

## Fame-Led to Sympathy: Content Analysis of Felicya Angelista's Statement Related to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Using Roland Barthes Semiotic Approach

<http://dx.doi.org/10.25008/jkiski.v9i1.1017>

Husen Mony<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Ivanaldy Kabul<sup>1</sup>, Angkie Yudistia<sup>1</sup>, Nurhajati Lestari<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Doctoral Program of Communication, LSPR Communication and Business Institute

Jl. KH. Mas Mansur Kav. 35, Jakarta 10220 - Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Communication Science, Universitas Sahid

Jl. Prof. Dr. Soepomo No. 84, Jakarta 12870 - Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: [23284010008@lspr.edu](mailto:23284010008@lspr.edu)

Submitted: May 10, 2024, Revised: May 32, 2024, Accepted: June 5, 2024

Accredited by Kemdikbudristek No. 152/E/KPT/2023

**Abstract** - The video of Felicya Angelista discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict sparked controversy, with criticism directed at her for seemingly supporting Israel. The use of the word "war" without context and footage of Hamas attacking Israeli citizens contributed to this backlash, leading to calls to boycott Scarlett products. This research, utilizing Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory, aimed to analyze the denotation, connotation, and myths within the video's text, assessing its impact on Felicya's reputation and Scarlett products. Qualitative content analysis was conducted using data from Felicya's Instagram videos, netizen comments, and online news reports. The findings revealed denotatively that Felicya is crying and wiping her tears, Israeli civilians attacked by Hamas, and Felicya stood on humanity and peace. The denotational meanings were Felicya expressed sadness for the victims especially parents and children, and Felicya appearing neutral. However, connotatively, she was perceived to support Israel. Myths surrounding the expression of sadness, artists' involvement in the conflict, and the conflict's religious nature were also identified. The video faced criticism from netizens, leading to calls for boycotting Scarlett products due to Felicya's perceived alignment with Israel. In summary, while the video portrayed Felicya's neutrality denotatively, it connotatively suggested support for Israel, contributing to backlash and calls for boycotts.

**Keywords:** Scarlett; Israel-Palestine conflict; Roland Barthes; The video of Felicya; Content Analysis

### Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict often invites multiple and mixed reactions from the international public (Azra et al., 2024). Some requests a ceasefire, while condemning Israel's behavior as the colonizer of Palestine. However, others consider what Israel is conducting is a form of retaliation for Palestinian actions (in this case exercised by Hamas) to them.

Multiple expressions arising due to the division in society in viewing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are also present in the Indonesian context. Though the majority of Indonesians are Muslim, this reality does not necessarily mean that people fully support Palestine or blame Israel. In Indonesia, there are some community groups, taking side and supporting Israel.

Wibowo et al., (2024) argued that public discourse in response to the boycott of Israeli products by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) is divided into two, supporting and rejecting the boycott. These findings confirm that the Indonesians are also divided in responding to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A research conducted by Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMCR) reveals the same

findings, although these are with a different focus. In its findings regarding public attitudes in Indonesia, SMCR showed that 65% of respondents agree that the conflict is a conflict between Jews and Muslims. Also, 14% had the opposite view, but 22% abstained (Islamiati & Rijal, 2022). Indeed, among the “face-to-face” sides diametrically, other groups also emerge. This group stands neutral and is concerned about voicing the cease-fire through its public statements.

Various views, attitudes, and actions in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict intersect in public discourse in Indonesia. Many groups take part in the discussion. They include officials, political elites, public figures, intellectuals and academics, clergy, pupils and students, activists, celebrities, and the general public.

The group supporting Palestine and condemning Israel’s attitude can clearly be identified. In contrast, the group “supporting” Israel is difficult to observe. Recently, this group still often “hides” when expressing their views in public. In fact, the same situation is also seen from those taking a neutral stance.

Felicya Angelista is one of the celebrities expressing her public views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The video displaying her statement about the conflict has raised pros and cons among the public. It has received 76,000 comments on her Instagram account.

