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## An Analysis of Gucci Through Semiotic Roland Barthes

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**Abstract:** In the millennial era, people no see fashion as a primary commodity but they tend to improve social status. Citizens no longer concern with the originality. Therefore, influencers play a role in the formation of meaning through social media that is consumed by the public. Thus, there is a shift in marking that affects the meaning of the Gucci brand. This study aims to describe the signs in Gucci branding that represent social status. This study uses a interpretative qualitative method by observing and documenting the Gucci branding. This study uses semiotic theory of Roland Barthes. The results of this study find that there are 5 data which apply denotation, connotation, and myth to Gucci branding. Based on the data, it shows that there is a shift in signification in the Gucci branding which affects the meaning of the Gucci brand that it can increase a person's social status. Therefore, there is a relevance between Gucci branding and social status. The results of this study are expected to be an information in order to avoid information bias in the community.

**Keywords :** *Semiotic, Influencer, Social Status, Gucci.*

**Abstrak:** Pada era milenial masyarakat tidak lagi melihat fashion sebagai suatu komoditas yang bersifat primer melainkan untuk meningkatkan status sosial. Masyarakat tidak mementingkan lagi originalitas. Oleh karena itu, influencer berperan dalam pembentukan makna melalui media sosial yang dikonsumsi oleh masyarakat. Sehingga, terjadinya pergeseran penandaan yang berpengaruh kepada pemaknaan dari brand Gucci. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan pertanda dalam branding Gucci yang merepresentasikan status sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif interpretatif dengan melakukan observasi dan dokumentasi terhadap branding Gucci. Dalam membedah penelitian ini digunakan teori semiotika Roland Barthes. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 5 data yang mengaplikasikan denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos pada branding Gucci. Berdasarkan data yang ditemukan menunjukkan bahwa terjadinya pergeseran penandaan dalam branding Gucci yang berpengaruh kepada pemaknaan dari brand Gucci sehingga dapat meningkatkan status sosial seseorang. Oleh karena itu, terdapat relevansi antara branding Gucci dan status sosial. Hasil dari penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menadi sebuah infomasi guna terhindar dari bias informasi di masyarakat.

*Kata kunci : Semiotik, Influencer, Status Sosial, Gucci*

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## A. Introduction

Language is a very important communication tool in human life because they can communicate using language as an interaction and speech tool to strengthen relations between one another in social life. Nurbiana explains that language is a liaison or communication tool between members of society consisting of individuals who express their thoughts, feelings, and desires in achieving goals<sup>1</sup>. In addition, language is also a symbol of arbitrary sound that is used in society to interact and interpret things.

In interpreting something, humans often find many signs in the environment but sometimes we are not aware of these signs. In fact, these signs have a function to convey information or messages directly, both verbally and non-verbally. A sign can be regarded as a representation of

physical reality that refers to a certain reference. According to Cobley and Janz states that the sign reference is referring to a social context that is the reference of the sign<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, it can lead to a process of meaning between the recipient and the sender of the message to a meaning. Zoest argues that sign is all things that we can be observed hence it is not limited to the objects<sup>3</sup>. One of the signs that can be observed in the community environment with a significant influence is commodities. In addition, a commodity is not valued because of its benefits, but it becomes a symbol of the lifestyle, prestige (symbolic-value), luxury and social status of the consumer (sign-value). However, these two aspects show that people presently no longer consume an object based on its use and exchange value, but also the symbolic value and the abstract sign value. It means that they only

<sup>1</sup> Dhieni, Nurbiana. *Metode Pengembangan Bahasa*. (Jakarta: Universitas Terbuka, 2005), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Cobley and Janz. *Introducing Semiotics*. (England: Totem Books, 2017), p. 15

<sup>3</sup> Zoest. *Semiotika: Tentang Tanda, Cara Kerjanya dan Apa Yang Kita Lakukan Dengannya*. (Jakarta: Yayasan Sumber Agung, 2013), p. 18

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consume the sign values contained in a commodity. Thus, the tendency of consumers bought a commodity without consideration and knowledge. In fact, they just purchase the signs from those commodities, therefore the primary needs shift to tertiary needs. On the other words, necessity turns into desire. It is the foundation that the branding creates trending. Therefore, in this case there is a signification process that occurs involving the producer of meaning and the consumer of meaning which is related to the semiotics aspect.

