

Interpretation of Social and Cultural Conflicts in Marjan Putri Hijau and Desa Kehidupan 2024 Advertisement Using Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis

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Abstract

This study is based on the understanding that advertisements serve not only as promotional media but also as interpretations of social and cultural values. The Marjan Putri Hijau and Desa Kehidupan Ramadan 2024 advertisement utilizes local mythological narratives to convey moral messages through visual and narrative symbols. This research aims to interpret the representation of social and cultural conflicts in the advertisement using Roland Barthes' semiotics, supported by Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. The method employed is a descriptive qualitative approach through observation and documentation of visual and verbal elements. The results indicate that at the denotative level, the advertisement depicts a conflict over the life energy; at the connotative level, it represents the struggle between care and greed; and at the mythic level, it naturalizes values of togetherness, the sanctity of nature, and the role of women as protectors of balance. Cultural analysis demonstrates a long-term orientation and social harmony consistent with Indonesian societal characteristics, showing that the advertisement functions as a meaningful medium of cultural communication.

Keywords: Interpretation, social and cultural conflict, Marjan advertisement, Putri Hijau, Roland Barthes' semiotic

1 INTRODUCTION

In contemporary marketing communication, advertisements do not only function as promotional tools but also as media that represent the social and cultural values of society. Indonesia's rich local culture is often utilized in advertisements to convey moral, social, and ideological messages that resonate with audiences. The success of an advertisement is determined by its ability to creatively organize messages through verbal and non-verbal elements, fostering emotional closeness and persuasive power.

Utilizing folklore and myths in advertisements is an effective strategy because they contain universal messages easily recognized by the public. However, meanings within advertisements are not always explicit and require interpretation of visual, verbal, and audio signs. Therefore, a semiotic approach is relevant to examine how meaning is constructed and communicated within advertisements. Roland Barthes' semiotic theory enables the analysis of advertisements through three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth, revealing underlying ideologies and cultural values.

Previous studies on semiotic analysis of advertising have explored how visual and verbal elements construct meaning and ideology in various contexts. For instance, studies on beauty product advertisements focus on the construction of ideal beauty standards, while research on beverage advertisements emphasizes themes such as freshness, lifestyle, and youth identity. Other studies have examined themes of success, family values, and environmental awareness through semiotic approaches. However, most of these studies tend to focus on general symbolic meanings or specific thematic representations, and rarely examine the representation of social and cultural conflict within advertisements, particularly those rooted in local mythology. Furthermore, limited studies apply Roland Barthes' semiotic framework to explore layered meanings of denotation, connotation, and myth within the cultural context of Indonesian advertisements.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the Marjan advertisement "Putri Hijau dan Desa Kehidupan", focusing on the interpretation of social and cultural conflict through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach [1]. One advertisement demonstrating strong symbolic messaging is the Marjan syrup



advertisement. Marjan has successfully associated its brand with the Ramadan period in the minds of Indonesians, making its advertisement a marker of the holy month. The 2024 Ramadan edition titled “Putri Hijau and Desa Kehidupan” features a fantasy theme inspired by local mythology.

The advertisement depicts a conflict between Putri Hijau, symbolizing the protector of nature, and Tuan Jungkat, representing greed that disrupts environmental balance. The struggle over life energy serves as a metaphor for social and cultural conflicts between collective interest and individual ambition. Through Roland Barthes’ semiotics, this study aims to interpret symbolic meaning, cultural representation, and myths constructed in the Marjan “Putri Hijau and Desa Kehidupan” advertisement as a form of communication of moral and social care during Ramadan.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is grounded in the understanding that communication is a social process crucial in shaping meaning, perception, and cultural values in society. The term “communication” derives from *communicare*, meaning “to share” or “to make something common,” implying that communication is essentially a process of building mutual understanding through verbal and non-verbal symbols [2]. In media and advertising, communication functions not only as information delivery but also as a tool for constructing social reality and representing ideology. Effective communication engages both verbal and non-verbal elements simultaneously to create coherent and meaningful messages.