Analysis of the video places Felicya’s dynamic position in viewing the incident. In her first appearance, Felicya took a position as a “neutral” party. This could be seen from her message calling for ceasing the war via a video, uploaded to her Instagram account @felicyangelista.

*“Saya berdoa untuk adanya upaya gencatan senjata supaya terjadi perdamaian dan peperangan ini bisa berhenti”* (I pray for a ceasefire so that there can be peace and this war can end).

Contrary to Felicya’s position, most people actually saw that Felicya had been more supportive of Israel. The public objected to the use of the diction “war”, instead of genocide, displayed in the video of her statement. The use of the word “war” did not explain the actual situation of the occurring events. This public logic was reinforced by Felicya’s video, showing news footage of Hamas bombing and attacking Israel.

Responding to these pros and cons, Felicya made a clarification video, essentially apologizing for not seeing the occurring events between Israel and Palestine as a form of genocide as wished by the public on social media. In her clarification video, Felicya emphasized her position that she supported Palestinian independence.

The emerging pros and cons as excesses from the video lead to the issue of Felicya’s reputation as a person (in terms of her capacity as a public figure) and Scarlett’s reputation as her business activity. Being a public figure, Felicya is seen as confronting with Palestine, supporting Israel attacks, not empathizing with the suffering of Palestinians, etc. These accusations have flooded the comments column on her social media account. In the business context, in this case a skin care company with the Scarlett brand, there have been calls for a boycott from various groups. Artists, using Scarlett products, such as Sazkia Adya Mecca, have also announced the boycott. The calls for boycott have echoed on social media, becoming a trending topic on Twitter.

Both Israeli supporters and neutral party often appear to be careful in expressing messages to the public. The use of words, diction, sentences, gestures, facial expressions, and clothes is designed in such a way so as to avoid errors in meaning before the public, as the recipient of the message.

According to the researcher’s view, the emergence of pros and cons over the video of Felicya’s statement deals with a communication issue related to the interpretation of the meaning of the message. Some netizens believe that Felicya’s statement and the signs in the video indicated support for the genocide committed by Israel. This certainly contradicts the wishes and hopes of the Indonesians, who make up the majority of Muslims supporting Palestine as a form of Muslim solidarity.

Talani et al., (2023) conducted a research on the use of semiotics as an interpretive science in media and communication studies. In their findings, the use of semiotics as the science of interpreting text messages is generally conducted to study two forms of messages, such as verbal and non-verbal messages. Non-verbal messages are signals, and include images, advertisements, films, etc.

From the background, this research aims to: (1) understand the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth in Felicya Angelista’s video statement regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; (2) comprehend the implications of the video statement for Felicya’s reputation; and, (3) know the

implications of the video statement on Scarlett's reputation.

This research is relevant to this study because it explores the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a communication perspective, relating to efforts to uncover the meanings of messages produced or reproduced by the public. Apart from that, at the social level, this study also wants to examine the implications of the messages produced and reproduced on reputation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study of the meaning of messages and signs from human communication actions often uses semiotics as a theoretical argument. Semiotics is a science that studies signs with their function and meaning in the context of their production and reproduction (Kevinia et al., 2022). Roland Barthes is a theoretician studying semiotics. According to him, language is a symbolic system that humans use to understand the world. The language system is composed of text, where Barthes comprehending text refers to everything that can be interpreted linguistically (Abdillah, 2024).

Specifically, Barthes developed the views of his teacher, Ferdinand de Saussure, on the signified and the signifier, where he focused on looking at the interaction between the text and the user's experience or interaction with the "agreed" and expected meaning of the text. Barthes used the terms denotation (true meaning) and connotation (double meaning that arose from cultural interactions and personal experience). Therefore, this understanding was called "order of significance" (Rahayu, 2020). Connotation, by Barthes, is seen as an ideological operationalization, which provides a concept that he called myth.

