

## Understanding Communication and Identity Strategy of Indonesian Diaspora Women as YouTuber

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### Abstract

*Nowadays the presence of internet provides virtual spaces for diaspora women who are living outside Indonesia. Living within different cultures are challenging and social media platform can be as self-actualization medium to representing identities and expressing their emotional bonding with homeland. There are only several research which have revealed on how Indonesia women diaspora from mixed family especially in maintaining YouTube platforms. The aim of this study is tried to portray how Indonesian diaspora women revealing their national identity within video YouTube content. This research method was descriptive qualitative. Data were collected from ten videos of two Indonesian diasporas YouTuber who have mixed family, living abroad, and have more than 1 (one) million subscribers. We tried to explore from some categories such as video's location, moment or time background, target viewer, and on how delivering the messages within videos. Research finding showed that the video's contents indicated kind of negotiation construction for showing love and caring between homeland and recent locations, also acceptance with local identities. Elements of Indonesian are attached in their everyday life. In addition, they were still depicted as being related to domestic role and being responsible for taking care of the family.*

**Keywords:** Indonesian Diaspora Women, YouTuber, Construction Indonesian Identity, Women's Domestic Role.

### Introduction

Today, the Indonesian diasporas has been scattered in various countries in the world. Globalization gives away for diaspora's spreading across the nation. Diaspora means as, people with a common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside the borders of their ethnic or religious homeland-whether that homeland is real or symbolic, independent or under foreign control (Shain & Barth, 2003). The concept of the modern diaspora broadens its point of view than just people's migration.

The beginning of Indonesian diaspora development was initiated by Dino Patti Djalal. He initiated the commendation of the first diaspora congress in Los Angeles, the United State of America in 2012. It was attended by more than 2000 diaspora people from Indonesia. Currently, the number of Indonesian diasporas is more than 8 million people (Muhidin & Utomo, 2016). These numbers will be more increasingly growing number shortly. These are a kind of potential resources that can be empowered in the development of Indonesian.

Many scholars have been given relatively little interest on the study of Indonesia diaspora while the interaction of diaspora people becomes more interesting to explore. The untold homesickness and anxiety are particular problems that mostly felt by them. Being far from the homeland placed them to be far from families and previous social

groups. They are facing challenge ability to adapt and building interaction with the new society or new social group. They need to mingle and encourage to maintain their existence. They have to fuse their identities to adapt will local culture (Clancy, 2011; Shain & Barth, 2003; Sun, 2005; Yeoh & Huang, 2000).

Many studies capture how diaspora's try to express their homesickness of homeland while they are living in their recent location, such as development Ghanian diasporas making homeland (Henry & Mohan, 2003), Chinese diaspora's muslim in Indonesia (Weng, 2014), Indonesia diaspora in Australia (Jati, 2021), and also living with Javanese identity while in Malaysia (Sunarti & Fadeli, 2021). From these studies, we can concluded that representation on how cultural identity is still matter (Clini & Valančiūnas, 2021). It was constructed in the forms of diaspora's daily communication.

Diaspora's adaptation sometimes appeared within a new version of identity, or mixed with local identity. Their interaction involves the communication process. It is like building new identity or new social reality through communication process. The construction of these is probably using particular symbols originated come from their homeland. The new identity of the diaspora is then illustrated on their everyday's life communication. It was negotiated while doing interaction with other people. It can be seen as daily realities, which are arranged in the framework of meaning. The identity is seen as a result of discourse construction.

Theoretical background explains that the understanding of communication process is a self-expression process. Communication process involves self-reflection. Therefore, the way of communication can be represented as a person's depiction. A person can be known from the way he or she communicates to others. Communication proses can be explained from the theory of representation which revealed that it involves the use of language to convey meaningful messages to others (Hall, 1997). Representation is a process by which mental individuals actively perceive and give meaning to social realities. The construction of the meaning process produces a meaningful reaction that can be exchanged with each other.

The activity of exchanging meanings between group members in society is a transactional process (Belasen & Frank, 2012; Gamble, M. & Gamble, 2013). A person as a member of a group or community will not only just understanding the symbol of message, but also actively produce messages in responding others. Hence, we can assume that people communicate within a construction process of meaning. It is always related to the context of their daily social reality experiences.