Semiotics is the study of signs which explains a meaning. Hoed states that signs are all things both physical and mental, in the world and universe, both in the human mind and biological system of humans and animals that are given meaning by humans<sup>4</sup>. In addition, a sign is a mark that has meaning for humans. It is related to the thoughts of a semiotic figure from

France, Roland Barthes who established his position as one of the crucial thinkers in the world of semiology. He was famous in his idea about semiology and also published his literary work entitled *Mythologies*. Sobur explains *Mythologies* is a book that tells about the myths that exists in society. Roland Barthes emphasizes that everything contained ideology or mythology<sup>5</sup>. Besides, Barthes also said in his book entitled *Mythologies*, Myth is a messages or utterances that must be believed the truth but cannot be proven which contains ideology. Sobur conveys that the semiotic of Roland Barthes myth is not a concept but a way of giving meaning<sup>6</sup>. The myth does not refer to what we think is superstitious, unreasonable, ahistorical and others, but according to Barthes' myth as a person's type of speech. This statement attempts to identify a meaning which has impact in society and the problem has been

<sup>4</sup> Hoed, H. Benny. *Semiotika Budaya*. (Depok: Pusat Penelitian Kemasyarakatan dan Budaya FIB Universitas Indonesia, 2014), p.5.

<sup>5</sup> Sobur. *Semiotika Komunikasi*. (Bandung: Rosda Karya, 2009), p.69.

<sup>6</sup> Sobur. *Semiotika Komunikasi*. (Bandung: Rosda Karya, 2016), p.71

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captured by Roland Barthes so that indirectly we only discuss what has been discussed.

Everyone tries to show their existence through what they use become their identity such as fashion. Even Roland Barthes ever talked about *The Language of Fashion* (2006), Barthes mentions that fashion has its own internal logic, irrelevant to outside concerns such as history or utility or even aesthetics, and it is completely bound up with its own representation in which something is fashionable because fashion says it is<sup>7</sup>. Thus, the above statement becomes the basis for this study thinking to examine acutely about semiology in the world of fashion. Fashion can be an aesthetic expression that is popular at a certain time, place and context, for example in clothes, footwear, lifestyle, accessories, make-up, hairstyles, and body proportions.

Fashion in various countries around the world has developed massively which means that fashion continues to change from time to time both in terms of design, concept and quality. The use of quality fashion coupled with high prices is called luxurious brands. One of the international luxury brands that have been recognized by the international community to remote areas in Indonesia is Gucci.

Gucci, first appeared in 1921, which is a luxurious Italian brand. This brand name is taken from the name of the founder, namely Guccio Gucci. With the age of four heads is not a barrier to being successful. When he was 19 years old, Guccio worked at the Savoy Hotel, London, getting the inspiration to create his own brand for hotel guests who carry luggage. However, Gucci is not only concerned with fashion, but also household appliances and others in which makes their branding wider.

Based on Interbrand, a research team for International Brand (2019), Gucci is

<sup>7</sup> Barthes, R. *The Language of Fashion*. (Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p.120.

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listed as the fastest growing luxury brand in the world showing 23 percent increase in brand value, while Louis Vuitton and Chanel saw a 14 percent and 11 percent increase, respectively, since last year's report. In addition, Gucci is also known by many people because it is packaged through a popular culture, namely the song entitled 'Gucci Gang' sung by Lil Pump with 1.1 Billion views so that Gucci is an interesting commodity to analyze in this study. The consumption of this luxurious brand is indeed quite phenomenal as illustrated by the reputation of Gucci is so good that it generates a fantastic income of around billions of USD. The Gucci phenomenon that occurs in society today really describes the consumer society. Therefore, this process, which Roland Barthes said as mythologies, is therefore curious to trace how the semiological changes occur in Gucci branding.

The public response to Gucci shows how consumptive they are. In fact, considering the price offered for commodities like Gucci. The most people's

problem is that they just consume the signs which is made by several influencers, and so forth become a social convention because they do not know the history of Gucci itself. In fact, they only know the trending not the branding because of the signs are consumed by them. This study aims to analyze the marking in Gucci branding itself that it affects their social status.