Myths have the function of revealing and providing justification for the dominant values that prevail in a certain period (Nasirin & Pithaloka, 2022). The various signs produced by Felicya in her statement video about the Israeli-Palestinian situation, has caused controversy. The video statement raises differences in meaning among the public. Video (with multiple "signs") as a signified raises issues from the signifier side. This problem has implications for the reputation of sign producer—and her businesses.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary in 1970, reputation is related to how the public evaluates it (Ratnasari & Suradika, 2020). This means that reputation is not attached to the object being "appraised" but rather to the mind of the appraiser. When a company processes information perfectly about something, the company's reputation will be good before its stakeholders (Afifah, 2022).

Various messages delivered on social media inevitably lead to a process of contestation of information and message of its content. Information contestation cannot be avoided because, on social media, every user can produce and distribute content and has a great influence on the opinions of other users (Nasrullah & Gustini, 2022).

According to Sulyatingnas (Meyunis & Rahayunianto, 2021), the task of the company's leadership, when the company already has a good reputation, is to maintain, build, or continue that reputation, through various activities to form a distinctive identity and activities that are consistent with its public image. Thus, the media must manage social media seriously to build the company's image. Companies use social media as a strategy to communicate with the public, including building public opinion (Diniati et al., 2023).

### **Material and Methodology**

This research employed a content analysis method with a qualitative approach. The collected data was *post-facto*, such as: (1) primary data, including a video of Felicya Angelista's statement regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; (2) netizens' comments (comprising of words, videos, memes/images) in the video comment column and those spreading on social media; and (3) mass media coverage regarding Felicya's statement and the involved controversy.

Data collection was conducted through observation and documentation studies. To answer the research problem formulation, two data analysis methods were used. To answer the first research objective, multimodality analysis was used with an approach to Barthes' semiotic analysis. Multimodality analysis was an analytical method used to understand communication through expressing text in language, audio, visual and gesture (Abdullah et al., 2020).

Every mode used to reveal meaning (in a communication act), for example visual, linguistic, audio, gesture, and other technical modes, was part of multimodality analysis (Raharjo et al., 2020).

Operationally, to understand the meaning in Felicya’s statement video, Roland Barthes’ semiotic analysis was employed. Semiotics was used to reveal the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth(Kusuma & Nurhayati, 2017, contained in the text in Felicya’s statement video, such as statements, gestures, and expressions, clothing, visuals, and audio.

**Result and Discussion**

*Denotation and Connotation Analysis*

The following are the results of an analysis of the denotation, connotation, and myth of the video created and uploaded by Felicya Angelista’s Instagram account on October 7, 2023. The upload contained the artist’s and public figure’s perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**Table 1.** The meaning of Felicya's black shirt

Text	Meaning of text	
	Denotation	Connotation
The black shirt worn by Felicya	Referring to dark colors in a color spectrum, and light absorbing color	Feelings sadness and sorrow, description of her feelings regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict


Source: researcher’s analysis

**Table 2.** Meaning of Audio (Song)

Text	Meaning of text	
	Denotation	Connotation
Background song for the video was “we are the world” (audio)	War causing damage to the world, and love and feelings healing such damage	The Israeli-Palestinian conflict had brought damage to both countries, so it must be ceased immediately


Source: researcher’s analysis

**Table 3.** Meaning of Gestures

Text	Meaning of text	
	Denotation	Connotation
Gesture “crying” and wiping tears 	Tears flowing from Felicya’s eyes, and wiping out from her face	Felicya’s expression of sadness and sorrow for the victims, especially parents and children who were actually innocent.

Source: researcher’s analysis

**Table 4.** Meaning of Video footage

Text	Meaning of text	
	Denotation	Connotation
Video footage of “Israeli civilians attacked by Hamas” (visual). 	Israeli civilians run for their life after Hamas attacked and killed the Mayor.	The “war” waged by Hamas brought casualties to Israeli civilians.

Source: researcher’s analysis

**Table 5.** Meaning of Song (audio)

Text	Meaning of text	
	Denotation	Connotation
“I stand with peace and humanity. God bless you all” (audio)	Felicya stood for humanity and world peace	Felicya did not take sides, whatever the reason, nothing good would come from this conflict. The main focus was peace.

