Virtual Communication Patterns in the Online Game Ragnarok X: Next Generation in Developing Game Strategies: A Netnographic Study of the Nazarik Community on Discord

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Abstract: This study explores the communication patterns of the Nazarik Guild community within the online game Ragnarok X: Next Generation by examining their interactions through Discord. Using a netnographic approach conducted from July 21, 2021, to March 3, 2023, the research focuses on how virtual communication structures shape group coordination, solidarity, and strategic decision-making. Data were collected through immersive observation and analyzed using Dell Hymes's SPEAKING model, which identifies eight components: Setting, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre. The findings show that the Nazarik Discord community exhibits a consistent all-channel or star communication pattern, where every member, including the leader, can exchange information freely. Communication occurs through text, visuals, Excel spreadsheets, and verbal interactions, indicating a multimodal structure. The Ends of communication emphasize group solidarity and efficiency in game strategy. Discord's open design allows synchronous and asynchronous interaction, fostering participatory leadership and dynamic collaboration. Applying McLuhan's media theory, the study concludes that Discord is not merely a communication tool but a medium that shapes collective behavior, culture, and digital identity within the guild. This research highlights how online platforms function as virtual ecosystems for coordination, socialization, and meaning-making in digital gaming communities.

Keywords: Discord Communication; Virtual Community; SPEAKING Model; Gaming Culture; Netnography

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information technology has significantly transformed the way humans communicate and interact. The transition from conventional media to new media marks a profound shift in communication behavior, where individuals increasingly rely on digital platforms to fulfill their social, professional, and entertainment needs. The emergence of internet-based technology has given rise to the concept of *virtual communication*, which refers to the process of message delivery through internet media or

cyberspace. According to Severin and Tankard, as cited in Wijaya and Paramita (2019), the concept of cyberspace originates from the terms *cybernetics* and *space*, which together describe communication processes that occur virtually via computers within an internet network. Today, the internet has become a modern medium for individuals to build communities in the virtual world. Such virtual communities are formed when users engage in interactive communication with others through technology facilitated by internet connectivity.

The internet allows individuals to share activities, upload personal photos, express emotions and thoughts, and interact with others using various facilities such as email, chat, social media, and online games. It also serves as a medium for commercial and public service advertising. Social media users are not limited by age or social class; instead, they represent diverse demographic and cultural backgrounds. Due to the convenience of these digital features, social media usage continues to increase rapidly each year. Social media has thus become an essential medium for establishing communication with a wide audience quickly and effectively. Information dissemination has become more efficient, enabling real-time interaction and feedback loops among users. However, while social media provides numerous benefits, it also requires responsible use to avoid misuse and misinformation. Proper utilization of social media fosters meaningful interaction and even the formation of communities, particularly in the form of social groups with shared interests or identities.

The growth of virtual reality has facilitated the emergence of various virtual communities that provide new spaces for social interaction. Within these spaces, individuals can establish social relationships with other members through online interactions. These relationships are built on continuous exchanges that take place via internet facilities and digital devices. Virtual communities, or *cyber communities*, are therefore social constructs that emerge within digital environments, enabling members to communicate, collaborate, and share experiences. Rheingold, as cited in Nasrullah (2014), explains that the internet serves as a platform for virtual interaction, where individuals cooperate and engage in emotionally driven communication mediated by digital technology. Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) plays a crucial role in this process, as it allows individuals to exchange information and data through digital devices. CMC thus enables virtual communities to exist and thrive by facilitating interaction independent of geographical and temporal constraints.

Virtual communities are distinct from real-world social groups because their relationships are primarily sustained through continuous online interaction. One of the most visible examples of such communities is found in the gaming ecosystem. Online gaming communities represent a unique intersection between entertainment, technology, and social behavior. According to Neys, Jansz, and Tan (2014), gaming is among the fastest-growing segments in the entertainment industry, characterized by interactivity that creates new challenges and experiences for users. Severin (2005), as cited in Giandi, Mustikasari, and Suprapto (2012), explains that online games are an evolution of traditional computer games, offering internet-based entertainment services where players can connect and communicate in real time. Online games also allow players to adopt fantasy roles and explore interactive virtual worlds with other users. Consequently, gaming communities have become vibrant cultural spaces where members share interests, strategies, and achievements.

