

## Representation and Reception of Betawi Cultural Identity in Sofwan Amin Content: Analysis of Digital Communication Perspectives

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**ABSTRACT:** This research aims to analyze how Betawi cultural identity is represented and received in digital content created by Sofwan Amin. Using a qualitative approach and content analysis method, this study examines Sofwan Amin's short videos on Instagram and Tiktok social media Sofwan\_Amin. Through the lens of representation theory and encoding-decoding (Stuart Hall), as well as the theory of use and gratuity, this study found that Sofwan Amin strategically constructed the meaning of Betawi through a combination of verbal and nonverbal elements, especially the use of humor and dialect. Reception analysis shows that most of the audience performs dominant-hegemonic decoding, accepting the meaning presented, while the audience's main motivation is entertainment and the search for identity. These findings affirm the role of content creators as agents of cultural dissemination and highlight the dynamics of cultural.

**KEYWORDS:** Betawi culture, content creator, social media, tiktok, Instagram

### INTRODUCTION

Amid the current of globalization and the dominance of popular culture, social media has evolved into a crucial communication space for the preservation and revitalization of local culture. Content creators, who used to be just consumers, are now prosumers (producers as well as consumers) who actively produce and disseminate their own cultural narratives. This phenomenon is clearly seen in the figure of Sofwan Amin, a content creator who has managed to attract hundreds of thousands of followers with content that is thick with Betawi cultural identity. The content is not only entertainment, but also an **arena of representation**, where Betawi symbols, values, and traditions are produced and their meanings negotiated.

This research focuses on an in-depth analysis of Sofwan Amin's content from the perspective of communication science. We'll answer key questions:

- (1) How is Betawi identity constructed and represented in its content?
- (2) What communication strategy did Sofwan Amin use to achieve this representation?
- (3) How do audiences react and interpret the message, and what are their motivations for consuming this content?

By answering these questions, this research contributes to a richer understanding of the role of digital media in cultural communication, particularly in the Indonesian context.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Representation Theory (Stuart Hall)

Representation is the foundation of cultural communication. According to Stuart Hall (1997), representation is not a passive reflection of reality, but rather an active process in which meaning is produced through language and sign systems. These signs, which consist of signifiers (physical forms, such as words or images) and signified (concepts or meanings represented), are used by creators to construct a "world" that audiences can understand. In the context of Sofwan Amin's content, Betawi dialect, everyday clothing, and body gestures serve as signifiers that collectively refer to the signified "Betawi identity."

#### Encoding and Decoding Theory (Stuart Hall)

This theory was developed by Stuart Hall in 1973, challenging the idea of linear communication by emphasizing that messages sent by the sender (encoding) are not always interpreted the same by the receiver (decoding). Hall identifies three decoding positions:

1. Dominant-Hegemonic: The audience receives and understands the message according to the creator's intentions.
2. Negotiable: The audience accepts the dominant meaning, but modifies it according to their personal experience or social context.
3. Opposition: The audience rejects the meaning presented and interprets it in the opposite way.

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By analyzing the comments and audience responses, we can identify which decoding positions are most frequent, providing insight into how effective the representations Sofwan Amin creates.

### Uses and Gratifications Theory

Different from other communication models that focus on the effects of media, this theory (Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch, 1974) sees the audience as an active participant who has a purpose in choosing and using the media. Audiences are not seen as passive recipients who are "shot" at messages, but rather as individuals who deliberately choose content to meet specific psychological or social needs. In this context, Sofwan Amin's content consumption can be driven by the need for: entertainment, personal identity (feeling connected to cultural roots), information (learning about traditions), and social interaction (feeling part of the Betawi community).

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a content analysis method to examine the content of Sofwan Amin's video. Primary data was collected from passive observation and documentation of his short videos on the Tiktok and Instagram platforms Sofwan\_Amin. The primary unit of analysis is each video, with the secondary unit being audience comments.