Source: researcher's analysis

In general, the meaning of the denotation appearing in the video of Felicya's statement was that she took a neutral position and stood above humanity and world peace. Meanwhile, the connotation emerging from the video was that Felicya did not sympathize with the suffering of Palestinians.

### Myth Analysis

According to Budiman (Wahyuningsih, 2024), Barthes did not see myth as a reality, but a communication system (message). Its function was to reveal and provide justification for the dominant values prevailing in a certain period of time.

Having looked at the denotation and connotation aspects of the text in Felicya Angelista's video statement, a number of myths that were intended to be conveyed was seen in the foregoing tables: expression of sadness, such as crying would generate public support; the use of audio (music) and visuals to support a communication action would gain public support; the world community had to live in peace and avoid war; artists or public figures speaking out on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would receive public support; to voice world peace, we had to take sides or take a neutral position; and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was not a religious conflict.

Roland Barthes, who was a major figure in semiotics, defined semiotics as a science that is used to interpret signs. The meaning of signs can be explored in songs, dialogue, musical notes, logos, images, facial expressions, and gesture. Color, as an element of an image, is also a sign that has meaning.

Azra stated that the meaning of black can be different depending on the wearer. People can interpret the philosophy of black in clothing as a symbol of mourning (Azra et al., 2024). Hence, the black shirt worn by Felicya became a non-verbal communication, which was connotatively expressed to convey the meaning of her condolences for the current conditions caused by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This meaning was also reinforced connotatively through other signs, such as the choice of background song. According to Safitri (2020), music is initially only used for traditional ceremonies and rituals, but it has become a medium for expressing and communicating expressions that also reflect the culture of the supporting community.

The song “We are the World” was created in 1985 by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie, and involved world singers as a symbol of unity to help combat the famine that hit Ethiopia at that time. By using this song, Felicya intended to adopt the meaning and spirit, which connotatively showed that this was the time to reunite and reach out for peace.

In his research, (Al-Amhar et al., 2022) set forth that a public figure is someone who can be a role model for someone's behavior and has a place to voice his/her voice. As a figure having a large support base, the words or actions of a public figure have a tremendous impact.

Felicya was certainly aware of the influence she had, and used it to express her views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Felicya's statement provoked criticism from netizens, because she used the word “war” instead of the word “genocide”, which she felt better to explain the existing reality.

According to Indonesian Dictionary (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia/KBBI*), war is hostility between two countries (nations, religions, tribes, etc.) or a large armed battle between two or more troops. Meanwhile, according to KBBI, genocide means the planned mass murder of a nation or race. Reporting from Kompas.tv, the number of civilian casualties resulting from Israel's attacks on Gaza and statements by Israeli officials to Palestine showed genocidal intentions and actions in accordance with international law. This was also in line with the CNN media post, which stated that Israel's attacks on Palestinians since October 7, 2023 portrayed genocide and efforts to exterminate a group. Thus, the use of the term “war” caused netizens to indicate that Felicya was pro-Israel.

In addition, it was reinforced by video footage, showing Israeli citizens running due to Hamas attacks. Connotatively, the video displayed that a conflict inevitably brought losses to the confronting parties and sacrificing innocent parties. However, this video was also what increasingly made netizens think that Felicya took side with Israel.

Emotional interaction occurred when individuals made contact with each other by expressing their feelings. For example, shedding tears as a sign of sadness, emotion, or extremely happiness (Afifah, 2022). The expressions and tears flowing from Felicya, while talking about the conflict and associating herself as a parent who had lost a child and a child who had lost a parent, contained connotations that showed Felicya's sadness and her ability to feel deep empathy for every innocent victim.

Also, it depicted a meaning telling about Felicya's encouragement and motivation to speak up, pray, and join hands to fight for humanity and peace. Denotatively, Felicya expressed the feeling through her closing sentence, such as "I stand with peace and humanity".

