

**Analysis of Semiotics and Gender
Equality Message in the ABC's Soy
Sauce Advertisement
#SuamiIstriMasak Edition**

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Abstract

The ABC soy sauce advertisement #SuamiIstriMasak edition is one of ABC's soy sauce advertisements that resulted from a series of gender equality campaigns. ABC's soy sauce continues its commitment to gender equality, especially regarding the division of responsibilities in the kitchen, which means that not only the wife cooks in the kitchen but the men can also cook and help in the kitchen. This advertisement conveys a message of gender equality, which is conveyed visually in the advertisements. This study aims to determine how the visual message of gender equality can be conveyed with the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth in the ABC's soy sauce advertisement of the #SuamiIstriMasak edition using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. This research used Roland Barthes' approach with the descriptive qualitative research method. The stages were making background, problems, purposes, research methods, collecting data, analyzing, discussing, and conclusions. The result of this study is an analysis of selected scenes from ABC's soy sauce advertisement of the #SuamiIstriMasak edition which most support the existence of gender equality message and then analyzed with the meaning of Roland Barthes' semiotics, namely denotative, connotative, and myth.

Keywords: semiotics, advertisement, gender equality

Abstrak

Iklan kecap ABC edisi #SuamiIstriMasak merupakan salah satu iklan kecap ABC yang dihasilkan dari rangkaian kampanye kesetaraan gender. Kecap ABC melanjutkan komitmennya terhadap kesetaraan gender, terutama mengenai pembagian tanggung jawab di dapur, yang artinya bahwa tidak hanya istri yang memasak di dapur tetapi pria juga bisa memasak dan membantu di dapur. Iklan ini menyampaikan pesan kesetaraan gender yang disampaikan secara visual dalam iklan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana pesan visual kesetaraan gender dapat tersampaikan dengan makna denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos dalam iklan kecap ABC edisi #SuamiIstriMasak dengan menggunakan analisis semiotika Roland Barthes. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan Roland Barthes dengan metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Tahapannya adalah membuat latar belakang, masalah, tujuan, metode penelitian, pengumpulan data, analisis, pembahasan, dan kesimpulan. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah analisis terhadap adegan-adegan terpilih dari iklan kecap ABC edisi #SuamiIstriMasak yang paling mendukung adanya pesan kesetaraan gender kemudian dianalisis dengan makna semiotika Roland Barthes yaitu denotatif, konotatif, dan mitos.

Kata kunci: semiotika, iklan, kesetaraan gender

1. Introduction

Technological developments make competition in the business world increasingly visible. The use of technology in economic activities, for example, is manifested in the display of advertisements to attract buyers. Advertising is a means to promote products to the public. The purpose of advertising is so that people have the confidence or persuade to buy and use the advertised product or service (Anisa, 2020). Therefore, the language in the advertisement must be able to influence the buyer to buy the advertised product (Wicaksono, 2018; Handayani & Indah, 2022;). Advertising is in two fields of science that may seem unrelated, namely semiotics and economics (Noth, 2006). In economics, advertising is related to the process of exchanging goods, while in semiotics related to exchanging messages or influencing people to buy products. Benny H. Hoed (2014) revealed that current advertising does not only invite potential consumers to buy but also to become a member of the group that uses the goods or services. He also added that advertising will be seen as a cultural phenomenon, where culture can be seen as a system of signs or something that represents something. Thus, advertising has become the object of various studies related to semiotics.

