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FERRY IRWANDI'S COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN DECONSTRUCTING MYSTICAL BELIEFS ON YOUTUBE: A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study aims to examine Ferry Irwandi's communication strategies in constructing counter-narratives to mystical beliefs on Indonesian YouTube using Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality framework. The proliferation of mystical content on YouTube has contributed to the normalization of supernatural beliefs within digital culture, particularly narratives surrounding witchcraft, indigo phenomena, and shamanistic practices. Employing a qualitative case study design, this research analyzes three YouTube videos through video observation, transcription, narrative and rhetorical analysis, and examination of audience comments. The findings indicate that Irwandi constructs externalization through critical narratives that expose logical inconsistencies in mystical claims, objectivation through empirical references and visual simplification, and internalization through audience responses marked by acceptance and resistance. Reflective content reinforces communicator credibility through clarification of positional stance, while collaborative dialogic formats strengthen rhetorical structure and expand social legitimacy for rational critique. This study demonstrates that the deconstruction of mysticism in digital media operates as a contested process of social meaning construction shaped by narrative strategy, rhetorical authority, visual representation, and audience interpretation.

Keywords: *Digital Communication; Mysticism; Social Construction Of Reality; Communication Strategies; Youtube*

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A. Introduction

The development of digital media over the past decade has brought significant changes to patterns of information consumption and the formation of public perception. YouTube, as one of the largest video-sharing platforms in Indonesia, functions not only as a medium for entertainment but also as an arena for discourse production that shapes how society understands social, cultural, and spiritual issues. Recent studies indicate that YouTube has the capacity to serve as a space for learning and opinion formation through educational, reflective, and persuasive content (Balakrishnan & Griffiths, 2017). Consequently, YouTube should be understood not merely as a channel for information distribution, but as a site of meaning construction in the digital era.

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Among the various types of content that have proliferated, mystical and supernatural themes represent one of the most dominant genres on Indonesian YouTube and attract a substantial audience base. Channels such as Jurnalrisa, Sara Wijayanto, and Om Hao have garnered millions of viewers through dramatized narratives involving spirits, indigo abilities, and spiritual rituals. These representations function not only as entertainment, but also as mechanisms that reinforce cultural narratives surrounding the unseen world. Jafari (2020) argues that digital mystical content operates as a form of cultural reproduction, transmitting symbols, stories, and supernatural experiences regarded as meaningful by segments of Indonesian society.

Amid the dominance of mystical narratives, however, a contrasting communicative approach has emerged through content creators who challenge such claims—one of whom is Ferry Irwandi. Through his YouTube channel, Irwandi consistently critiques mystical claims related to witchcraft, indigo phenomena, and shamanistic practices using a rational and analytical framework. This approach introduces a counter-narrative to the prevailing mystical discourse in digital media. According to Liliani et al. (2019), counter-narratives in digital environments possess the potential to reshape perspectives by disrupting traditional modes of thinking and stimulating critical reflection among audiences.

Nevertheless, the rational messages conveyed by Irwandi are not always received positively. Some audience members perceive critiques of mysticism as threats to cultural identity and spiritual values. This phenomenon of resistance aligns with Hamilton (2020) findings, which suggest that traditional belief systems tend to be defended when individuals perceive their value structures to be challenged by critical or rational narratives. Thus, the tension between rationality and tradition extends beyond epistemological disagreement and is closely intertwined with issues of identity and cultural legitimacy.

The dynamics of audience acceptance and rejection of Irwandi's messages underscore the importance of examining communication strategies within the context of deconstructing mysticism. Such strategies encompass narrative construction, visual presentation, rhetorical techniques, and the perceived identity of the communicator. Kopf (2020) emphasize that digital media do not merely disseminate information, but actively shape social reality through continuous processes of mediation.

Based on this context, the present study is significant because much of the existing literature focuses primarily on audience reception or the effects of mystical content, while scholarly attention to how communicators strategically construct rational messages to deconstruct mystical beliefs remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze Ferry Irwandi's communication strategies in deconstructing mysticism through a qualitative approach, as well as to examine how such messages are constructed, articulated, and responded to by audiences on the YouTube platform.

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B. Methods

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine Ferry Irwandi's communication strategies in deconstructing mystical beliefs through YouTube content. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of meaning construction processes, message strategies, and interaction dynamics between the communicator and audiences within a digital media context. The case study design is appropriate as the research focuses on a specific phenomenon analyzed intensively through its contextual and structural characteristics. This approach is consistent with Rafi & Sumarlan (2025), who argue that case studies are effective for uncovering communication strategies in media contexts characterized by complex narrative structures.

The research data were derived from an analysis of three YouTube videos produced by Ferry Irwandi that are thematically relevant to the deconstruction of mysticism, namely *Membongkar Kebohongan Santet dan Indigo*, *Saya Baik-Baik Saja*, and one collaborative video featuring critical dialogue on shamanistic practices or debunking content. These videos were selected purposively based on thematic relevance, popularity, and levels of audience interaction. This purposive sampling technique aligns with Fitrianto & Sumarlan (2024) recommendation that data selection in media research should consider both thematic relevance and communicative intensity within the content.