YouTube is currently one of the most popular social media almost in the entire world community (Brodersen et al., 2012; Liikkanen & Salovaara, 2015; Rosalen, 2019). It is a social media platform showing various other's people realities. Unlike mass media, while using YouTube, people will be able to view various video's content easily according to their needs repeatedly. Furthermore, it can be used as a medium reflection of identity's construction which explored by studying on how presenting regulated and produced contents (Liew & Hassan, 2021; Pérez-Torres et al., 2018; Rosida & Azwar, 2021).

YouTube's audiovisual capabilities gives advantages as an attractive medium for everyone. People can create and develop various symbols, including significant images, to illustrate the meaning of social reality that is representing something. YouTube becomes a furnish medium to manipulate the meaning of social reality to be something that can be 'enjoyed' by other people for entertainment (Chu, 2009; Peterson, 2016). The

power of audio-visual that inserted on YouTube makes it more attractive compared to other social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

In line with the current habits in our society while using and consuming YouTube channels, Guy Debord's comes up with ideas which is seem to be concerning about Society of Spectacle (Debord, 1967). People tend to create various visual images to be displayed for the public at large. In this case, YouTube becomes a space location to describe representation of realities while the construction of social reality involves fantasy (Brown et al., 2012; McLean & Wainwright, 2009). Fantasy means something which is unreal but it derives from reality. It involves imaginations process which are fruitful creativity in mind to enrich realities. It is a kind of development an illustration way of thinking that encourage people to present something to attract others intentions (Papacharissi, 2002).

Today's presence of YouTube platform provides connection channel for diaspora who are living outside Indonesia. Until now, it is offering spaces for Indonesian diaspora women in carrying out their expression and showing reflection of theirs balancing life. This has also happened with the one who married with a man from another nation and living abroad. They have unique mixed family. They face many challenges in the integration of cultural identity.

They make use of social media platform such as YouTube channel as a medium to show their existence. YouTube is placed not just only for expressing their creative content channel but also as a place to maintain connections between viewers. They use it as a medium to maintain good friendship relations, showing happiness, and also sometimes their anxiety. They are much very likely to emphasize that they are still have emotional bonding relations with their nation. It is like a kind of indication that they want to be still acknowledge and proud to be as Indonesian.

This phenomenon can be understood because their home country still something important. They still remain their nation identity visible. The nation's identity can be easily recognized from certain symbols that is used to express emotional bonding with their homeland (Rofil et al., 2016; Widodo, 2017; Yeoh & Huang, 2000). These bonding is involving homeland's emotion and expressing in many particular ways. They could not easily forget their "home" as early life experiences. However, in the other side, they still have to adapt to the social environment far from their homeland.

Diaspora phenomena will further be seen as playing a role in promoting the identity of a nation. They are also enhancing the reputation of a nation (Clancy, 2011; Hartoni et al., 2019). Many studies have shown that these patron means that being diaspora does not mean forgotten their former or original identity (Effendi, 2016; Narottama & Sudarmawan, 2017; Widodo, 2017). They are still admitting as part of their nation or homeland.

Unfortunately, only several research findings have revealed how the Indonesian diaspora maintaining their Indonesian identity (Harijanti et al., 2018; Oktafiani, 2019; Rofil et al., 2016) and also in exploring how diaspora's expression for being Indonesian on YouTube channel, such as on how young Chinese-Indonesian on YouTube (Susilo & Sugihartati, 2020). Thus, studying on how Indonesia women from mixed families and theirs YouTube would be an alternative point of view to discuss further.

The purpose of this research study is to portray how Indonesian diaspora women revealing their nationality within video YouTube content. We try to explore ordinary Indonesian diaspora women who have been labeled as YouTubers and have lots of

subscribers. They are sharing ideas about their activities and also their role in the particular social-cultural background through their own lens. They are making and sharing daily life videos which represents their appreciation of life in their YouTube channel. This can be acknowledged as unique reality on how living abroad through daily learning processes making adjustment within new different society.

### Methods

This research approach was empirical qualitative descriptive. Qualitative research involved the importance of contextualized analysis for understanding what is behind the video content creator's head (Virginia & Victoria, 2013). This is underlying our working by using qualitative content analysis to some YouTube videos. Data is collected from 10 (ten) videos open for public, which are belongs to Indonesian diaspora women on their YouTube channel. It is also determined by the number of subscribers which reached approximately more than 1 (one) million, and marital status. We filtered it by identifying the performance and the uniqueness which can be easily recognized. Then, we analyzed its content based on some categories which have been used in discussing blog and wikis (Myers, 2010).