The rise of online games has given birth to numerous virtual communities where players interact regularly, developing their own cultures, norms, and communication styles. These communities often extend beyond the games themselves, encompassing discussions, fan creations, and collaborative activities across social media platforms. For instance, studies on *Mobile Legends* players indicate that virtual communication enhances team coordination and strategic performance during gameplay by providing multiple channels for interaction and feedback (Wijaya & Paramita, 2019). Similarly, Trianto (2018), in his study on

communication patterns within the online game *Counter Strike*, found that virtual team communication is characterized by openness, flexibility, and tolerance, allowing players to collaborate effectively to achieve shared goals. These findings underscore how virtual communication fosters cooperation and social cohesion within gaming environments.

Many gamers also leverage social media as an extension of their gaming activities, forming online communities that often number in the hundreds or even thousands. The enthusiasm to join such communities continues to grow alongside technological development. The popularity of online games, particularly Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs), illustrates this phenomenon. MMORPGs allow massive numbers of players to interact within persistent virtual worlds, making them a central pillar of contemporary gaming culture. The genre gained prominence in 2002 with the release of *Ragnarok Online*, developed by Gravity and based on the Korean manhwa *Ragnarok* by Lee Myung-jin. The game was initially launched in South Korea on August 31, 2002, for Microsoft Windows. Two decades later, the game was revived as *Ragnarok X: Next Generation*, jointly developed by Gravity Co., Ltd., and Nuverse, with distribution in Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. Notably, the project involved collaboration with ByteDance, the company behind TikTok, marking a cross-industry partnership between gaming and social media (Giandi et al., 2012).

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated engagement with online gaming. As lockdowns and social restrictions confined people indoors, digital games became a primary form of entertainment and social interaction. According to CNN Indonesia (2020), as cited in Andrew, Eunike, Felicia, and Situmorang (2022), the number of online game players increased by 75% during peak hours, with gameplay duration rising by 47%. This surge was driven by the need for leisure and connection during prolonged periods of isolation. *Ragnarok X: Next Generation* attracted significant attention during this time, amassing over 10 million downloads across Southeast Asia shortly after its release on June 16, 2021. MMORPGs thus represent a paradigm shift in computer gaming, as they integrate persistent social interaction with immersive digital experiences (Giandi et al., 2012).

To better understand how communication unfolds within these virtual environments, the researcher conducted a preliminary interview with Wahyu, the leader of the Nazarik Guild—one of the largest and most competitive *Ragnarok X* communities in Southeast Asia. As of November 2022, Nazarik had 85 active members, with membership continuing to grow. Wahyu described Nazarik as a highly organized guild, with structured activities, scheduled tournaments, and individual performance monitoring. These systems ensure the guild remains competitive and cohesive. Nazarik regularly participates in regional competitions, such as *Kreiger Von Midgard (KVM)*, a 5v5 player-versus-player tournament, where the guild consistently ranks among the top ten in the *Demon Castle* server. Beyond in-game activities, the community has held offline gatherings, including events in Bandung (2015) and Bekasi (2018), reflecting the guild's transition from a purely virtual group to a social community with real-world connections.

However, achieving such organizational stability has not been without challenges. Nazarik maintains a strict code of conduct and disciplinary system to ensure effective teamwork. Central to its success is effective communication among members. Communication in the guild occurs primarily through Discord, a popular digital platform for voice and text interaction. Within the Nazarik community, members frequently post content, share experiences, discuss strategies, and use hashtags to categorize discussions. These hashtags help organize conversations and enable users to locate related content easily. The use of specialized terminology within the community further demonstrates the creation of a shared linguistic identity unique to guild members. Such language variations, common in

online communities, reflect the evolution of digital discourse and identity formation in virtual spaces.

Given this background, the researcher aims to analyze the virtual communication patterns within the *Nazarik Ragnarok X: Next Generation* Discord community. The focus of this research is to examine how communication patterns facilitate teamwork, coordination, and strategic decision-making within the guild. Specifically, the study seeks to address two research questions: (1) How do virtual communication patterns operate within the *Nazarik Ragnarok X: Next Generation* Discord community? and (2) How do members interact with one another in developing game strategies through virtual communication?

In communication studies, the term *pattern* refers to a consistent structure or form within a communication process. Communication itself is the act of sending and receiving messages between two or more people in ways that enable mutual understanding (Bahri, 2004). A communication pattern is thus a process model that represents the interrelation and continuity of communication elements in a systematic and logical manner (Effendy, 2008). Townsend, as cited in Tubbs and Moss (2005), identifies several types of communication networks: the wheel, chain, Y-shaped, circle, and all-channel networks. Each model demonstrates different dynamics of information flow and authority distribution within a group. In virtual contexts, these patterns manifest through online platforms that facilitate multidirectional interaction among members.