Review of related literature

Etymologically, semiotics comes from the Greek "semeion" meaning sign (Seudjiman, Panuti, & Zoest, 1996). Pierce (in Zoest, 1993) defines semiotics as a branch of science related to the study of signs and everything related to signs. Meanwhile, according to Berger (in Hoed, 2014), semiotics has two figures, namely Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sander Peirce. Semiotics according to Ferdinand de Saussure, signs have two main parts, which are signifier and signified (Faizan, 2019). Roland Barthes, an adherent of Ferdinand de Saussure's theory, holds that a sign system reflects the assumptions of a particular society at a certain time (Endraswara, 2013). Barthes in his theory explains the culture that exists in society. He developed a theory of signifier and signified

with the concept of denotation and connotation of meaning (Barthes, 2007)

In the development of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, denotation is defined as the literal meaning or how a sign is interpreted as it is. As in the picture, denotation is the first level of meaning. The process of denoting meaning is also called traditional meaning because there is no need to carry out in-depth criticism in understanding signs (Sobur, 2009). While connotation is the development of denotation which is a process of meaning based on the background, knowledge, and ideas that exist in society. The meaning of this connotation can develop into a myth when it develops or settles in society (Hoed, 2014).

Concerning semiotics, the elements in the ad are combined to produce an ad that can convey its message well. The elements in the ad are as follows:

- a) Image elements are advertising visualization elements visible to the audience. Images in television advertisements can be interpreted as visualizations of figures or objects in advertisements
- b) Elements of a spoken word are words that are conveyed verbally or verbally, to convey a certain message contained in the advertisement.
- c) Written word elements are words that are delivered non-verbally or in the form of supporting text that explains the product in the advertisement.
- d) Elements of music or sound effects are sound elements that accompany television commercials.
- e) The color element in the advertisement is the composition of color and light the advertisement to describe the atmosphere in the advertisement
- f) The element of movement is how the movement can affect the emotions of the audience. (Palupiningtyas, 2013)

As one of the objects of various studies related to semiotics, advertisements that are broadcast carry influences such as values, norms, and perspectives that develop and

ultimately have not only economic but also socio-cultural influences, for example, the shackles of patriarchal culture on gender equality. Society's stereotypes regarding gender are masculine men and feminist women. In advertisements, women are often shown as a feminist in a setting where the female character is shown at home as a housewife who does cooking, takes care of children, or cleans the house. Meanwhile, men are shown as masculine and are busy doing activities outside the home. In a patriarchal culture, if masculine women and feminist men or women do men's work and men do jobs that women usually do, such as cooking, it will be considered strange, taboo, and inappropriate. This happens due to the social culture that is embedded and 'created' by the community. So, there are differences between genders that are opposed. Gender is the values, norms, and rules attached to both women and men that limit the behavior between the two created by sociocultural society continuously for a certain time (Rokhimah, 2014).

Advertising as a mediator of socio-cultural messages can be an agent that lifts the stereotypes and myths inherent in a patriarchal society. As a step, ABC launched a gender equality campaign through its advertisement with the *#SuamiIstriMasak* edition that builds awareness of gender equality. Therefore, the researcher conducted a semiotic analysis of the visual message of the concept of gender equality in the denotative, connotative, and myth-forming meanings of the ABC's soy sauce advertisement *#SuamiIstriMasak* edition in 2021 with the duration of 1 minute 4 seconds. The advertisement was the object of this research because the advertisement not only carries messages about the product but also conveys messages of gender equality that are relevant to people's lives today. Analysis of the message of gender equality in this advertisement will be researched and proven by using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory.

2. Research Questions

In this research, there are two research questions to guide the analysis as follows:

1. What are the visual messages of gender equality in the ABC Soy Sauce Advertisement *#SuamiIstriMasak* edition??
2. How the visual message of gender equality can be conveyed with the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth in the ABC Soy Sauce Advertisement *#SuamiIstriMasak* edition?

3. Method

The type of method used in this study was a qualitative analysis with a descriptive analysis method that emphasizes the study of the research object. This research was concluded in descriptive form, namely the data concluded in the descriptive form of images, not numbers. This study used Roland Barthes' semiotic theory approach to analyze messages of gender equality in the ABC soy sauce advertisement *#SuamiIstriMasak* edition. In this research approach, the researcher used Roland Barthes' semiotic meaning approach. Researchers analyzed the meaning of the concept of gender equality in the context of the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth in the advertising scene. The stages in this research were making the background, problems, purposes, research methods, collecting analyzing, and discussing data, and last conclusions.