There are 4 (four) aspects which provide clear and simple distinction content videos such as; 1) geographic location; 2) use of time; 3) target reader; 4) opinion construction. These categorizations are used to parse every video's and coded to be analyzed. We also gave attention to every additional elements/attributes such as gestures, reactions, other people comments, as well as clothes, applied tools, and others things. Then, we discussed every videos in order to have deeply understanding from its contextual within.

### Results

In this research, we had 2 (two) data source among Indonesian diaspora women YouTuber. The first YouTuber; Trisna Leunufna Matasik. Vlogger called her as '*Kak Ina.*' Her YouTube channel is '*Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman*' (Happy family in Germany). Her family rooted is from Papua. She married with Paul Keller from Germany. Now they live in Germany and have 1 (one) daughter. At the time of this study, she has 2.93 million subscribers.



Figure 1. Trisna Leunufna Matasik and family  
(source: [youtube.com/c/KeluargaBahagiaDiJerman/videos](https://www.youtube.com/c/KeluargaBahagiaDiJerman/videos))

The second YouTuber' Nikmatul Rosidah. Her YouTube channel is Dobson's Kitchen & Family Activities. Her family rooted is from Blitar, East Jawa Indonesia. She

married with Paul Dobson from Canada. Now, they live in Hongkong and have 3 (three) children. At the time of this study, she has 1.6 million subscribers.



Figure 2. Nikmatul Rosidah and Family  
(source: [youtube.com/c/NikmatulRosidah/videos](https://youtube.com/c/NikmatulRosidah/videos))

At this time, it probably has more numbers of videos and subscribers. However, we were conducting this research while there were more than 187 videos from the 1st YouTuber channels and 1.322 videos from the second YouTuber channels. Among them, we filtered videos from its catchy video's title, representation of Indonesian culture, the amount of subscriber which exceeds more than one million, the number of views and comments which exceeds more than two hundred.

We also observed the attractiveness video content that indicated being proud to be the Indonesian nation, despite being married and living in another country. We also found video's content that is closely related to Indonesian culture according to their experiences while visiting their homeland Indonesia.

We examined it by video location, moment or time background, target viewer, and on how YouTubers convey the message or information. From these categories, we find out material or emotional bonding construction for being Indonesian diaspora women. The summary of 10 videos content analysis of *'Keluarga Bahagia di Germany'* and *'Dobson's Kitchen & Family Activities'* is as follows:

*Site Location:* amples of their video's content show that the geographic location shown in the videos were in Asia, Europe, and Canada. The background of videos is generally located around the house such as their living room, family room, bedroom, kitchen, workspace, and the terrace and yard. There are also some which is located outside their home, such as at shopping store to buy family needs, at pathway to go to schools, and or in other family recreation areas.



Figure 3. In the Backyard with Friends (source: [youtube.com/watch?v=gVL\\_qdoX8Xk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=gVL_qdoX8Xk))

Sometimes she shows the backyard or public area, near public roads or city parks with family and friends. The second YouTuber lives in Hongkong. She shows video while she and her family are living in Hongkong. There are also videos while they were in Blitar (Nikmatul home town). Besides that, she also shows video while they were traveling together to Winnipeg-Canada for her husband, Paul's for family reunion.



Figure 4. At Home with Family (source: [youtube.com/watch?v=IVjAw7TU9\\_I](https://youtube.com/watch?v=IVjAw7TU9_I))

*Use of Time:* Their video's content noticed that time is important for family togetherness and happiness. Every time is the best moment for taking care of the family. Every moment in the video's content shows golden moments for engaging closed relationship. The activities are such as while shopping, preparing food supplies, preparing food to eat together for lunch or dinner, or when family's gathering with friends or neighbors. There are also special moments such as family birthdays, or scary moment while one of their family members was seriously ill.

For example, reviewing many different culinary together with her husband are special moments for first YouTuber, while for second YouTuber is tasting food and or chit chat using Java language (Blitar). Besides, there is also another special moment while waiting for children back home from school, or waiting for husbands from his office. She likes to enjoy there moments especially while looking the afternoon scenery.

*Target Viewer:* Their video's content does not specifically targetting on particular age or group. All ages can watch it. The contents also do not specified sex or contain adult-specific viewing elements. It mostly contains many elements of entertainment, by telling family life. Besides, it appears that there is no well-done editing process before uploading it into the channel.