Advertisements serve informative, persuasive, and reminder functions, while also adding value to products by building specific imagery and meanings in the audience’s mind [3]. Thus, advertisements cannot be separated from the cultural context in which they are produced and consumed, as they convey values, norms, and prevailing ideologies.

To understand how meanings and ideologies operate in advertisements, this study employs Roland Barthes’ semiotic approach. Barthes expanded Ferdinand de Saussure’s sign theory by introducing the *two orders of signification*, namely denotation and connotation, later evolving into the concept of myth. According to Barthes, a sign results from the relation between the signifier and the signified, which is arbitrary and determined by social and cultural context; meaning is never neutral or natural [4]. Denotation is understood as the literal or “what-it-is” meaning, objective and socially agreed upon [5]. Whereas connotation refers to additional meanings arising from cultural associations, social experiences, and interpreters’ backgrounds, making it subjective and contextual.

At a deeper level, Barthes introduced the concept of myth as the third-order system of meaning, representing the naturalization of ideology through signs, making it appear self-evident and collectively accepted [6]. In advertising, myth functions to obscure underlying ideological and cultural needs behind seemingly simple visual narratives. Barthes’ semiotic analysis is particularly relevant for examining advertisements because it extends beyond linguistic elements to include visuals, gestures, colors, and cultural symbols used in constructing meaning. This approach enables researchers to reveal how social and cultural conflicts are represented, as well as how moral values are conveyed in advertisements.

In addition to Barthes’ semiotics, this study employs Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory to understand the cultural values represented in the advertisement. Hofstede emphasizes that culture influences individuals’ thinking, behavior, and communication [7]. He categorizes national culture into six dimensions, including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint [8]. In Indonesia, collectivism, social harmony, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and long-term orientation are dominant cultural characteristics.

Hofstede’s theory is used to observe how these cultural values are built and represented through symbols, characters, and narrative in the advertisement. Long-term orientation is evident in messages about sustainability and environmental protection. Masculinity versus femininity enables analysis of gender representation, particularly the presence of strong yet empathetic female figures.

This study does not use Roland Barthes’ semiotic theory and Hofstede’s cultural dimensions separately, but rather integrates both frameworks to provide a more comprehensive analysis. Barthes’ semiotic theory is first employed to identify and interpret the meanings of signs in the advertisement at three levels: denotation, connotation, and myth. Through this process, the study reveals how visual and narrative elements construct symbolic meanings and ideological messages.

Subsequently, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions are used to interpret these meanings within a broader cultural context. The cultural values identified through Barthes’ semiotic analysis—such as collectivism, social harmony, and long-term orientation—are further examined using Hofstede’s framework to understand how these values are represented, reinforced, and naturalized in the advertisement.

Thus, Barthes’ semiotics functions as a tool to decode meaning, while Hofstede’s cultural dimensions provide a framework to interpret the cultural significance behind those meanings. This integration allows the study

to not only analyze how meaning is constructed, but also explain why certain cultural values are emphasized in the Marjan advertisement.

Based on this theoretical foundation, the research framework considers advertisements as mass communication forms containing visual and narrative signs. These signs are analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotics to explain denotative, connotative, and mythic meanings, which are then interpreted through Hofstede's cultural dimensions to understand naturalized cultural values. This framework positions advertisements as an intersection of commercial interest, cultural representation, and social ideology, allowing comprehensive understanding of how the Marjan Putri Hijau and Desa Kehidupan 2024 advertisement represents conflicts, values, and cultural identity in Indonesian society.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses an interpretive paradigm with a qualitative approach, viewing social and cultural reality as constructed through meaning, symbols, and representation. This paradigm is appropriate because the research focuses on interpreting meanings behind visual, verbal, and audio signs in the Marjan Putri Hijau and Desa Kehidupan Ramadan 2024 advertisement. The method applied is descriptive qualitative, aiming to describe and interpret phenomena in depth based on social and cultural contexts without emphasizing variable relationships [9].

Unit of analysis in this study is defined as individual scenes and visual sequences within the Marjan Putri Hijau and Desa Kehidupan 2024 advertisement. Each scene is treated as a unit of meaning that contains visual elements (such as characters, colors, setting, and gestures), verbal elements (dialogues and narration), and audio elements (background music and sound effects). These units are selected based on their relevance to the representation of social and cultural conflict, environmental themes, and symbolic interactions between characters. By focusing on specific scenes, the analysis becomes more structured and allows for in-depth interpretation of signs within their narrative context.