Rheingold (1993), as cited in Nasrullah (2013), asserts that the development of new communication media, particularly the internet, has transformed human interaction and created new social phenomena distinct from traditional relationships. The internet serves as a virtual space where individuals collaborate, communicate, and express emotions digitally. According to Robshields (2011), virtual communities exist within the broader framework of digital technology. They represent a form of social organization enabled by information and communication technologies, wherein interactions are both real and mediated. Robshields further explains that virtuality is not merely an incomplete imitation of reality but a genuine manifestation of social existence in a digital form. In this context, virtual communities exemplify a hybrid social reality—simultaneously real in emotional and relational dimensions yet mediated by technological infrastructure.

In conclusion, the evolution of online gaming communities, such as *Nazarik Ragnarok X: Next Generation*, illustrates how virtual spaces have become central to contemporary social interaction. These communities not only enable collaboration and entertainment but also foster new communication patterns that blend technological mediation with human connection. As virtual communities continue to expand, understanding their communication dynamics becomes essential for comprehending how digital interactions shape modern social behavior. This study, therefore, focuses on analyzing the virtual communication patterns within the *Nazarik* community on Discord, emphasizing how technology facilitates coordination, shared identity, and emotional engagement among members.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative netnographic method to explore the virtual communication culture within the Discord community of *Nazarik Ragnarok X: Next Generation*. Netnography, as explained by Kozinets (2020, as cited in Eriyanto, 2021), is a qualitative research approach designed to understand cultural experiences reflected in digital traces, practices, and online systems. These digital traces may include text, graphics, photographs, audiovisual content, music, and commercial advertisements. Such cultural experiences are interpreted through three core elements of netnography: investigation, interaction, and immersion. As an extension of ethnography, the netnographic design allows researchers to observe natural conditions in online communities and cultural environments

(Kozinets, 2010). Netnography replaces traditional fieldwork with computer-mediated communication (CMC) as its primary data environment, emphasizing the study of online cultural interactions (Kozinets, 2010, 2020).

Following Bakry (2011), the netnographic process involves six key stages: research planning, gaining access or permission to enter the community, data collection, data interpretation, adherence to ethical standards, and representation of findings. Netnography relies heavily on CMC as its main data source to achieve ethnographic understanding and cultural representation. It is naturalistic, descriptive, adaptive, and intuitive, emphasizing meaning derived from online behavior and communication. Data collection in this study was conducted within the *Nazarik* Discord community, focusing on how members communicate and build relationships in a virtual environment.

The research subjects were members of the *Nazarik Ragnarok X: Next Generation* Discord community. According to Kozinets (2010, as cited in Priyowidodo, 2022), netnographic data collection includes three types of data: (a) archival data, (b) elicited data, and (c) fieldnote data. Archival data consist of pre-existing online records such as chats, posts, and shared media. Elicited data are gathered through screen captures and observations of online interactions, while fieldnote data are the researcher's personal reflections and analytical memos written during participation. These data were collected directly from online communication mediated through Discord to understand community interaction and meaning construction.

Data analysis followed Kozinets' (2020, as cited in Eriyanto, 2021) four key phases: investigation, interaction, immersion, and integration.

1. Investigation: The researcher searched, selected, and stored data for analysis, focusing on member comments and discussions in the Discord server.
2. Interaction: Emotional engagement was applied as an interpretative strategy to understand user culture. The researcher participated emotionally in posts and conversations to comprehend users' feelings and responses (Kozinets, 2020).
3. Immersion: The researcher deeply engaged with the community by observing interactions and recording them in an immersion journal, allowing interpretation of digital traces as cultural artifacts.
4. Integration: Thematic analysis was used to integrate all collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2013, as cited in Eriyanto, 2021), identifying recurring patterns and themes that represent the cultural meaning of virtual communication among community members.

Data credibility was ensured through triangulation, as recommended by Patton (1990). Four types of triangulation were considered: method triangulation, source triangulation, analyst triangulation, and theoretical triangulation. This study specifically used source and analyst triangulation to verify data consistency and reliability. By combining multiple data sources and researcher perspectives, the findings gained validity and dependability, ensuring that interpretations accurately represented the observed online cultural phenomena.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data analyzed in this study were obtained through an immersive and in-depth observation of the *Nazarik Discord* community from July 21, 2021, to March 3, 2023. Using a netnographic approach, the researcher examined communication patterns within the online gaming community *Nazarik Guild*, which is active in the game *Ragnarok X: Next Generation*. The focus was on understanding how communication takes place through Discord, a virtual platform that facilitates coordination, information sharing, and strategic planning among players.