Data collection was conducted through video observation, transcription, visual analysis, and documentation of audience comments. Narrative analysis was employed to identify message structure and sequencing, while rhetorical analysis was used to examine the deployment of ethos, pathos, and logos within Irwandi's arguments. This approach is consistent with Rieder, Bernhard, Coromina, Oscar, & Matamoros-Fernandez (2020), who emphasizes the importance of rhetorical analysis for understanding persuasive strategies employed by communicators in digital media. Additionally, visual analysis was applied to examine how gestures, facial expressions, and graphic elements were utilized to reinforce the rational messages conveyed.

The data analysis process was carried out using thematic coding techniques by identifying core categories such as narrative patterns, message delivery strategies, the use of visual evidence, and audience responses. Thematic coding follows the qualitative analysis framework proposed by Balakrishnan & Griffiths (2017), which suggests that this method allows researchers to systematically identify patterns and relationships among themes within qualitative data.

Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation and theoretical comparison. Findings from the video analysis were examined in relation to Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality framework (Christian et al., 2022; Jovanović, 2021; Steets, 2016) and compared with findings from previous studies on digital communication . Triangulation was employed to enhance the credibility of the analysis, as recommended by Veselič (2021), who notes that triangulation in qualitative research serves to minimize interpretive bias and strengthen analytical rigor.

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C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

Analysis of the video *Membongkar Kebohongan Santet dan Indigo* indicates that Ferry Irwandi's communication strategy operates through a systematic process of meaning construction. At the stage of externalization, Irwandi develops critical narratives that challenge the legitimacy of mystical practices by presenting historical explanations of witchcraft, highlighting logical contradictions in indigo claims, and emphasizing the importance of critical thinking (Keskin, 2017b, 2017a; Rosita, 2018). The narrative is organized sequentially—from claim presentation, to analytical explanation, illustrative examples, and rational rebuttal—thereby creating a coherent argumentative flow that facilitates audience comprehension of the rational messages conveyed. This pattern of externalization aligns with digital narrative studies suggesting that structured storytelling supports more stable meaning construction among audiences (Pires et al., 2021).

At the stage of objectivation, Irwandi reinforces his arguments through the use of empirical evidence derived from personal experience, assertive bodily gestures, and simple visualizations designed to explain abstract concepts. Visual elements and gestures function as markers of argumentative emphasis, making logical explanations appear more "natural" and accessible to audiences. This finding supports Balakrishnan & Griffiths (2017) research, which demonstrates that visual evidence in digital content strengthens the objectivation of meaning and enhances message credibility on YouTube.

Audience responses to the first video reveal varied internalization processes. A substantial number of comments indicate acceptance of Irwandi's rational arguments, including expressions of newly acquired understanding regarding the inconsistencies of mystical claims. However, other comments demonstrate resistance, with some viewers perceiving Irwandi's approach as dismissive of spiritual values. This polarization is consistent with findings by Hay (2016), who observe that critical YouTube content often generates divided audience responses, particularly when addressing culturally and spiritually sensitive issues.

Analysis of the second video, *Saya Baik-Baik Saja*, reveals a strategic emphasis on strengthening the communicator's ethos. In this video, Irwandi clarifies that his critiques are not intended to undermine cultural traditions or belief systems, but rather to expose misleading claims that may harm public understanding. This reinforcement of credibility through transparency contributes to increased audience trust, particularly among moderate viewers. This finding is consistent with Li (2025), who identify communicator ethos as a key factor in fostering acceptance of sensitive messages in digital media.

In addition to strengthening ethos, the second video demonstrates the use of mild pathos. Irwandi presents a more personal and humanized perspective, which functions to reduce emotional tension among audiences following controversy generated by earlier content. This emotional strategy effectively mitigates viewer resistance, supporting the argument by Vettorel (2019) that emotional approaches in digital communication can enhance audience connection and receptivity.

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Findings from the collaborative video addressing the debunking of shamanistic practices indicate that dialogic formats provide opportunities for more structured and in-depth argumentation. In this format, Irwandi employs empirical data, concrete examples, and supporting theoretical references, thereby strengthening the logos dimension of his rhetoric. The collaborative interaction also expands social legitimacy, as the presence of additional participants reframes Irwandi's critique as part of a broader public discourse rather than an individual opinion. This finding aligns with Haroon et al. (2023), who argue that collaboration among digital creators enhances message legitimacy and broadens audience interpretive frameworks.

The dialogic interaction in the collaborative video demonstrates a process of meaning amplification, wherein Irwandi's arguments are no longer positioned solely as personal viewpoints but as contributions to collective discourse. As a result, the deconstruction of mysticism in this context is shown to depend not only on logical reasoning, but also on social validation achieved through interaction with other communicative actors (Fraser & Turcan, 2025; Tancheva, 2011).