The research type is descriptive qualitative, with data in the form of visual texts, dialogues, narratives, symbols, colors, gestures, and audio elements present in the advertisement. Data are analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, emphasizing three layers of meaning denotation, connotation, and myth to uncover ideology and social-cultural messages in the advertisement [10]. Thus, the advertisement is understood not only as a promotional medium for Marjan syrup but also as a symbolic representation containing cultural values, social conflicts, and

ideological narratives about goodness, greed, and social harmony.

The research material consists of the Marjan Putri Hijau and Desa Kehidupan Ramadan 2024 advertisement, comprising two episodes. The advertisement features strong narrative and cultural elements, set in the Desa Kehidupan as a symbolic space representing an ideal, harmonious society rooted in local values and aligned with nature. The character Putri Hijau symbolizes feminine strength, local wisdom, and guardian of cultural values, inspired by Malay folklore from North Sumatra.

Data sources are categorized into primary and secondary data. Primary data is directly obtained from the advertisement video accessed via Marjan Boudoin's official YouTube channel, serving as the main informant because it contains the primary signs, symbols, and narratives to be analyzed. Secondary data is collected from Roland Barthes' semiotic literature, academic journals on visual communication and advertising, previous related studies, and online media articles discussing Marjan advertisements and the Putri Hijau cultural context.

Data collection techniques include observation and documentation. Observation examines visual, verbal, and audio elements in the advertisement as a system of signs, which are then analyzed based on Barthes' denotation, connotation, and myth. Documentation involves recording, noting, and classifying scenes, dialogues, colors, symbols, and storylines in text, images, and visual captures to support systematic and structured analysis.

The data collection process is conducted through several systematic steps. First, the researcher repeatedly watches the advertisement to gain a comprehensive understanding of its narrative and visual structure. Second, the advertisement is segmented into key scenes based on changes in storyline, setting, and character interaction. Third, important elements such as dialogues, visual symbols, colors, gestures, and audio cues are identified and documented. Fourth, screenshots and written notes are taken to capture significant moments that represent social and cultural meanings. Finally, all collected data are classified and organized into categories to facilitate semiotic analysis.

Data validity and reliability are ensured through triangulation. Source triangulation compares advertisement analysis with literature, academic journals, semiotic studies, and cultural references such as the Putri Hijau legend and North Sumatran social context. Method triangulation combines visual observation and literature review, including potential audience interviews to strengthen symbolic interpretation. Reliability is maintained by consistently applying Barthes' semiotic framework to every scene, ensuring denotation, connotation, and myth

interpretations are evidence-based and culturally contextualized, resulting in scientifically accountable outcomes.

Data analysis employs qualitative analysis concurrently with data collection to facilitate in-depth interpretation of signs [11]. The Marjan Putri Hijau and Desa Kehidupan 2024 advertisement is analyzed using Barthes' semiotics through denotative, connotative, and mythic layers. Denotation examines literal meanings of visual and narrative signs such as Putri Hijau, Tuan Jungkat, environmental changes, and iftar scenes. Connotation reveals cultural meanings related to care, greed, and togetherness. Myth interprets ideology about the struggle between good and evil, the sanctity of nature, women's roles as life guardians, and Ramadan rituals as social and spiritual restoration.

The stages of semiotic analysis in this study are conducted systematically in three main steps. First, denotative analysis is performed to describe the literal meaning of each selected scene, focusing on what is visually and explicitly presented. Second, connotative analysis is carried out to interpret the deeper cultural and emotional meanings associated with the signs, considering social context and audience interpretation. Third, myth analysis is applied to reveal underlying ideologies and cultural beliefs that are naturalized within the advertisement. These stages are applied consistently to each unit of analysis to ensure a structured and comprehensive interpretation of meaning.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Marjan Ramadan 2024 advertisement was produced by PT Lasallefood Indonesia, a food and beverage company established in 2002 that manages several prominent brands such as Sunquick, Del Monte, Maestro, and Marjan. As one of Indonesia's leading syrup brands, Marjan consistently presents advertisements with narrative and cultural nuances. In 2024, Marjan featured a fantasy story inspired by the local legend of Putri Hijau from North Sumatra through two series of advertisements titled "Putri Hijau and the Village of Life" and "Putri Hijau and the Greed of Tuan Jungkat", each with a duration of 60 seconds. The ads starred Josevanie Looraine Allestra and were broadcast on television and digital media during the Ramadan period leading up to Eid al-Fitr 2024.

