

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the discussion on research background, research problem, research purpose, research significance, definition of key term and organization of the paper. It begins with the research background, which outlines the relevance of semiotic analysis in understanding how meaning is constructed in contemporary advertising, particularly on digital platforms such as Instagram reels. The research problem is then identified, followed by a clear statement of the study's objectives. This chapter also discusses the significance of the research in relation to both theoretical contributions to semiotic studies and practical implications for media and advertising discourse. Finally, it offers definitions of key terms used throughout the study and outlines the organization of the chapters that follow.

1.1 Research Background

Language is an essential aspect of human life, commonly used in daily interactions. Its primary function is to communicate to others Kanaza (2020). It serves as a structured system that allows individuals to convey ideas, emotions and intentions effectively. This structured nature makes language both flexible and efficient in addressing diverse communicative needs. In the context of visual media, language transcends spoken or written words, including semiotic elements such as imagery, symbols and colors. According to Connor-linton and Fasold (2006) that the language is a finite system of elements and principles that make it possible for the speakers to construct sentences to do a particular communicative job. Connor-Linton and Fasold (2006) define language as a limited set of elements and principles that allow speakers to construct sentences to fulfill specific communicative purposes. This perspective emphasizes the structured nature of language, highlighting its role as a system that not only enables interaction but also serves distinct communicative functions through the use of finite rules and components. This structured approach allows language to be both flexible and efficient in meeting diverse communicative needs. As language evolves within various of media, its application extends beyond everyday communication into broader societal tools, including advertising. In this field, communication becomes more than just a transfer of information, it transforms into a strategic act of persuasion, symbolism and branding. Through this evolution, the elements of language and semiotics are used to influence perception, trigger emotions and convey complex ideas with minimal text or dialogue.

Among the many platforms where language and communication converge most powerfully is advertising. Advertising is one of the most influential

communication tools in modern society, serving not only as a means of promoting products but also as a vehicle for conveying ideas, values and brand identities. According to Arora and Sharma (2020), communication is both art as well as science, art because it involves the use of words, presentation skills and its soul lies in creativity. On the other hand it is also science because it imbibes strong scientific information with the costumers to provide reasoning ability, to fulfill their comprehension needs and create a strong technical background.

Therefore communication in the field of advertising is a mix of soft sell approach as well as hard sell approach. The trend of advertising is more and more innovative, it is discovery of new ideas and approaches to communicate the most simplest of the products in a grandest manner. As a communication tool, advertising transforms straightforward product information into compelling messages that resonate with audiences on emotional, social and cultural levels. By incorporating various artistic elements such as visual design, storytelling and music, advertising engages viewers in ways that go beyond words, using aesthetics and symbolism to appeal to both rational and emotional responses. It explains that the main purpose of communication is to deliver meaning.

In this layered approach, advertising operates on multiple levels. On one level, it conveys a literal, or denotative, message about a product's features and functions. At once, it often carries a connotative layer where deeper meanings, symbols and cultural references are inserted, aiming to connect with viewer's values and aspirations. This dual nature makes advertising an ideal subject for semiotic analysis, which examines how signs and symbols in media construct meaning. *Adidas advertisement*, for instance, are crafted not only to showcase their products but also to embody values like athleticism, resilience and individuality. Through semiotic elements, Adidas position itself within broader cultural narratives, creating an image that resonates personally with its audience while shaping public perception of the brand. This study will explore how *Adidas advertisements* function as a communication tool, analyzing how they convey meaning, demonstrating the communicative power of advertising as both an art form and a strategic medium. Meaning is one of the studies in linguistics that comes under the semantic category. It is an element of micro linguistic and discusses the interpretation of the meaning of words. Thus, it makes the scope of semantic is very large especially to analyze the meaning; one of them is called Semiotic Jamilah (2014). According to Chandler (2002) In the book of *The Basics Semiotics* explained that semiotics is the study of the role of signs as part of social life. Signs could be the form of words, images, gestures, sounds and objects. This understanding highlight the significance of signs as fundamental components of communication, reflecting the complex interplay between meaning and the societal

constructs that shape our interpretations. Therefore, semiotic analysis serves as a valuable framework for exploring how these diverse forms of signs convey meaning and influence social interactions.

