted by Mujiono and Dianthi (2024), who examined YouTube's function as an agricultural extension medium, and Naja et al. (2024), who analyzed communication strategies in educational technology content. Research on semiotics in visual media has been conducted by Khairana and Rasyid (2023), who applied John Fiske's semiotic framework to analyze representations in the film *Imperfect*, and Firzatullah (2024), who examined how ideology is constructed in audiovisual media texts. Studies of digital communication strategies have also been conducted by Pasaribu (2024), who emphasized the importance of message presentation in YouTube-based marketing communication.

However, several specific gaps remain. First, although semiotic analysis has been applied to films and advertisements, its application to YouTube content produced by digital influencers, particularly Indonesian creators who actively participate in public discourse, remains limited. Second, previous studies have rarely connected semiotic analysis systematically with the formulation of communication strategies, leaving a gap between the interpretation of meaning and

its practical strategic application. Third, research on Ferry Irwandi's content remains limited, particularly studies examining how his digital messages are constructed through verbal, visual, and ideological signs despite his prominent role in public discourse on social and educational issues in Indonesia. This study seeks to address these gaps by analyzing the construction of digital communication messages in Ferry Irwandi's YouTube content using John Fiske's semiotic approach and connecting the findings to the formulation of digital communication strategies. The novelty of this study lies in integrating John Fiske's semiotic analysis with the formulation of communication strategies. While many semiotic studies focus primarily on interpreting meanings in media texts, this study extends the analysis by examining how semiotic findings can inform the development of digital communication strategies. The focus on Ferry Irwandi's YouTube content also provides a distinctive contribution because the object of analysis is not a film, advertisement, or music video, but digital creator content that actively participates in public discourse.

Based on the identified background and research gaps, this study aims to identify the verbal and visual signs used in Ferry Irwandi's YouTube content to construct digital communication messages and to analyze their meanings at the levels of reality, representation, and ideology using John Fiske's semiotic framework. Furthermore, this study examines how verbal signs, including diction, language style, and argumentative structure, as well as visual signs, including appearance, gestures, setting, camera techniques, lighting, and editing, contribute to the construction of meaning. Ultimately, this research seeks to formulate digital communication strategies based on the findings of the semiotic analysis, providing a framework for content creators and communication practitioners to design messages that are credible, transparent, engaging, and strategically constructed. This study is expected to contribute to the development of communication studies, particularly in the fields of digital communication, media semiotics, and content-based communication strategy. In practical terms, the findings may also provide insights for content creators, communication practitioners, institutions, and organizations in designing digital messages that are more meaningful, ethical, and strategically constructed.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using John Fiske's semiotic analysis to examine the construction of digital communication messages in Ferry Irwandi's YouTube content. The analysis focused on verbal and visual signs and their role in producing meaning within the selected videos (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study applied John Fiske's semiotic framework, which examined media texts at three levels: reality, representation, and ideology (Khairana & Rasyid, 2023). At the level of reality, the analysis focused on observable elements such as appearance, facial expressions, gestures, speaking style, setting, and behavior. At the level of representation, it examined camera techniques, editing, sound, visual text, and narrative structure. At the ideological level, it interpreted the values, perspectives, and forms of social criticism embedded in the content.

The research object consisted of selected videos from Ferry Irwandi's official YouTube channel. The videos were chosen based on their relevance to the research focus, particularly

content addressing social issues, public criticism, educational themes, and communication strategies. The study focused on the construction of messages in the content rather than on Ferry Irwandi as an individual.

The study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data consisted of selected videos from Ferry Irwandi's official YouTube channel, while the secondary data were obtained from books, scholarly journals, and previous studies related to digital communication, semiotics, YouTube, and communication strategies.