Connotatively, Felicya showed that her side was with peace and humanity, not with the parties involved in the conflict, and only wanted to focus on helping the victims. However, the use of the term "war", and the video error, had made netizens, confidently, assume that Felicya actually had a covert side with Israel. The Indonesian government which clearly supported Palestinian independence, doubled with various personal reasons from netizens who supported Palestine, had caused Felicya and Scarlett to receive a massive negative sentiment.

### *Implications for Felicya's Reputation*

Based on netizens' comments, the researcher tracked the implications of the video on Felicya's reputation. Many accounts attacked Felicya's personality with negative language. For example, the comment from the @zahrabafagiih account saying "look for safety" and it was liked by more than two thousand accounts, and the comment from the @saungbantal account felt that Felicya's feelings of sadness and empathy were just a fabrication:

"Oh gosh...blaming h4mas. If you support Israel, you're embarrassed. Acting is tired. Where are you crying about? Please imagine if the Dutch returned to Indonesia with a claim that this is on the land we own. Katulampa Dam, he didn't build it. It is said that the Criminal Code was also a Dutch legacy, and old buildings, sugar factory. Do you think they'll fight? Or we just give houses and land voluntarily to the Dutch?"

Those who were disappointed with the content uploaded by Felicya also gave various reactions, such as deciding to unfollow Felicya's Instagram account so that Felicya had to study the context of what really happened before opening her voice as a public figure.

"This is not a war anymore, but a massacre, try studying history again, sist", "fix unfollow, this is genocide!!!", "at least, making research first, sist, it looks one-sided."



**Figure 1.** Screenshot of Felicya's video

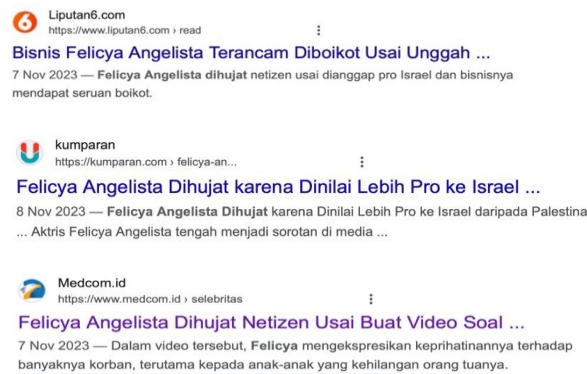
Source: Instagram @felicyangelista\_

### Implications for Scarlett's Reputation

Besides having implications on her personal reputation, the upload also had implications on the company with the Scarlett brand, owned by Felicya. Nurhadi (2024), in his article, showed the movement to boycott Israeli products had a huge impact on Unilever which saw its market capitalization declining drastically to only IDR 99.19 trillion from IDR 134.67 trillion previously. Similar conditions also affected other products, affiliated or suspected of being affiliated with Israel. As a result of her post, considered pro-Israel, Scarlett Whitening, a business owned by Felicya Angelista, was also considered affiliated with Israel, which caused a movement to boycott Scarlett products.

Netizens were busy calling for the hashtag #boycottscarlett with various expressions of disappointment. It could be seen from the comments on the account @akukuat\_001 "BOIKOTT SCARLEETTT", liked by more than 7,000 accounts and received responses from more than 68 comments. The #boycottscarlett movement was also widely discussed on other social media, such as Twitter (X) and Tiktok. The content depicted discharging Scarlett products as a humanitarian movement. Zaskia Mecca, a fellow artist using Scarlett, also declared that she would stop being a consumer.

Apart from that, calls for boycott of Scarlett products also appeared in news headlines of the mass media (online media) with negative frames towards Felicya and Scarlett. Below are several online media headlines with negative frames.



**Figure 2:** Screenshot of online media headlines  
Source: Liputan6.com, Kumparan.com, Medkom.id

### Conclusions

The conclusion of this research is the denotational meaning that appears in the video of Felicya's statement that she has taken a neutral stance and stood on humanity and world peace. Meanwhile, the connotation that emerges from the video is that Felicya has not sympathized with the suffering of Palestinians. The revealed myths are that expression of sadness, such as crying, will have generated public support; the world community must live in peace and avoid war; artists or public figures who speak out on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will have gained public support; and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has not been a religious conflict.