The data from this study was divided into two, namely primary data obtained from advertising documentation in the form of video advertisements obtained from the official ABC Indonesia YouTube page. Next, was secondary data obtained from mass media, data, and relevant literature review. In collecting the data, the researcher made non-participant observations regarding advertising data and documentation. The data needed in this study includes the background of the advertisement, the concept or purpose of the advertisement, a series of campaigns related to the procurement of advertisements, and data from the advertiser's company. The data obtained were analyzed descriptively to produce a descriptive analysis of the visual message of gender equality in ABC's soy sauce advertisement *#SuamiIstriMasak* edition with Roland Barthes' semiotic theory.

This research has produced descriptive data in the form of an analysis of denotative, and connotative meanings, and the development of myths about gender equality messages from ABC's soy sauce advertisement *#SuamiIstriMasak* edition.

4. Result and Discussion

In this study, researchers have got information about the background of this advertisement. As reported from the CNN Indonesia page, PT Heinz ABC Indonesia as a business entity for ABC's soy sauce production is committed to realizing the spirit of gender equality in Indonesia through ABC's soy sauce. Since 2018, the ABC's soy sauce has launched various programs to support gender equality such as men being able to help women in the family. The ABC's soy sauce was continuously committed to educating the Indonesian people about gender equality, where one of the forms is by applying gender equality starting from the kitchen. Based on data from The Global Gender

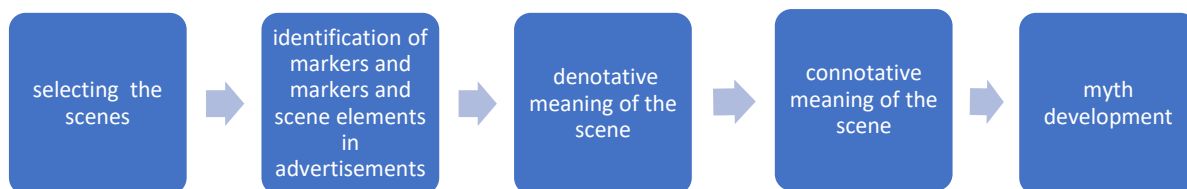
Gap Index, awareness of gender equality in Indonesia was

still low (World Economic Forum, 2019). It was caused by the lack of education about gender equality in society from an early age. Based on this problem, ABC soy sauce took the initiative to encourage husbands to participate in including both genders in the kitchen. In her interview, Mira Buanawati as Head of Legal & Corporate Affairs Kraft Heinz Indonesia & PNG said "Heinz ABC believes that it is important to educate and encourage young people to have an understanding of gender equality, which will be one of their big assets when they start a family in the future" (CNN Indonesia, 2021).

Systematics Flow of Advertising Scene Analysis

Based on the research method chosen, the research has determined the flow of analysis needed in the analysis process of ABC's soy sauce advertisement *#SuamiIstriMasak* edition. With the theoretical approach described earlier, the flow of the analysis of the advertising scene was as follows.

Figure 2. Ad Scene Analysis Flow



In conducting advertisement analysis, researchers selected advertisements to filter out the scenes that gave meaning to the concept of gender equality. After the scene selection stage, the first analysis was carried out by identifying signifiers and signified in advertisements. In the process of analysis, the researcher also identified the elements contained in the advertisement. Analysis of advertising elements is carried out to deepen the meaning of the connotations and the development of existing myths.

ABC's Soy Sauce Advertisement *#SuamiIstriMasak* Edition

The advertisement that has become the object of research is an advertisement that is part of a series of the *#SuamiIstriMasak* campaign. The advertisement entitled "ABC's soy sauce *#SuamiIstriMasak* edition", was released on August 26, 2021, on the official ABC Youtube page. The ad has an audience of 12,050,635, as of December 2021 on ABC Indonesia's official YouTube and reaped many positive comments in the video comment column. The ad, which lasts 1 minute and 4 seconds, tells about how a husband and wife react to a video of a little boy cooking.