In general, the sign helps communicate the idea to one another; there are signs in the advertisement that convey readers what the content of the advertisement means. Frequently, the advertisements' indicated meaning is shown. Therefore, as stated by (Beasley & Danesi, 2002) the society needs to filter the meaning to get the real meaning which is delivered by the advertiser. Moreover, advertising employs artistic elements such as design, storytelling and music to enhance its communicative effectiveness. These artistic components not only capture attention but also foster emotional connections with viewers, making advertisements more memorable and impactful. Through strategic use of aesthetics, brands can communicate complex ideas and values, establishing a lasting impression in the minds of consumers.

The achievement of the advertisement's goal indicates that it is effective and has the ability to convince consumers. As stated by (Berl 2022) the fundamental purpose of advertising is to sell something; a product, a service or an idea. In addition to this general objective, advertising is also used by the modern business enterprises for certain specific objectives which are listed below; (1), to introduce new product by creating interest for it among the prospective customers. (2), to support personal selling program, advertising maybe used to open customers, doors for salesman. (3), to reach people inaccessible to salesman. (4), to enter a new market or attract a new group of costumers. (5), to light competition in the market and to increase the sales as seen in the fierce competition between the two brand (Berl 2022). Given its impact and the layered messages it conveys, advertising becomes an ideal subject for semiotic analysis. Semiotics, particularly through the framework established by Roland Barthes, provides a means to delve into the denotative and connotative meanings embedded within advertisements.

This research uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to examine the implied meanings of advertising specifically in taglines, text and picture by revealing (S-S) or signifier and signified. As stated by (Barthes: 1957) that advertisements cooperate with modern era to perform something new (new brand) which is not common in societies. In this term, the modern era intends to persuade consumers to follow dynamic development.

The concept of semiotics has long been a valuable tool in understanding how meaning is constructed through signs and symbols, especially within media and communication studies. In this regard, (Barthes Roland Mythologies 1957) presented various kinds of semiotics studies, one of which focused on the idea of

signs, namely denotation, connotation and myth. Denotation provides an explanation of how signifiers relate to reality, resulting in clear-cut, unambiguous meanings. While connotation defines the connotation as second order signification to get the clear sign which identifies the hidden meaning Nadira (2018). In addition, Barthes also revealed that there is a myth in the concept of semiotics. According to Sobur (2016) myth is a form of message or speech that must be believed to be true but cannot be proven. In myth there is an ideology that is conveyed. According to Barthes, myth in semiotics is not a concept but a way of giving meaning Sobur (2016). This framework of denotation, connotation and myth provides an insightful approach to analyze advertisements, revealing both the explicit and underlying cultural messages they convey.

This research will apply Barthes' semiotic framework denotation, connotation and myth to analyze *Adidas* advertisement specifically within their Instagram reels. By examining these short, dynamic video ads, the researcher can observe how Adidas uses visual and auditory element to communicate both explicit and implicit messages. The denotative level will reveal the straightforward aspects of the advertisements, such as the product features and athlete representation, while the connotative layer will uncover deeper meanings related to values like empowerment and individuality. Through the concept of myth, this study will further explore the ideologies embedded in these Adidas' advertisement, assessing hoe Adidas crafts narratives that resonate with their audience on a cultural level. This study will highlight the power of Instagram reels as a medium for Adidas to shape brand identity and connect with viewers in a highly engaging, visually driven format.

This study selects *Adidas advertisements* on Instagram reels due to the platform's unique ability to engage audience through short, visually captivating content that aligns with current digital consumption trends. Instagram reels, with its broad to reach and focus on creative, immersive storytelling and provides Adidas with an ideal platform to showcase its brand values and connect with a global audience. Reels also enable Adidas to leverage music, visuals, and concise narratives to convey both product features and deeper cultural meanings in a way that resonates with viewers' lifestyle aspiration. By analyzing Adidas's reels, this study can effectively explore how the brand communicates denotative, connotative and myth elements, revealing how these advertisements contribute to shaping consumer perceptions and brand identity in a highly competitive digital space. Given the richness of meaning conveyed in such short-form content, it becomes essential to examine why Instagram reels, as a platform, is particularly effective for delivering these layered messages.