### Data Analysis Techniques

The data is analyzed through two main stages:

- a. Semiotic Analysis (Encoding): We dissect the signs used in the content, identifying the verbal elements (dialect, vocabulary) and nonverbal elements (clothing, facial expressions, setting). This analysis aims to understand how these signs work to construct the meaning of "Betawi."
- b. Critical Discourse Analysis (Decoding): We analyze the audience's comment text to identify patterns of response and interpretation. We categorized comments into Hall's three decoding positions (dominant, negotiable, opposition) and identified audience motivations based on use and gratification theory.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Representation (Encoding): Humor as a Bridge of Culture

Sofwan Amin uses a reaction comedy style between Encang and Ropi (his nephew) who are both played by Sofwan Amin himself. This is the main communication strategy to represent Betawi identity. The content is often in the format of a light comedy sketch between Encang and Ropi that takes a daily background in front of Encang's desk. The use of typical Betawi dialects and intonation not only serves as an element of representation, but also as the main source of humor itself. Through this strategic encoding, he succeeded in making Betawi culture feel relatable and easily accessible to a wider audience.

In communication theory, representation or encoding is the process by which a message or meaning is constructed into a form that can be communicated to others. Sofwan Amin consciously and strategically uses humor to "encode" or represent Betawi cultural identity.

Sofwan Amin does not just present facts about Betawi, but packages them in a unique sign system, namely light humor of the action of sharing information between Encang and Ropi, the character of a pretentious youth. This humor serves as a cultural bridge, which makes Betawi values, customs, and language more understandable, familiar and attractive to diverse audiences.

Here is a more in-depth description of the encoding strategy carried out by Sofwan Amin:

#### 1. The Creation of Fictitious Characters as Cultural Self-Representation

Sofwan Amin created two main characters, Encang and Ropi, both of whom were played by himself. This character is not just a figure, but a fictitious representation of two generations in Betawi culture. Encang often represents an older, wiser, and perhaps slightly traditional figure, while Ropi represents a more modern younger generation.

The interaction of actions and reactions between them creates social dynamics that are commonly found in society. Light conflicts, advice, and everyday conversations become a reflection of real interactions. Thus, the audience not only sees Encang and Ropi, but also sees a reflection of the relationship between uncles and nephews, the old and young generations, which are part of the socio-cultural structure of Betawi.

#### 2. Dialect and Intonation as the Main Encoding Elements

The use of Betawi dialects and intonations is not just ornaments, but a key element of message encoding. Language is one of the main pillars of cultural identity. By using the authentic Betawi dialect, Sofwan Amin immediately sent a message about his cultural origins.

However, what makes it clever is how this dialect functions not only as an identity, but also as a source of humor itself. Pronunciation differences, unique accents, and distinctive ways of speaking are often at the heart of jokes. Through the humor that comes from this language, he manages to avoid the impression of rigidity or education, and instead makes Betawi culture feel alive and interesting.

The tagline used by Sofwan Amin, is "Know kagak..." and "Nyok Kita Bahas!", are key elements in the Betawi cultural

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representation and communication strategy described earlier. Both serve as effective communication bridges to connect audiences with the cultural content presented.

### a. "Know Kagak..." - Dialogue and Education Opening

This tagline serves as a rhetorical dialogue opener that immediately attracts the audience's attention. The question is, "Did you know..." It's not just an ordinary question, but a familiar code in everyday conversation. This creates a relaxed and intimate atmosphere, as if the audience is chatting with you. Encoding Strategy: "Did You Know..." directly encode or package cultural education in a format that is not patronizing. Instead of presenting information in a rigid way, Sofwan Amin uses this question to challenge the audience's knowledge in a lighthearted way. This makes the process of learning about Betawi culture interactive and interesting.

Relationship with Humor: This phrase is often the opening of jokes or anecdotes related to Betawi culture, creating an anticipation of humor in the audience. This reinforces the idea that cultural information does not have to be serious, but can be conveyed through an entertaining medium.

### b. "Let's Talk!" - Invitation to Collaboration and Participation

This tagline is a direct invitation to the audience to be involved in the discussion. "Nyok Kita Bahas!" means "Let's Discuss!" in the Betawi dialect, which creates the impression that Sofwan Amin is not only speaking one-way, but inviting the audience to participate in the conversation.

Encoding Strategy: This tagline encodes audience participation as an integral part of cultural representation. By inviting the audience to "discuss", he changed the role of the audience from passive to active. It shows that culture is something that lives and is constantly updated through discussion and interaction.