Narratively, the advertisement depicts a village living in peace thanks to the life energy guarded by a true protector. This tranquility is disrupted by the arrival of Tuan Jungkat, an antagonist who steals life energy to maintain power and youth. His actions result in environmental damage and the loss of social harmony. Putri Hijau emerges as the savior striving to restore balance to nature and the community's life. The conflict continues in the second episode, where Tuan Jungkat's

greed ultimately leads to his own downfall, while Putri Hijau successfully restores life energy, concluding the story with a message of victory and hope, reinforced by Marjan's Ramadan slogan.

The character of Putri Hijau in this advertisement is inspired by the Malay legend from North Sumatra, which has been passed down since the 15th–16th centuries in the regions of Aceh, East Sumatra, and the Malay Peninsula. In the legend, Putri Hijau is known as a beautiful woman with a greenish glow symbolizing power, protection, and life [1]. In the advertisement, Putri Hijau is visualized as a graceful yet resilient young warrior, representing courage, sincerity, and care for both nature and society. The dominance of the color green not only reinforces the symbolism of life protection but also subtly connects the values of freshness, authenticity, and hope with Marjan syrup's brand identity. The cinematic visual presentation, choreography incorporating local cultural elements, and Josevanie Looraine Allestra's performance make Putri Hijau emotionally and symbolically impactful.

Using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, the meaning in the Marjan Putri Hijau and the Village of Life (2024) advertisement is constructed through two primary layers: denotation and connotation, which further develop into myth as a form of ideological naturalization. This hierarchical structure of meaning is consistently employed to convey cultural, moral, and ideological messages relevant to Indonesian society, particularly during the Ramadan period. Through this approach, the advertisement is not only viewed as a medium to promote products but also as a platform for representing social values functioning through a system of visual and narrative signs.

At the denotative level, the advertisement presents visual sequences depicting a harmonious village, a glowing tree as the source of life energy, villagers, environmental conflicts, the antagonist Tuan Jungkat, and Putri Hijau as the savior. Literally, the scenes depict the village's transition from peace to destruction caused by the theft of life energy, which is subsequently restored through the protagonist's struggle. This denotative meaning serves as a recognizable visual foundation for the audience and as the starting point for constructing deeper meanings.

The visual meaning then develops at the connotative level through cultural and emotional associations. The glowing tree and the dominance of green connote life, fertility, hope, and blessings aligned with Ramadan values. Conversely, red, fire, and destruction represent greed, moral crisis, and environmental degradation caused by excessive exploitation. Putri Hijau is interpreted as a symbol of courage, care, and moral responsibility, particularly representing women as agents of change. Thus, the

visual conflict becomes a metaphorical struggle between care and greed.

At the myth level, the advertisement constructs an ideological narrative naturalized as a collective truth. Putri Hijau is mythologized as a female hero restoring ecological and social balance, in line with Nusantara folk traditions of a savior figure appearing when harmony is disrupted. Conversely, Tuan Jungkat is mythologized as the personification of greedy power destroying ecological and social order. Through this myth construction, the advertisement instills the ideology that greed leads to destruction, while care and sacrifice are pathways to restoration. This mechanism makes cultural values appear natural and easily accepted.

This naturalization strategy is reinforced by associating the product as a symbol of freshness, togetherness, and life restoration. Scenes of multi-generational iftar gatherings and the restored natural harmony create the myth that happiness and Ramadan blessings are realized through simple moments of togetherness. Hence, the advertisement not only serves commercial purposes but also reproduces cultural ideologies about social solidarity, environmental balance, and spiritual values naturally embedded in everyday life.