### References

- Abdillah, E.M. (2024). Analisis Makna Bahasa Slogan "Untuk Islam yang Satu" pada Rasio Silaturahmi Teori Semiotika Roland Barthes. *Ittishal: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Media*, 1(1), 56-71.
- Abdullah, N. I., Sarudin, A., Osman, Z., & Mohamed Redzwan, H. F. (2020). Elemen multimodaliti dalam karya kartun menerusi mod linguistik dan mod visual. *Rumpun Jurnal Persuratan Melayu*, 8(2), 28-39
- Afifah, A. (2022). Pengaruh Interaksi Sosial Teman Sebaya terhadap Tingkah Laku Salah Suai Peserta Didik di Kelas XI IPS SMAN 2 Tebo. *Jurnal Riset Ilmu Pendidikan*, 2(1), 9-14.
- Al-Amhar, H. (2022). Peran Public Figure dalam Mendukung Gerakan Kesetaraan Gender. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Ilmu-ilmu Sosial Universitas Negeri Surabaya*, pp. 1-10.



- Diniati, A., Setyawan, K. T., & Lestari, M. T. (2023). Instagram Social Media as Peruri's Public Relations Strategy in Communicating with the Public. *Jurnal Komunikasi Ikatan Sarjana Komunikasi Indonesia*, 8(1), 250-264.
- Ismiati, W., Rijal, S. (2022). Memahami Konflik Palestina-Israel dalam Bingkai Berita NU Online. *Jurnal Studi Jurnalistik*, 4(20), 1-18.
- Kevinia, C., Syahara, P., Aulia, S., Astari, T. (2022). Analisis Teori Semiotika Roland Barthes dalam Film Miracle in Cell No.7 Versi Indonesia. *Journal of Communication Studies and Society*, 1(2), 38-43.
- Meyunis., Rahayuniato, A. (2021). Strategi Komunikasi Unite Dance Work (UDW) Dancers dalam Membangun Reputasi. *Jurnal The Source*, 3(2), 46-62.
- Nasirin, C., Phitaloka, D. (2022). Analisis Semiotika Konsep Kekerasan dalam Film The Raid 2: Berandal. *Journal of Discourse and Media Research*, 1(1). 28-43
- Nasrullah, R., & Gustini, D. (2022). Digital Speech Acts on Social Media: The Content Ethnographic of Audiences Response to the Publication of Illegal Online Loans on @Ojkindonesia's Instagram Account. *Jurnal Komunikasi Ikatan Sarjana Komunikasi Indonesia*, 7(2), 450-459
- Raharjo, A. R., Hidayat, D. N., Alek, A., & Jalil, N. (2020). Multimodal Analysis of Wardah Lipstick Advertisement. *Elite: English and Literature Journal*, 7(2), 149-159. <https://doi.org/10.24252/10.24252/elite.v7i2a4>
- Rahayu, M. (2020). Mythology of Career Woman in Hijab Film (Study of Roland Barthes Semiotic Analysis). *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)*, 4(7), 80-86.
- Ratnasari, L & Suradika, A. (2020). Membangun Reputasi Sekolah Islam di Kalangan Kelas Menengah Muslim. *Perspektif Komunikasi: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Politik dan Komunikasi Bisnis*, 4(1), 18-29.
- Safitri, A. (2022). Pesan Dakwah dan Kritik Sosial pada Lirik Lagu: Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes pada Lirik Lagu “Haluan” Barasuara. Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga.
- Talani, N.S., Kamuli, S., & Juniarti, G. (2023). Problem Tafsir Semiotika dalam Kajian Media dan Komunikasi: Sebuah Tinjauan Kritis. *Jurnal Magister Ilmu Komunikasi Bricalage*, 9(1), 103-115.
- Wibowo, P., Hapsari, R.D., & Ascha, M.C. (2024). Respon Publik terhadap Fatwa Boikot Produk Israel oleh Majelis Ulama Indonesia. *Journal Publichuo*, 7(1), 382-395.