The findings indicate that Irwandi's deconstruction of mystical beliefs emerges from the interaction of narrative sequencing, rhetorical strategy, visual reinforcement, and social legitimacy. The processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization unfold through repeated communicative practices that correspond with the Social Construction of Reality framework (Jovanović, 2021). Audience responses further demonstrate that rational deconstruction within digital media remains contingent upon cultural context and individual belief systems.

2. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Ferry Irwandi's communication strategies for deconstructing mystical beliefs on YouTube operate through processes consistent with the social construction of reality framework. Externalization is evident in the deliberate articulation of rational counter-narratives that challenge supernatural claims through structured argumentation. Such narrative construction illustrates the capacity of digital communicators to reshape dominant cultural discourses by introducing alternative interpretive frameworks, reinforcing observations that digital media enable the production of competing meanings within public discourse (Priadi, 2025).

The findings demonstrate that Ferry Irwandi's communication strategies for deconstructing mystical beliefs on YouTube operate through processes consistent with Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality framework, namely externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Christian et al., 2022; Dreher & Vera, 2016; Oruh & Agustang, 2024; Pramono et al., 2024; Rahmawati & Putri, 2024). At the stage of externalization, Irwandi deliberately constructs rational counter-narratives that challenge supernatural claims through structured and logical argumentation. This narrative strategy illustrates the capacity of digital communicators to generate alternative meaning frameworks that contest dominant cultural discourses, reinforcing Priadi &

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Prasetyo (2025) assertion that digital media enable the production of counter-narratives capable of reshaping public understanding.

Objectivation is manifested through the strategic use of visual evidence, bodily gestures, and references to empirical experience that strengthen the legitimacy of the rational narratives presented. Visual elements serve not merely as aesthetic components, but as semiotic resources that translate abstract reasoning into observable forms. This reinforces the objectivity of the arguments and enhances audience trust. Visual reinforcement on YouTube significantly contributes to communicator credibility and facilitates the acceptance of educational and rational messages.

At the stage of internalization, audience responses reveal that meaning construction unfolds unevenly across viewers. The coexistence of acceptance and resistance reflects differences in cultural background, belief orientation, and prior exposure to rational discourse. The polarization observed in audience reactions indicates that challenges to traditional beliefs often provoke symbolic resistance rather than immediate cognitive revision. Rational narratives confronting deeply rooted spiritual values frequently encounter defensive responses tied to cultural identity rather than epistemological disagreement alone.

Analysis of the second video highlights the strategic importance of communicator ethos in addressing audience resistance. By clarifying communicative intent and emphasizing that his critique targets misleading claims rather than cultural traditions, Irwandi reinforces transparency and trust. Communicator credibility is a determining factor in audience acceptance of sensitive messages within digital media environments. The articulation of positional clarity thus functions as a stabilizing mechanism in the negotiation of contested meanings.

The use of mild emotional appeal further complements the rational strategy. Through personal reflection and a more measured communicative tone, Irwandi mitigates emotional tension without compromising analytical rigor. Emotional engagement operates as a supportive mechanism that facilitates receptivity rather than as a primary persuasive tool. This observation aligns with Pires et al. (2021), who note that controlled emotional strategies can reduce resistance to controversial content in digital communication contexts.

The collaborative video format underscores the significance of social legitimacy in the deconstruction of mystical beliefs. Dialogic interaction allows arguments to be articulated with greater depth and coherence through the integration of empirical data, theoretical references, and reciprocal clarification. The presence of additional participants situates rational critique within a shared discursive space, transforming individual viewpoints into collectively validated discourse. This finding supports Kopf (2020) argument that collaboration among digital creators enhances message credibility and expands audience interpretive horizons.

The discussion indicates that the deconstruction of mystical beliefs in digital media extends beyond logical refutation alone. Effective communication strategies require the integration of narrative coherence, rhetorical discipline, visual reinforcement,

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communicator credibility, emotional regulation, and social validation. These elements interact dynamically to shape processes of meaning construction within digitally mediated environments. Digital platforms thus function as contested spaces in which rational and traditional worldviews engage in continuous negotiation rather than unilateral persuasion, reaffirming Hay (2016) and Balakrishnan & Griffiths (2017) view of media as an active force in the ongoing construction of social reality.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that Ferry Irwandi's communication strategies for deconstructing mystical beliefs on YouTube operate through a multi-layered process of meaning construction that integrates rational argumentation, visual support, and rhetorical positioning. The articulation of counter-narratives challenges supernatural claims through logical critique and empirical references, while audience responses reveal patterns of acceptance and resistance shaped by cultural values and belief systems. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of digital debunking is not determined by rational critique alone, but also by communicator credibility, narrative coherence, and the management of emotional and cultural sensitivities.

Reflective content strengthens symbolic authority by clarifying communicative intent and reinforcing transparency, whereas collaborative formats expand social legitimacy by embedding critique within collective discourse. Based on these findings, content creators addressing mysticism and culturally sensitive issues should adopt balanced strategies that combine analytical rigor, visual clarity, and contextual awareness. This study is limited by its focus on a single content creator and platform; therefore, future research should examine a wider range of creators, audience groups, and digital platforms to further explore how deconstruction strategies are negotiated across different media environments and cultural contexts.

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