Data were collected through documentation and repeated observation of the selected videos. The researcher identified and recorded relevant verbal elements, including significant statements, as well as visual elements such as facial expressions, gestures, camera angles, backgrounds, editing, and on-screen text. The videos were selected using purposive sampling based on predetermined criteria aligned with the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data analysis was conducted using John Fiske's three levels of semiotic analysis. First, the reality level was analyzed by identifying visible and audible elements in the videos. Second, the representation level was examined by analyzing how technical and narrative elements constructed meaning. Third, the ideological level was interpreted by identifying the values, ideas, and perspectives embedded in the content. The findings were subsequently used to formulate digital communication strategies emphasizing clarity, credibility, persuasion, and audience engagement.

The credibility of the findings was enhanced through repeated observation and theoretical triangulation. The selected videos were reviewed multiple times to ensure consistency in identifying signs and meanings, while the interpretations were compared with relevant theories and previous studies on semiotics, digital communication, and communication strategy (Miles et al., 2014).

The research procedure involved determining the research focus, selecting relevant videos, identifying and classifying verbal and visual signs, analyzing the data according to John Fiske's three semiotic levels, and interpreting the findings in relation to digital communication strategy formulation.

This study was limited to selected videos from Ferry Irwandi's YouTube channel and focused specifically on the construction of digital communication messages through John Fiske's semiotic approach. It did not quantitatively measure audience responses or seek to generalize the findings to all YouTube content creators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that Ferry Irwandi's *YouTube* content constructs digital communication messages through verbal, visual, and ideological signs. The selected content presents Ferry not only as a content creator, but also as a digital communicator who challenges mystical claims through rational, legal, and empirical communication. The construction of meaning can be seen through John Fiske's three levels of semiotic analysis, namely the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology. These three levels reveal that the message in the content is not built randomly, but through specific signs that support a rational

and critical communication strategy.

Table 1. John Fiske’s Semiotic Analysis of Digital Communication Message Construction in Ferry Irwandi’s YouTube Content

Level of Semiotic Analysis	Findings in Ferry Irwandi’s <i>YouTube</i> Content	Meaning Construction	Communication Strategy
Reality	Ferry appears in casual clothing, such as a plain shirt or dark hoodie, without mystical, religious, or traditional attributes. He also uses a modern podcast studio with a microphone, laptop, and office-style setting.	The casual appearance represents a modern and rational public figure. The absence of mystical attributes shows an effort to remove the sacred or supernatural impression usually attached to mystical issues.	Building credibility through simplicity, rationality, and closeness to the audience.
	During the <i>live streaming</i> moment while waiting for mystical threats, Ferry shows relaxed gestures, laughs, reads comments, eats, and plays guitar.	Relaxed gestures construct the message that mystical threats do not have power over him. Fear is replaced with humor and entertainment.	Reducing audience fear by using calm, humorous, and confident non-verbal communication.
	Ferry uses legal, economic, and scientific diction, such as “empirical evidence,” “MOU,” “written agreement,” and “Alphard with BPKB.”	The use of legal and scientific language shifts mystical claims into rational and material logic.	Strengthening the message through evidence-based and logical communication.
Representation	Ferry uses an uncut <i>live streaming</i> format.	<i>Live streaming</i> represents transparency because the audience can watch the event in real time without editing manipulation.	Creating trust and authenticity through open and direct communication.
	The camera uses a medium close-up and eye-level angle.	The eye-level angle creates equality and closeness between Ferry and the audience.	Building intimacy and direct engagement with viewers.
	The studio uses bright lighting and avoids dark or horror-like visual effects.	Bright lighting represents openness, clarity, and rationality. It rejects the visual codes often used in mystical or horror content.	Creating a clear, rational, and non-dramatic message presentation.

Level of Semiotic Analysis	Findings in Ferry Irwandi's <i>YouTube</i> Content	Meaning Construction	Communication Strategy
	Ferry displays screenshots of conversations, comments, or news as visual evidence.	The screen functions as a space of evidence, not only as entertainment.	Strengthening arguments through visual proof and documentation.
	Ferry challenges mystical claims by demanding empirical proof.	The content promotes rationalism and empiricism against superstition.	Educating audiences to think critically and question unsupported claims.
Ideology	Ferry uses the promise of a luxury car or material reward to test the truth of mystical claims.	The strategy exposes contradictions in mystical business practices.	Using satire and material logic to criticize irrational claims.
	Donations received during the <i>live streaming</i> are redirected for educational purposes.	The content constructs education as a solution to fight ignorance and irrational beliefs.	Transforming public attention into social and educational value.