Most of first YouTuber viewers are younger Indonesian people who have been living in Indonesia before, and some who have been living in Europe before, such as, Netherlands, and Germany. Meanwhile, most of second YouTuber viewers are housewives and Indonesian workers who mostly are in Hongkong, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, China, Japan.

*Opinion Construction:* from this research, it can be resumed that the video's content contains message about pleasant and or sometimes bitter things. The construction of utterance messages is expressing natural emotion, compliment, or opinion to their families. Some videos are showing about how they were in the middle of comparing difference habits which are also happened in Indonesia. In this kind of situation, they are showing tolerant attitude sand trying to embrace it.

Furthermore, the symbols or non-verbal messages within video's content are typical Indonesia. It also appeared for cuisines or food recipes that are served. For example, how to use stones to demolish many spices. It is a tool that commonly used by Indonesian

housewife's for preparing food in the kitchen. There are also some ingredients that are not available abroad, but it can be resolved by being creative or trying to find other which is almost in similar taste.

The first YouTuber communicates with a cheerful personality, shows flexibility, or easy to adapt and shows more self-confidence. She is proud of being an East Indonesian and as Papua's ethnicity. She is able to make laugh at her indigenous accent while she could not pronounce words properly. It makes the video's content turn into a unique and interesting.

Meanwhile, the second YouTuber communicates with calm personality and showing her maternal, sometimes showing humble, and grumbling with her ethnic language (Java language). It usually cannot be easy to understand for her children. Unlike the first YouTuber, sometimes she shows reluctantly and less self-confident while she could not say something in Indonesian language but more fluent to mention it in her ethnic language (Java). It makes the video's content interesting and fun seeing her faults pronounce and or showing family's desperate while hearing Java's language.

Within the video's content, there are two or three daily languages which are used at the same time. Others than Bahasa Indonesia, they occasionally are using Java and or Papua ethnic languages. The combination of it seemed natural and nice blended. Their husbands and children are also occasionally appeared tried to follow their mother.

## Discussion

Everyday people communicate each other. Communication is a process that each individual participates in conveying information messages. They exchange information to fill up their life through communication activities. Those are usually symbolized in the form of written and unwritten symbols to change behavior. Our research finding indicated that there are kind of communication patterns that was constructed within families. They communicate each other with symbols, language, and also gestures within their owned negotiated meaningful communication.

Being far away from homeland was very challenging for people who are living abroad. This is also happened for women diaspora who are living in outside their homeland. They are facing resisting conflict, within family or in social neighborhood. However there was no turning back and have to keep struggling to live abroad (Akua-Sakyiwah, 2016; Fabos, 2012; McLaurin-Jones et al., 2020; Sabri et al., 2015). However, within these research findings it can be showed that Indonesian diaspora women perform their abilities to deal with difficulties while making adjustment and accepting life habits differences. We assume that they are getting through it by managing and maintaining particular pattern communication while interaction.

The nuances of loved and happy cheerfulness mostly coloring in each location as the background videos. Besides video's message contents are delivering opinion which are construction that everyday is blessed with optimistic energy. They are showing their role as housewives who playing centered person's. They are able to bring bright ideas and natural happiness for every person who get involved with in videos context. These notions seem also perceived by for viewers which are only connected with internet. Occasionally, video's contents are made inspired by viewers or fulfilled viewers' request. Thus, targeted viewers are those who can give responses and appreciating properly also greeting each other and becoming virtually friends.

These are in line with research finding that there are communication patters in the mix culture family (Indriani & Mulyana, 2021) The use of languages in their daily conversation clearly shows nation's identity. They use it while prompting comments which are pronounced with thick unique accents. So that it can be easily identified from words and accents that it is from Indonesian culture. The use of this mixed language is unique and sounds funny. Of course, these unusual actions will entertain viewers. It is interesting and amusement and thus will urge viewers to keep subscribe and follow the YouTube channel continuously.

The unspoken homesickness as Indonesian was paid off by sharing symbols and exchange information their mixed life identity through natural daily life stories in YouTube channel. It reinforced their existence in their community and also in virtual community. Thus, they are also potential to induce their participation to promote the Indonesian digital diaspora. They create messages which are containing on how they can manipulate and encounter differences. Therefore, they make used of YouTube as media for recognition of their effort for having happiness of life. Hence, it can trigger stimulant ideas that 'living abroad is not difficult, it is pleasing!' It's like a kind of self-affirming of their existing in society. Some kind of message to the world that they are not facing difficult problems even though they are living far away from family and beloved homeland.