The study revealed that the virtual communication within the *Nazarik* community operates through a process of continuous coordination and information exchange. Discord

serves as a primary medium that enables both verbal and nonverbal interactions. Messages shared by the *Guild Master*—known as Popoi—often include verbal explanations, visual elements such as icons and charts, and structured infographics that support effective understanding among members. During major events like *KVM* (Kingdom vs. Monster) and *GVG* (Guild vs. Guild), the communication flow intensifies, showing a recurring structure of message sharing, feedback, and collective decision-making.

The communication pattern identified in the *Nazarik Discord* is best characterized as an *all-channel* or *star pattern* (Budiargo, 2015), where each member has equal access to information and the freedom to communicate with anyone, including the leader. This egalitarian flow of information fosters openness and encourages members to exchange ideas dynamically. The pattern also supports democratic participation—each player can directly contribute to strategic discussions, propose alternative tactics, or provide feedback on prior performance.

To deepen the analysis of communication structures within *Nazarik Discord*, this research adopts Dell Hymes's *SPEAKING* model (Kuswarno, 2011), which consists of eight components: Setting, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre.

Setting

The *Setting* in *Nazarik Discord* shapes the foundation of communication events. Observations revealed that the server remains open to access via an invitation link, without restrictive access barriers. This open structure allows non-members or new participants to join easily, aligning with Discord's flexible communication model (Raihan & Putri, 2018). The timing of interactions varies, depending on the occurrence of in-game events or scheduled guild activities. Communication spaces are divided into two primary channels: #rox-free-chat, which accommodates general discussions without fixed topics, and #share-info-rox, which serves as the central hub for strategic information, event announcements, and tactical updates.

Participants

The *Participants* in *Nazarik Discord* include both the guild leader and members who interact through posts, comments, and reactions. Interactions take place mainly in two channels mentioned earlier, with *#share-info-rox* being the more formal space for structured communication. The automatic record of every interaction (messages, images, infographics) creates a digital trace that facilitates subsequent analysis. The researcher identified approximately 98 exchanges related to *GVG strategies* and 396 posts concerning *KVM tactics*, indicating that strategic discussion dominates the communicative activity. These interactions show a participatory dynamic, where members exchange and co-create tactical knowledge in real time.

Ends

The *Ends* of communication in *Nazarik Discord* are both collective and individual. Collectively, the goal is to strengthen solidarity among members, maintain coordination, and increase the guild's competitive effectiveness. Individually, players aim to improve their skills, stay informed about updates, and gain recognition for their contributions. Thus, communication serves not only as a means of information exchange but also as a mechanism of social bonding and motivation. This aligns with Milner's (as cited in Hardiyansyah, 2015) definition of communication as an intentional act to influence others' behavior through message transmission.

Act Sequence

The *Act Sequence* refers to the order of communicative actions. From July 2021 to March 2023, the *Nazarik Discord* consistently posted strategic updates about four times per week—one for *GVG* and three for *KVM*. The Guild Master often begins by posting a structured plan using an Excel file, followed by a text-based explanation. Members then respond with confirmations, questions, or suggestions. This systematic pattern ensures that all participants receive clear, timely, and actionable instructions. As Wetherbe (2012) emphasizes, clear sequencing in message delivery enhances system efficiency and minimizes miscommunication in collaborative environments.

Key

The *Key* of communication in *Nazarik Discord* reflects the tone and style of interaction. The reference materials often come directly from in-game events or the official *Ragnarok X* website. Occasionally, *Nazarik* members cite discussions from other similar Discord servers, such as *Ragnarok X University*, particularly when analyzing mathematical calculations or tactical optimization. The communicative tone is collaborative and goal-oriented, maintaining a professional yet friendly atmosphere.

Instrumentalities

The *Instrumentalities* component covers the form and channel of communication. In *Nazarik Discord*, communication occurs through text messages, images, screenshots, and Excel files used for tactical mapping. The Guild Master consistently uses Excel sheets to organize team formation and position assignments before every major event, followed by concise written explanations. The simplicity of these messages ensures comprehension across varying levels of player expertise. The dominant mode remains textual-verbal, but nonverbal cues such as emojis and reaction icons supplement emotional tone and group cohesion.