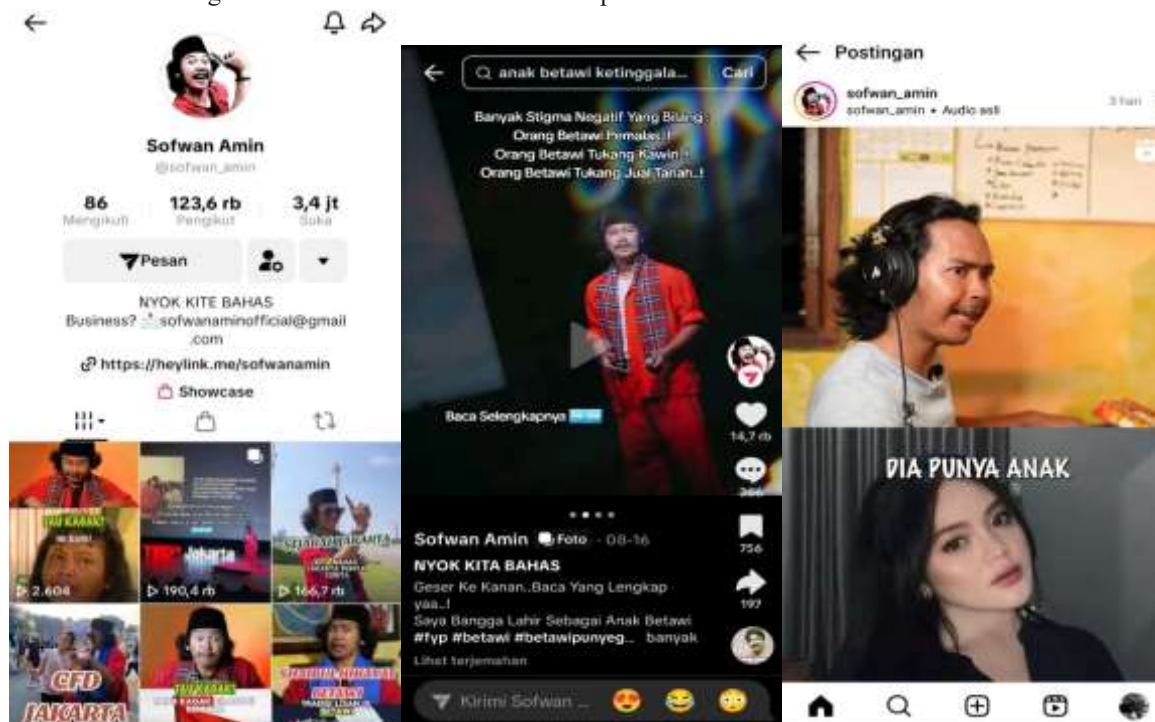
Relationship with Cultural Bridges: "Nyok Kita Bahas!" serves as a gateway for cultural collaboration. This opens up a space for the audience to share their experiences, knowledge, or even questions about Betawi culture. Thus, this tagline reinforces the role of humor as a bridge that not only connects, but also allows for two-way cultural exchange.

These two taglines work synergistically to achieve Sofwan Amin's main goal: to make Betawi culture feel relatable and accessible. "You know..." creates interest, while "Nyok Kita Bahas!" invites engagement, making it an effective model of cultural communication through humor.

## 3. Everyday Background and Content Relevance

The content created by Sofwan Amin takes a very simple background: Encang's desk. This background is deliberately chosen to create an everyday and simple impression. This is an important encoding strategy because it makes the audience feel that what they see is part of real life.

The content is also in the form of light comedy sketches that discuss everyday issues. By raising topics that are relevant and easily identifiable to the audience (e.g.: Betawi figures, food philosophies, traditional cultural arts, history, or traditional Betawi clothing), Sofwan Amin connects Betawi culture with the universal human experience. This allows audiences from various cultural backgrounds to find common ground and feel a cultural relationship with their content.



## **Representation and Reception of Betawi Cultural Identity in Sofwan Amin Content: Analysis of Digital Communication Perspectives**

The content uploaded by Sofwan Amin, as seen in the screenshot, is a real example of how communication theory, especially Stuart Hall's Encoding Theory, works in the age of social media.

Sofwan Amin strategically packaged (encoded) Betawi identity into his digital content. Every visual and verbal element has a role to play in this process.

**Visual and Character Representation:**

His profile picture shows a typical figure with a big smile, wearing a black peci on his head and a traditional Betawi clothing (baju pangsi) representing ordinary people, which directly represents the character of Encang (uncle). It's a strong visual code, signaling that the content will be centered around familiar and approachable characters.

**Tagline as Communication Code:**

"Nyok Kite Bahasa!" (Lets discuss!): This tagline is a direct invitation, encoding the message that a cultural discussion is about to take place. This creates the impression of an informal and collaborative conversation, rather than a monologue.