To illustrate the significance of semiotic analysis in modern digital advertising, this study draws on sample data from Adidas' *Predator Belligold Pack* campaign on Instagram reels. One particular reel features a man standing before a stack of sleek, black Adidas boxes, with another man finishing a delivery beside a branded vehicle. On the surface, this scene simply presents a product handover (denotation). However, at a deeper level, it evokes feelings of anticipation, exclusivity and luxury. Conveying the idea that Adidas is not just delivering shoes, but a premium experience (connotation). Further, the campaign taps into a broader cultural myth of transformation through elite sportswear, by acquiring the Adidas Predator line, the consumer is symbolically stepping into the role of an empowered, high-performing athlete. This visual narrative highlights how Adidas uses Instagram Reels not just to market products, but to construct powerful brand ideologies that resonate with the values and aspirations of their audience.

There are several previous studies from theses and journal articles. Previous studies are research endeavors that are somewhat similar but have differences, aiming to serve as sources of reference. The first previous study conducted by (Zaenal 2011) *The Denotative and Connotative Meanings in The AXE advertisements*. This study explores the denotative and connotative meanings within a series of AXE advertisements, using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The second previous study conducted by (Nadira 2018) titled "*Roland Barthes' Denotation, Connotation and Myth in the Change of Four Starbucks Logos: A Study of Semiotics*". The study explores the semiotic elements within Starbucks' logos across four major changes. Using Barthes' theory, this study focuses on denotative, connotative and myth meanings to reveal how Starbucks incorporates cultural symbols and ideologies into their branding over time. The third previous study conducted by (Ala 2011) titled "*A Semiotic Analysis on A-Mild Advertisements Using Roland Barthes' Theory*," examining the connotative meanings within A-Mild cigarette advertisements through verbal and non-verbal signs. By applying Barthes' semiotic framework, the study explores the deeper cultural narratives and myths embedded in the advertisements, revealing how signs are used to communicate ideological messages.

The difference between this research and previous research lies in several points, especially in the object being analyzed. Muttaqien's study focuses on the denotative and connotative meanings within AXE advertisements, primarily analyzing static elements in print ads through Barthes' semiotic theory. While it provides insight into the brand's use of denotation and connotation to convey masculinity and attraction, it is limited to traditional, non-digital format. In contrast, the current study will apply Barthes' framework to *Adidas advertisements* specifically within the digital space of Instagram reels, a platform that integrates

dynamic elements like music, motion and short-form storytelling, thus requiring a nuanced analysis of semiotic layers in a multimedia context. While Nadira's study explores semiotics within Starbucks' logo changes, focusing on brand identity through static logos. However, it does not address dynamic advertising. This study expands on Nadira's work by examining how Adidas uses moving images and sound in Instagram reels to convey brand values. The difference between the current study and the third previous study reference, A'la's study analyzes signs in A-mild cigarette advertisements using Barthes' theory, focusing on static billboards. While it uncovers cultural myths, it does not explore interactive, digital media. This study fills that gap by applying Barthes' framework to digital ads on Instagram, where visuals, sound and short-term content interact.

The gap in these studies focus on static advertisements, leaving out the dynamic, multimedia nature of social media advertising. This study addresses this gap by exploring Adidas' Instagram reels, contributing to a better understanding of how modern, digital ads use visuals, sound and storytelling to convey layered meanings and cultural narratives.

1.2 Research Problem

To understand how Adidas employs semiotics elements to shape brand identity and convey layered meanings in a digital context, this study focuses on analyzing the denotative, connotative and myth aspects of *Adidas advertisements* on Instagram reels. Using Barthes' semiotic theory as a framework, the study seeks to uncover how these ads communicate both surface-level and deeper cultural messages that resonate with audiences. This analysis is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the denotation and the connotation signs that appear in sport advertisement on Adidas Instagram advertisements?
2. How the meaning of myths are contained in sport advertisement on Adidas Instagram advertisements?