The national representation as Indonesian can be also easily identified through daily conversations. In this research, two of Indonesia's women YouTubers are come from different ethnic. It can be seen from how to make food and enjoy eating food. Gastro approach seems the most effective ways to build fuse relationship or break awkward situation (Hariyatmi, 2019; Hartoni et al., 2019; Narottama & Sudarmawan, 2017). There are also showing their abilities to manage family's time, such as while travelling to their hometown, or visiting relatives, and building friendship with neighbors, friends, and colleagues. It can be inferred that they are showing harmony even though they are facing different culture or habits backgrounds. It can be also revealed that their happiness not only can be built from romantic relationships, but also from resolving conflict among families, through special events, or scary moments.

One of the advantages for diaspora Indonesia women YouTuber, who married and live abroad, is their potentiality to promote Indonesian culture through their daily life activities. They promote Indonesian culture through the Indonesian language, or their ethnics that they use, for examples Indonesian cuisine, and daily culture habits from Indonesia, etc. They can adapt to their husband's family, habits, and the new environment without losing her pride for being Indonesian. It is all a set of show emotional bonding as part of the Indonesian nation

Indonesian diaspora women, who use social media such as YouTube, have great potentiality in promoting Indonesian culture actively. This is also happened by other Indonesian diasporas, such as students or foreign workers (Effendi, 2016; Muhidin & Utomo, 2016; Romdiati, 2015; Widodo, 2017). They can describe and explain their life detailly through interesting stories which impulse responses from their viewers. They also can show their flexibility's acts to unite two different cultures in one harmonious family.

Their proudness reflection as Indonesian nationalism can be seen through their attitude, believe, attribute or tools day used in every day activities which is very Indonesian. They are using symbol cultures which are very unique. It can be inferred even though they are not fluent in Indonesian, they still can blend in with the culture and



society of the Indonesian environment. In sum, overall harmony of the story presented in YouTube videos are some kind of communication products. They create contents about their life as something to be shown and entertain others. Therefore, it should be carefully delivered. Creating content for viewer can be more important than their current reality of life. Being famous as entertainer could be overlooked. Their revealed reality that might not be real. It is called concoction of perception and fantasy of life expectancy (Debord, 1967; Papacharissi, 2002). Our research findings showed that in their daily role videos mostly relating to domestic place and responsible for taking care of their families. They are managing and taking care of their home, cooking, taking care of their husband and children with love. However, they showed it in a different way. They create it in their unique and modern style.

The expected role or traits, attitudes, and behaviors that are considered to be characteristic of women are the result of 'social learning' from the surrounding environment. It has also happened with Indonesian diaspora women. Understanding women's roles in society can be reviewed from social expectations associated with feminism and masculinity. It is stereotyping or socially constructed as something which has been accepted and understood within society. It is kind of social guide that men and women should be carried out for daily attitude and behavior. These expectations can vary depending on the collective agreement that is enforced in a social-cultural system. Therefore, each culture has its own values, norms, or rules that differ from one another while regulating life expectations for men and women in society.

In fact, this study has limitations exploring 2 (two) YouTuber profiles which are considered to represent part of Indonesian diasporas. There are more videos and channels which can be research's objects. Besides, the weakness of the results only gave us many indications at the surface level and could not be generalized. Diaspora from different ethnicities or nations has their own uniqueness. Thus, this finding provides possibility for further elaboration.

## **Conclusion**

This research study concludes that Indonesian diaspora women make use of YouTube channel as a medium to show their constructed meaning expressions. It reinforced their existence as Indonesian while living abroad. Their YouTube's video contents indicated negotiation construction for showing love and caring to their homeland and recent locations, and also their acceptance to blend with local identities. Being an Indonesian nationality was represented by attaching attributes or symbols which were used in describing daily's family life. The pride to be an Indonesian was also affected their husband and continuously developed in their family. Besides, along with promoting Indonesian cultures, there is also potentiality for women's re-inforcement in domestic role. The video's contents can be an alternative entertainment references for anyone who wants to know how to adapt living abroad through learning process. It can be a guide for making adjustment within new habit in the different society. However, this research is only preliminary research. The limited findings will challenge the need for further research elaboration by using other methods. It will be interesting to learn on how Indonesian diaspora spread across in many countries from different points of views. There will be lots of discourses about how to come up with tolerance upon differences, promoting nation to others, interaction between local community, also on how integrating indigenous culture, as well as on how their participation in social actions.

### Conflict of Interest

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organization related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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