Hofstede's cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance is related to societies with a tendency toward high uncertainty avoidance. This is evident in the advertisement's narrative trajectory, moving from ideal conditions to chaos, and then returning to order. Initially, the harmonious village with a glowing tree and peaceful villagers represents stability and order, reflecting the community's need for certainty, security, and life balance. When the sky turns red, nature is damaged, and life energy is stolen by Tuan Jungkat, the villagers are depicted as anxious, powerless, and threatened. This condition illustrates uncertainty that triggers social and emotional tension.

Through Barthes' semiotic perspective, this destruction connotatively represents a moral crisis caused by greed. At the myth level, the conflict emphasizes the cultural belief that restoring stability requires resolving imbalance. Putri Hijau's emergence as a hero functions as a symbol controlling uncertainty and restoring harmony. Interestingly, the presence of Marjan products at the end of each episode acts as a "symbol of resolution" or a crucial turning point. Within the Indonesian cultural context, the product's presence in the peaceful closing scenes assures the audience that after tension and uncertainty, moments of togetherness accompanied by Marjan signify the return to an ideal and calm life order. Therefore, the advertisement not only conveys moral messages but also represents Indonesian society's value of uncertainty avoidance, which prioritizes stability and order.

Visually, this uncertainty avoidance is represented through sequences forming a narrative structure: stability, crisis, and recovery. The harmonious village with a glowing tree symbolizes order and security, reflecting the psychological needs of the community. The transition to a red sky, environmental destruction, and Tuan Jungkat's theft of life energy marks uncertainty triggering collective anxiety. Putri Hijau's arrival restores social and ecological balance, emphasized through communal togetherness. These visual sequences show how the advertisement symbolically constructs the journey from uncertainty to stability as the ideal state. Therefore, the visual structure functions not only as an aesthetic element but also as a cultural representation affirming the Indonesian tendency to seek resolution, certainty, and order during crises.

In Hofstede's Masculinity versus Femininity dimension, the value conflict is reflected in the interplay between competition, courage, and achievement with harmony, care, and quality of life. The Marjan Putri Hijau advertisement (2024) effectively represents both dimensions simultaneously through symbolic visual narratives.

Denotatively, the visuals start with a harmonious village, a glowing tree as the life source, and villagers coexisting peacefully. Connotatively, this reflects femininity values, where the glowing tree and green hues symbolize balance, care, and strong social unity. However, the atmosphere changes when the sky turns red, signaling the onset of destruction. At this point, masculinity values appear, requiring courage, decisiveness, and opposition to evil.

Putri Hijau becomes the focal figure integrating both dimensions. As a female hero, she demonstrates strength and bravery, yet her power is not for personal domination or victory. Her courage stems from protecting, restoring nature, and ensuring communal well-being. She represents a fusion of assertiveness (masculinity) and nurturing instinct (femininity).

At the myth level, the narrative emphasizes the ideology that in Indonesian culture, an ideal hero is not measured solely by physical strength but by the strength derived from care. This alignment portrays masculinity and femininity not as opposing poles but as a unified value system. The advertisement conveys that true courage arises from safeguarding life and maintaining communal harmony.

A concrete visual representation is when Putri Hijau stands in the desert, holding a sword with one hand extended forward. Denotatively, this shows readiness to confront threats. Connotatively, the sword symbolizes bravery and strength associated with masculinity, while the extended hand represents protection and care reflecting femininity. Her objective is not domination but village preservation and balance restoration. This

visual demonstrates the integration of struggle and social care within a single female hero.

This meaning is reinforced during Putri Hijau's confrontation with Tuan Jungkat. The fight highlights courage and decisiveness as masculine values but is directed toward a collective goal: community protection and harmony restoration. At the myth level, these scenes affirm the ideology that ideal strength in Indonesian culture is used to care for communal life, positioning masculinity and femininity as complementary rather than contradictory in forming a holistic hero figure.