Source: Authors' analysis based on Fiske's semiotic framework (2011) from selected Ferry Irwandi YouTube videos, 2025

At the level of reality, Ferry Irwandi constructs himself as a rational and modern communicator. His casual clothing, simple appearance, and absence of mystical attributes create a strong contrast with the common image of supernatural practices. In many mystical narratives, power is often represented through traditional clothing, sacred objects, dark spaces, or symbolic rituals. Ferry rejects these signs by appearing as an ordinary person in a modern digital setting. This construction shows that rationality does not require dramatic symbols. Instead, his simple appearance strengthens the message that mystical claims can be questioned through common sense and public reasoning.

The setting used in the content also strengthens this construction. Ferry appears in a podcast-style studio with technological equipment such as a microphone, laptop, and modern seating. This setting represents a space of rational discussion rather than a mystical space. The issue of supernatural power is pulled away from dark, sacred, or frightening locations and placed into a digital and intellectual space. This shows that the content does not only discuss mystical issues, but also changes the arena of discussion. Mystical claims are no longer allowed to remain in the hidden space of fear, but are brought into the open space of digital public debate. Ferry's gestures and behavior further strengthen the message construction. During the *live streaming* moment while waiting for a mystical threat, he shows relaxed behavior, laughs, reads comments, eats, and even plays guitar. These actions are important signs because they reverse the emotional atmosphere usually associated with mystical threats. Instead of showing fear, Ferry displays confidence and calmness. This non-verbal communication functions as a form of symbolic

resistance. The threat is not treated as something sacred or frightening, but as something that can be mocked, questioned, and reduced through humor.

The use of language also becomes an important element in the construction of digital communication messages. Ferry frequently uses legal, economic, and scientific diction. Words related to evidence, written agreements, material proof, and ownership documents show that he is forcing mystical claims to enter rational systems of proof. This is a strategic communication pattern. Claims that usually operate in abstract and unverifiable spaces are challenged using concrete and measurable language. In this context, Ferry's message construction is not only persuasive, but also argumentative because it demands accountability from those who make supernatural claims. At the level of representation, the use of *live streaming* becomes one of the strongest technical signs in the content. The uncut and real-time format represents transparency. In mystical or horror content, editing, sound effects, and camera manipulation are often used to create fear and suspense. Ferry rejects this pattern by using *live streaming*, where the audience can directly observe what happens without post-production manipulation. This format builds trust because the audience becomes a witness to the event. As a communication strategy, *live streaming* strengthens authenticity, openness, and audience involvement.

The camera angle also supports the construction of meaning. The use of a medium close-up and eye-level angle creates a sense of equality between Ferry and his audience. He does not position himself as someone superior through a dramatic low-angle shot. Instead, he speaks at the same visual level as the viewer. This technical choice builds intimacy and direct communication. It also makes the message feel more personal and accessible. In digital communication, this kind of representation is important because audiences tend to trust communicators who appear close, direct, and relatable. Lighting becomes another important representational code. The bright studio lighting rejects the visual style commonly associated with mystical content, which often uses darkness, shadows, and dramatic effects. Bright lighting represents clarity, openness, and rational explanation. It visually supports the ideological message that the issue being discussed should be examined under the light of reason, not hidden behind fear. Through this technical representation, Ferry constructs his content as a space of explanation rather than intimidation.

The use of screenshots, comments, and digital documents as on-screen evidence also strengthens the content's communication strategy. Ferry does not only speak verbally, but also supports his arguments with visual proof. The screen becomes a kind of evidence board. This strategy makes the content more convincing because the audience is not only asked to believe the communicator, but also invited to see the supporting materials directly. This form of evidence-based presentation is important in digital communication because it increases credibility and reduces the impression of empty opinion.