1.3 Research Objectives

This study aims to explore how Adidas communicates brand identity and values through its advertisements on Instagram reels, using Barthes' semiotic framework to uncover the layered meanings within these ads. By examining the denotative, connotative and myth elements, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how adidas crafts its message in a digital, multimedia format that

engages audiences on multiple levels. The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To describe the denotation signs that appear in Adidas Instagram advertisements.
2. To describe the connotation signs that appear in Adidas Instagram advertisements.
3. To describe the meaning of myths in Adidas Instagram advertisement.

1.4 Research Significance

This research aims to offer valuable insights into how semiotic elements within digital advertising, specifically Adidas' Instagram reels, convey brand identity, cultural narratives and deeper ideological meanings. By analyzing the denotative, connotative and myth layers of meaning, the research contributes to both theoretical understanding of advertising semiotics and practical applications within the field of digital marketing.

- a. **Theoretically**, this study enriches the field of semiotic analysis by applying Roland Barthes' framework to a contemporary, multimedia advertising format on social media. It extends the application of Barthes' theories of denotation, connotation and myth beyond traditional media to the digital space, providing new insights into how brands like Adidas construct meaning in short-form, visually-driven content. By examining the layered meanings in Instagram reels, this research deepens our understanding of how signs and symbols operate in fast-paced digital media, contributing to the broader body of knowledge on advertising semiotics and cultural studies.
- b. **Practically**, this research provides marketers, advertisers and brand strategists with a clearer understanding of how to effectively use semiotic elements to engage audiences and build brand identity within social media platforms. Insights from this study can guide brands in creating more impactful advertisements that resonate with consumers on a deeper cultural and emotional level. For Adidas and similar brands, understanding how denotative, connotative and myth meanings influence consumer perception can inform strategies for employing social media to communicate brand values, ultimately enhancing engagement and brand loyalty in a highly competitive digital environment.

Through these theoretical and practical contributions, the study demonstrates the importance of semiotics in crafting compelling, culturally relevant advertising that aligns with modern consumer expectations on social media.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Some of the terms that are very important to describe related to the research, including semiotics, signifier, signified, denotation, connotation, myth and advertisement

- a. **Semiotics:** semiotics is the study of sign and symbols and how they are used to communicate meaning. According to Daniel Chandler (2002), semiotics explores how meaning is constructed and understood through signs, which may include words, images, gestures or objects. In media and advertising, semiotics reveals how visual and textual elements convey deeper cultural or ideological meanings.
- b. **Signifier:** signifier refers to the physical form or representation of a sign. Signifier basically refers to the concrete or perceivable form that describes or represents a sign Barthes (1964).
- c. **Signified:** signified is the concept, idea, meaning or interpretation associated with the signifier, playing a central role in unraveling the depth of the message conveyed Barthes (1964).
- d. **Denotation:** denotation refers to the literal or primary meaning of a sign, what is explicitly presented and directly understood without interpretation. It reflects the straightforward relationship between the signifier and the object it represents Zaenal (2011).
- e. **Connotation:** connotation is the secondary or associated meaning of a sign, shaped by cultural, emotional and contextual factors. It introduces subjective interpretations that evoke feelings, values and associations beyond the literal message (Peterson (2021).
- f. **Myth:** according to Barthes (1957), myth is a third level of meaning where cultural ideologies are embedded into signs, making certain values or beliefs appear “natural” or universally accepted. Myths often reflect dominant ideologies and reinforce social norms through media and advertising (Sobur 2020).
- g. **Advertisements:** advertising is a strategic communication activity used to promote products, services or ideas to a target audience. It combines persuasive language, visual design and media strategies to shape perception and influence consumer behavior (Williamson 2010).
- h. **Instagram Reels:** instagram reels is short-form video feature on the instagram platforms that allows users and brands to share dynamic, 15-60 second videos. Reels incorporate music, text, filters and effects, offering a powerful tool for immersive storytelling and digital marketing.