In Hofstede's long-term versus short-term orientation, long-term adaptation emphasizes dedication, struggle, sacrifice, and efforts that endure for future success. The denotation, connotation, and myth in the Marjan Putri Hijau advertisement represent a long-term orientation. The village with a glowing tree symbolizes a life source protected over generations, reflecting sustainability and respect for future outcomes. When threats arise, represented by the red sky and environmental destruction, villagers do not seek immediate solutions solely for short-term security but await a figure capable of restoring long-term balance.

Putri Hijau's struggle, from the beginning of the battle until the green light reappears, illustrates that collective success requires dedication, sacrifice, and patience through a prolonged process. This long-term orientation is further reinforced by the fact that Marjan advertisements are an annual Ramadan tradition. The consistent airing of narrative-rich ads is not merely a marketing strategy but has become part of a cultural ritual, encouraging audiences to continually preserve spiritual and social values year after year.

At the myth level, the narrative emphasizes the cultural belief that preserving nature, moral values, and social harmony is a long-term investment for future generations. Therefore, the advertisement aligns Marjan's product identity with the cultural resilience of Indonesian society, which prioritizes the sustainability of noble values over short-term gratification.

A visual representation of long-term orientation is seen when the village is restored, and villagers gather to celebrate around the glowing tree. Denotatively, this depicts environmental recovery and social togetherness post-conflict. Connotatively, the revived glowing tree symbolizes the continuity of life and ecological balance, while collective celebration signals hope for the shared future. At the myth level, this visual reinforces the cultural belief that maintaining environmental and social harmony is a long-term investment ensuring generational stability.

Beyond descriptive explanation, this study provides a deeper interpretation by positioning the Marjan advertisement as a cultural text that reflects and reinforces Indonesian social values. The representation of Putri Hijau as a protector of nature does not merely

function as a narrative element, but also signifies the ideological construction of women as agents of care, morality, and balance within society. This finding indicates that the advertisement reproduces cultural expectations where strength is legitimized through nurturing and collective responsibility, rather than domination.

Furthermore, the integration of Barthes' semiotic analysis with Hofstede's cultural dimensions reveals that the meanings constructed in the advertisement are not neutral, but are closely tied to dominant cultural values such as collectivism, harmony, and long-term orientation. This supports Barthes' argument that myth functions to naturalize ideology, making cultural values appear unquestionable and universally accepted.

These findings are consistent with previous studies on semiotic analysis of advertisements, which show that advertisements function not only as promotional tools but also as carriers of social meaning and cultural ideology. However, this study contributes by specifically highlighting the integration of environmental issues, gender representation, and cultural mythology within a single narrative framework, which has not been extensively explored in previous research. In addition, the use of Hofstede's cultural dimensions provides a broader cultural interpretation that complements semiotic analysis, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how meaning and cultural values are constructed in Indonesian advertising.

5 CONCLUSION

Based on the semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes on the Marjan Putri Hijau and the Village of Life Ramadan 2024 advertisement, it can be concluded that the advertisement constructs layered meanings through a strong system of visual and narrative signs. At the denotative level, the advertisement depicts the conflict between Putri Hijau and Tuan Jungkat over the village's life energy. At the connotative level, this conflict represents the struggle between care and greed, harmony and exploitation, as well as environmental protection and individual ambition. Meanwhile, at the myth level, the advertisement naturalizes Indonesian cultural ideology regarding the sanctity of nature, the importance of togetherness, the role of women as guardians of life, and the Ramadan ritual as a means of social and spiritual restoration. Consequently, the Marjan advertisement functions not only as a product promotion medium but also as a platform for communicating moral, cultural, and ideological values relevant to Indonesian society.

From the perspective of Geert Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, the advertisement represents the values of uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term orientation, which align with the characteristics of Indonesian culture. The presence of

Putri Hijau as a female hero emphasizes that courage and decisiveness can coexist with care and social harmony. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to enriching semiotic analyses of advertisements based on local culture, while also demonstrating that mythological narratives can be effectively employed in marketing communication. This study recommends that advertising practitioners pay greater attention to the potential of cultural symbols and local values as a communication strategy that is not only persuasive but also socially and culturally meaningful. Furthermore, future research may expand the study by comparing the representation of local culture in advertisements across different brands or time periods.

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