"Tahu Kagak?" (Do You Know?): This phrase is a verbal code that serves as a rhetorical opener. It instantly challenges audiences with familiar questions, which sparks curiosity and packages cultural education in a lighthearted and entertaining format.

**Content and Culture Linkage:**

The content shown, such as "The History of Jakarta" and "Betawi food philosophy," shows that Sofwan Amin consciously chose topics that are deeply related to Betawi identity and heritage. These headings encode the message that it is a credible and authentic source of information.

Overall, Sofwan Amin uses a very effective encoding strategy. He doesn't just showcase Betawi culture, but he represents it through a clever system: fictitious characters, authentic dialects, and relevant humor. This humor acts as a code that opens doors to a wider audience, so that Betawi identity can be accepted, appreciated, and enjoyed without significant cultural barriers.

Sofwan Amin succeeded in creating an effective "circuit of meaning". He uses strong cultural codes to encode his message, and his success is measured by millions of "likes" and hundreds of thousands of "followers," which suggests that most audiences interpret him in a dominant-hegemonic-or negotiation position.

### **Reception: The Majority of Decoding Is Dominant**

Analysis of comments shows that most of the audience is doing dominant-hegemonic decoding. They respond with laughter, emojis, and statements that confirm the meaning presented, such as "Betawi is really good!" or "like my father at home." This response shows that the representation made by Sofwan Amin is accepted and understood in accordance with his intention. There are also comments that show negotiable decoding, where the audience praises his humor but also reminds us of certain stereotypes.

### **Audience Motivation: Between Entertainment and Identity**

In accordance with the theory of use and gratuity, audiences consume Sofwan Amin's content for various reasons. Comment surveys show that the main motivation is as entertainment. Behind that, however, there is a deeper impulse: the search for identity. Many audiences, especially those from the Betawi diaspora or who live far from Jakarta, feel that Sofwan Amin's content provides a sense of nostalgia and connection with their cultural roots. This content becomes a "bridge" that fills their need to stay connected to their collective identity.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Analysis of Sofwan Amin's TikTok and Instagram content shows that his success is not solely due to his natural talent, but rather due to the use of smart and structured communication strategies. Sofwan Amin succeeded in representing Betawi cultural identity through humor as the main medium. This process effectively encodes cultural messages in a way that is not rigid, but rather lightweight and accessible.

The use of dialects, fictitious characters (Encang and Ropi), and everyday backgrounds serve as codes that allow audiences from different backgrounds to interact with the content. Taglines like "Know kagak?" and "Nyok Kite Badiscuss!" are not just jargon, but key elements that create participatory relationships with the audience.

Thus, Sofwan Amin's content is a clear example of Stuart Hall's Encoding and Decoding Theory, where he succeeded in directing the audience to adopt a dominant-hegemonic or negotiation decoding position, which led to a wide acceptance and appreciation of Betawi culture. Sofwan Amin is a successful example of a content creator who functions as a cultural communication agent. Through an intelligent encoding strategy, he not only displays, but actively constructs the meaning of Betawi identity. The predominantly-hegemonic audience decoding process shows that its representation is widely accepted. These findings confirm that social media is not only a space for entertainment, but also a powerful platform for preserving and revitalizing traditional cultures.

Based on the above findings, here are some suggestions for further development:

Sofwan Amin can expand the reach of his content to other platforms, such as YouTube with longer formats (e.g., vlogs or interviews), to document Betawi culture in more depth. This will attract audiences looking for more substantive and informative content.

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In most of the content that is aired, there is a high audience interaction. Sofwan Amin can hold live Q&A sessions or create collaborative content where audiences can participate directly, for example by submitting questions or stories about their experiences with Betawi culture.

When Sofwan Amin is going to monetize his content for the empowerment of the sustainable economy, it should be noted that the products or services promoted are still in line with Betawi cultural values. For example, promoting local products or Betawi handicrafts will strengthen its image of authenticity and have a positive economic impact on its community.

Sofwan Amin can collaborate across cultures to further expand his traditional culture. Inviting creators from other cultures to collaborate can create content that is not only entertaining, but also promotes tolerance and mutual understanding between cultures. This will strengthen its image as a cultural bridge, not only for Betawi, but also for Indonesia's diversity as a whole.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct a comparative study with the content of other local cultural creators, or a longitudinal study to see how Betawi representation in Sofwan Amin's content has evolved over time. Further research could also focus on how digital interactions contribute to the construction of personal and collective identities.

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