In this study, the researcher analyzed the message of gender equality in this advertisement using Roland Barthes'

semiotic theory. In this study, the researcher also has examined more deeply how the visual signs found affect empowerment and stereotypes

Figure 3. The advertisement for the gender equality campaign ABC's soy sauce #SuamiIstriMasak edition

(Source:

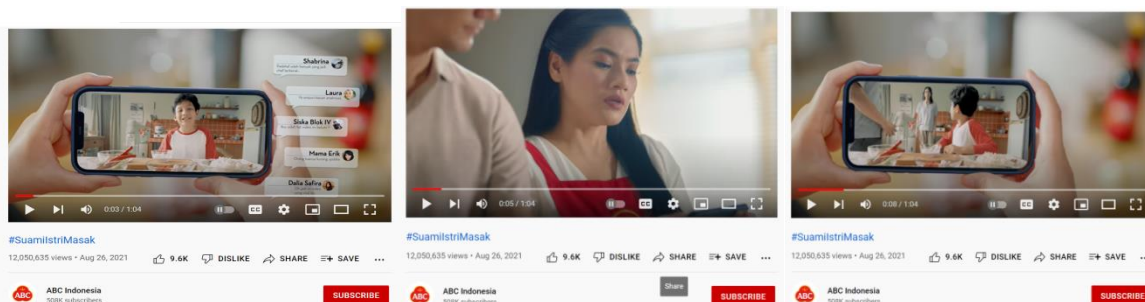
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKC6jgKXdjA>)

Synopsis : It started with the impression of a cellphone showing a video of a boy who was cooking. The video was watched by a woman and a man who act as husband and wife while cooking together. They commented on the little boy's video. Whereas, in the little boy's video, the little boy's father and mother argued about the man cooking in the kitchen. Her mother disapproves that cooking is only for men and her father insists that cooking is a woman's job. The husband and wife commented that not only do women cook in the kitchen but men can also cook and help in the kitchen. Both husband and wife have an important role, especially regarding the division of responsibilities in the kitchen.

Scene Analysis

In this study, the researcher analyzed the scenes in ABC's soy sauce #SuamiIstriMasak

Figure 4. A husband and wife watching a video



attached to gender equality. In this case, video ads became the primary data of the research.




edition by focusing on the commercial scene that showed messages of gender equality. The scenes were analyzed one by one using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis table, namely analyzing the signifiers and signified in the depicted scene, after analyzing the scene with denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings that appear in the advertisement. The results obtained are summed up in a descriptive form regarding the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings that arise in the scene. In the analysis of advertising scenes, the advertisement was dissected into a total of two scenes by focusing on scenes that support the message of gender equality visually and are supported by verbal aspects.

Scene 1

Scene 1 of the ABC's soy sauce advertisement #SuamiIstriMasak edition shows a husband and wife watching a video on their phone. The

following is a semiotic analysis of the sequence of Scene 1.

Table 1. Semiotic analysis flow of Scene 1

Scene 1 (Signifier)	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
 <p>(Signified) A boy's video was watched by a married couple via smartphone and displayed some comments from <i>netizens</i>.</p>	<p>There was a video of a little boy cooking that was watched on a smartphone with some comments from female netizens displayed. The content of the video has shown the difference of opinion between the boy's father and mother, which was his mother supported him in cooking while the father emphasized that cooking is only for women.</p>	<p>The depiction of a boy created a cooking video showing resistance to patriarchal culture, and some female netizens' comments have supported the boy's show of an open-minded society that supports gender equality. And the response of the boy's father shows that there are still people who were shackled by patriarchal culture.</p>	<p>The depiction of modern society is starting to become unfettered by patriarchal culture and supports gender equality, which is shown to be mostly women, while those who are still shackled by patriarchal culture are identical to men who want to maintain a superior position to women.</p>