At the ideological level, Ferry Irwandi's content promotes rationalism and empiricism. The main message constructed in the content is that extraordinary claims must be supported by evidence. Mystical claims are not accepted simply because they are repeated socially or believed culturally. They must be tested, questioned, and proven. This ideological construction challenges the culture of fear that often surrounds supernatural issues. Ferry's content encourages audiences

to move from passive belief toward critical thinking.

The content also contains criticism of mystical capitalism. The promise of a luxury car or material reward functions as a symbolic test. If supernatural practitioners truly have power, they should be able to prove it and take the reward. When this does not happen, the content exposes the contradiction between mystical claims and material reality. This strategy is effective because it translates abstract supernatural claims into concrete economic logic. It also criticizes the practice of exploiting public fear for financial gain. Another important ideological message is the transformation of fear into education. The donations collected during the *live streaming* are directed toward scholarships or educational purposes. This creates a strong symbolic contrast. Money that could have been generated from fear is instead redirected into education. The message constructed here is that public attention should not be used to strengthen superstition, but to support knowledge and social benefit. This makes the content not only critical, but also constructive.

Based on these findings, Ferry Irwandi's digital communication strategy can be understood through several patterns. First, he builds credibility through rational appearance and evidence-based language. Second, he creates transparency through *live streaming* and direct interaction. Third, he uses humor and relaxed gestures to reduce fear. Fourth, he strengthens arguments through visual evidence. Fifth, he connects criticism with social value by directing public attention toward education. These strategies show that effective digital communication is not only about delivering information, but also about constructing signs that support trust, clarity, and audience engagement.

The discussion shows that the construction of messages in Ferry Irwandi's *YouTube* content is closely related to the formulation of communication strategies. Through John Fiske's semiotic approach, the content can be seen as a structured communication text. The level of reality shows how Ferry builds his identity as a rational communicator. The level of representation shows how technical elements strengthen transparency and credibility. The level of ideology shows how the content promotes critical thinking, empiricism, and educational values. These findings indicate that semiotic analysis can be used not only to interpret meaning, but also to identify strategic patterns in digital communication.

In conclusion, Ferry Irwandi's *YouTube* content constructs digital communication messages through a combination of verbal signs, visual signs, technical representation, and ideological meaning. The content challenges mystical claims by using rational language, transparent media formats, relaxed non-verbal communication, and evidence-based argumentation. This construction can be used as a model for digital communication strategy, especially for content that aims to educate, criticize, and influence public opinion in a rational and ethical way.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that Ferry Irwandi's *YouTube* content constructed digital communication messages through verbal signs, visual signs, technical representation, and ideological meanings. Using John Fiske's semiotic approach, the analysis showed that communication messages were conveyed not only through spoken language but also

through appearance, gestures, setting, camera techniques, lighting, a live-streaming format, and the use of visual evidence. These elements worked together to construct rational, critical, and persuasive communication messages. At the level of reality, Ferry Irwandi presented himself as a modern and rational communicator. His casual appearance, relaxed gestures, and confident behavior reflected an effort to reduce fear associated with mystical claims. At the level of representation, the use of bright lighting, eye-level camera angles, live streaming, and on-screen evidence reinforced impressions of transparency, credibility, and openness. At the ideological level, the content promoted rationalism, empiricism, critical thinking, and education as means of challenging superstition and irrational beliefs. The study also demonstrated that the construction of digital communication messages in Ferry Irwandi's content could serve as a basis for formulating communication strategies. These strategies included the use of accessible language, evidence-based arguments, direct audience interaction, humor, visual evidence, and socially relevant values. Such strategies made the messages easier to understand, more credible, and more relevant to digital audiences. Therefore, Ferry Irwandi's YouTube content could be understood not only as digital entertainment but also as a form of public communication that educated, critiqued, and encouraged audiences to think more critically.

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