Norms

Norms in *Nazarik Discord* define acceptable behavior and interaction etiquette. The community emphasizes openness, mutual respect, and emotional awareness. Members are free to express their opinions as long as they do not offend others. The Guild Master encourages two distinct communication spaces: *#rox-free-chat* for informal discussions and *#share-info-rox* for official announcements. Moreover, the server includes clearly written *rules and punishments*, ensuring accountability and discipline. This finding resonates with Scrok and Blum's framework (as cited in Rusmana, 2009), which highlights the social nature of gaming, emphasizing discipline, problem-solving, emotional regulation, and leadership within structured play.

Genre

Finally, the *Genre* of communication within *Nazarik Discord* primarily involves information sharing, invitations, and updates. These genres recur throughout the observation period, with consistent message formats involving Excel-based data tables and accompanying textual narratives. Such consistency signifies the institutionalization of communication practices that reinforce clarity, coordination, and efficiency.

The Role of Medium: Discord as a Communication Environment

The study also found that the medium itself—Discord—plays a crucial role in shaping communication dynamics. According to McLuhan's media theory, *"the medium is the message"* (as cited in Nasrullah, 2011), meaning that the characteristics of the medium influence human interaction as much as the content of the messages. Discord's synchronous

and asynchronous communication features enable members to manage both real-time coordination and long-term archival discussions. The combination of voice chat, text channels, and visual sharing allows for multi-modal interaction, creating an integrated virtual ecosystem.

Through McLuhan's lens, *Nazarik Discord* exemplifies how technology mediates not only message delivery but also community structure and cultural identity. The communication here is not merely transactional but constitutive—players build a shared sense of belonging and co-create a digital culture that mirrors the hierarchy, norms, and cooperation found in offline social systems.

Recurring Communication Patterns

Observations revealed consistent communication patterns that recur across multiple components of the *SPEAKING* framework. The repetition of specific forms—such as using Excel templates, maintaining two communication channels, and referencing similar tactical sources—demonstrates institutionalization. This repetition aligns with Hymes's assertion that communication events are defined by their recurrent and structured nature.

The researcher found that *Nazarik Discord* functions as a hybrid space that merges formal coordination and informal socialization. Communication oscillates between one-way announcements (e.g., tactical schedules) and multi-directional discussions (e.g., team formation debates). Over time, these patterns stabilize into a recognizable system of internal communication that fosters efficiency and emotional solidarity.

Interpretation of Findings

This study illustrates how virtual communication in online gaming communities mirrors the dynamics of traditional organizational communication but within a flexible, decentralized environment. The *all-channel* communication model supports participatory leadership and knowledge co-creation, reducing hierarchical barriers. Moreover, the integration of multimodal communication—text, visuals, and spreadsheets—enhances both clarity and engagement, validating the view that communication effectiveness depends on adaptive message design (Tjiptono, 2014).

The netnographic approach also revealed that *Nazarik Discord* operates as a *micro-public sphere* where meaning-making, identity formation, and collective action intertwine. Members engage not only in strategic planning but also in humor, emotional support, and recognition—behaviors that strengthen the group's symbolic cohesion.

Ultimately, the data confirm that digital communication media like Discord extend the concept of community beyond physical boundaries, supporting what McLuhan envisioned as a *global village*. Within *Nazarik Discord*, the interplay between medium, message, and community creates a distinctive communication ecosystem where efficiency, emotional connection, and shared purpose coexist harmoniously.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research reveal that communication within the *Nazarik Discord* community represents an evolved form of digital interaction shaped by technology and collective participation. The *all-channel* communication pattern allows equal access and reciprocal exchange between the Guild Master and members, fostering openness and collective responsibility. The findings demonstrate that Discord functions as both a tool and a space where communication becomes a social practice—enabling members to plan, discuss, and coordinate strategies effectively while maintaining emotional and symbolic bonds.

Each component of Dell Hymes's *SPEAKING* model appeared consistently in this community's communication cycle, indicating a systematic, recurring structure that enhances

both efficiency and social cohesion. The repeated use of multimodal formats—texts, spreadsheets, images, and voice chats—reflects the adaptability of members in constructing a shared meaning framework. Moreover, the presence of explicit norms and digital traces of interaction shows how this community internalizes rules, etiquette, and collaboration ethics typical of online organizational systems.

Theoretically, these findings affirm McLuhan's proposition that "the medium is the message," as Discord not only facilitates message transmission but also transforms how members construct relationships and shared identities. Practically, this study contributes to understanding how virtual gaming communities operate as microcosms of digital society—where technology, communication, and culture intersect to create structured yet flexible ecosystems of interaction.

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