Scene 2

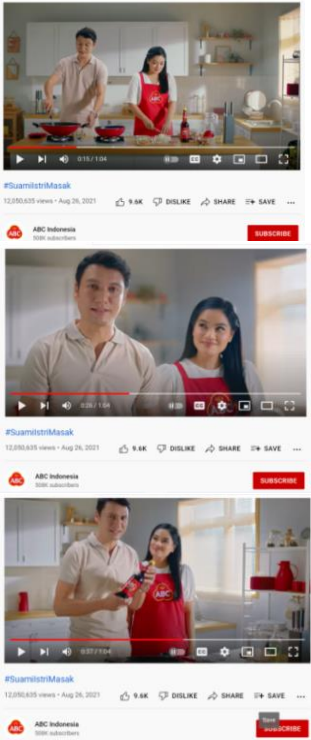
Figure 5. A husband and wife cooking together



In this scene, it is explained in 3 elements in the advertisement, namely (1) color, namely the lighting in the morning where bright light can be seen entering through the window, (2) an image of a husband and wife cooking together with the expression of a smiling wife, and (3) the spoken word, namely the narration of the husband and wife responding to the boy's video, the husband

said “*masak kan bukan untuk perempuan saja*” then the wife said “*ya, apa salahnya kalau anak laki-lakinya mau jadi koki atau food videoer*” then the husband added “*laki-laki harus bisa masak, suami dan istri itu memiliki peranan yang sama penting dalam rumah tangga dan suami juga bisa ikut andil dalam urusan di dapur loh.*”

Table 2. Semiotic analysis flow of Scene 2

Scene 2	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
(Signifier) 	A husband and wife cooking together responded to the boy's cooking video and supported the boy with the wife's smiling expression while listening as her husband spoke his opinion.	A married couple who were cooking together in the kitchen show gender equality, and they responded positively to the boy's cooking video, the wife was seen smiling happily while listening to her husband's opinion because he has the same opinion as her.	A husband and wife who cook together and uphold gender equality look happy and harmonious
(Signified) the husband and wife responded to the boy's video while cooking together			

Detailed Analysis of semiotic scene 2

The roles of husband and wife were shown standing together and doing cooking activities together in the kitchen. Their position was visualized as equal as a sign of gender equality. The husband accompanied and helped his wife cook in the kitchen, this breaks the old

myth circulating in the community where often the wife does household chores such as cooking and her husband who is relaxed just waits without helping his wife or showing the male who is more domineering because the head of the family only needs to be served without helping.

Figure 6. Visualization of the wife's apron and Heinz ABC logo



Viewed the clothes worn by the wife, the clothes they wear are casual clothes showing that they don't have other jobs or do not yet have time to go to work so they can cook together. Moreover, the red apron that the wife wears with the Heinz ABC logo shows it is to keep building the brand name. In addition, several red properties are similar to the color of the logo in the advertisement, which is intended to increase brand recognition in advertisements.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis of the message of gender equality with Roland Barthes' analytical theory of the ABC Soy Sauce #SuamiIstriMasak edition, it can be concluded in the semiotic analysis of the advertising scene that the message of gender equality is seriously implanted through stories or creative scenes. In the ABC Soy Sauce advertisement, the researcher concludes the denotative, connotative meaning, and myth development about gender equality through visual analysis and advertising elements from the scenes in the advertisement. Strongly analyzed ads become part of the culture and don't just talk about the product as the 'main character'.

The use of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory in analyzing gender equality messages in advertisements through connotative denotative meanings and myth development follows the characteristics of advertisements that show social symptoms through visual signs that accompany the story or message in the advertisement. The analysis of signs does not only involve the subjective knowledge and experience of the interpreter but also involves various studies related to the conditions of

norms and values in society and the study of advertising visuals so that the meaning of signs is wider and richer.

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