To answer all of the problem formulations, this study discusses a theory and concept which relate to the phenomenon of Gucci. The consumer community no longer takes advantage of the use-value of the objects they use, but the significant value that is manipulatively inserted into the Gucci. Then, it also explains how the lifestyle has become a commodity, as an engineered form of production-consumption activities in the current era of capitalism. Finally, it also explains Roland Barthes' semiological theory which is used to reveal the value of the sign. However, it forms a lifestyle in the social status that contains in the Gucci object.

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This study has the purpose of analysis, there are : to describe how the Gucci's branding be explained by semiotic analysis and the relevance between Gucci's branding and representation of social status.

The study about semiotics of Roland Barthes have been conducted by some researchers. There are some similarities and differences between the previous study and this study. The study that conducted semiotics Roland Barthes is *Fashion Sebagai Komunikasi: Analisa Semiotika Roland Barthes Pada Fashion Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono (AHY): Dalam Pemilihan Gubernur Jakarta by Nabila Myrrha Rahmawati (2020)*. The results of the study that in the 2016 Jakarta Governor election, AHY as one of the candidates for Governor used fashion as a medium of political communication for interacting the people during the campaign period. It can be seen from some clothes that are deliberately chosen to always be worn until the governor election period ends, such as black tactical

shirts and traditional Jakarta clothing. Through the fashion, is symbol of nationalism and is ready to lead as the identity of a prospective leader which is reflected in the tactical shirt he wears.

Besides, another study which is written by Asnat Riwu (2020) entitled *Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes Pada Film 3 Dara (Kajian Semiotika)*. This study aims to explain the meaning of denotation, connotative meaning, and myths contained in the film "3 Dara". This research uses descriptive qualitative with semiotic approach from Roland Barthes. The results obtained from research in the film "3 Dara" are that the meaning of denotation and connotation in this film gives us an understanding of the importance of being polite and respecting a woman and to anyone.

In addition, the study that conducted semiotic Roland Barthes is *Makna Denotasi, Konotasi, dan Mitos Dalam Film Who Am I Kein System Ist Sicer (Suatu analisis Semiotik) by Rina Septiana (2019)*. The results of the investigation are in the

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form of denotative and connotative meanings that are always present in the investigated data. Myths don't always exist. The denotation in this film is Benjamin's computer skills, which put him in a dangerous position. The connotative meaning of the film is social engineering. The myth of the film is that excessive obsession leads to dire consequences.

Another study which is written by Franciska Romana Sariningsih (2021) entitled *Analisis Tanda Roland Barthes Dalam film Dokumenter "Jadi Jagoan Ala Ahok (FIGHT LIKE AHOK)"*. This thesis aims to determine the meaning of denotation, connotation and representation of Chinese people in the film. This study obtained the results that there are 22 denotative meanings and 22 connotative meanings that have been classified. In addition, this study resulted in the findings of 5 representations of Chinese people in the film "FIGHT LIKE AHOK".

The other study which is written by Anastazja Magdalena Kasztalska (2018)

*Brand Image and The Fight Against Counterfeiting by The Gucci Company*. The purpose of this study is to find out about how maintaining a brand image can lead to increased corporate profits. However, there is a close relationship between maintaining a brand image and fighting counterfeiting. The counterfeit unfortunately casts doubt on the value of the brand and poses an existing threat to Gucci's company.

This study used interpretative qualitative approach to explain, describe, and analyze the findings of the data. Qualitative approach as a process of study and understanding based on a methodology that investigates a social phenomenon and human problem. In this approach, this study examines words, reports detailed views of people, and conducts studies in natural situations. This study is collecting the data from the signification of branding conducted object of study through ground theory perspective.

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This study is interpretative using a qualitative approach, qualitative methods allow the study to approach the data so that they are able to develop analytical, conceptual and categorical information components from the data itself instead of techniques that have been previously conceptualized.

Qualitative study tries to understand social behavior, because they find a definition of reality and how it affects behavior. According to Bungin (2007: 47) The interpretative concept is to analyze social reality and how social reality is formed. Interpretative study has the assumption that access to reality can only be done through social construction. Social construction in interpretative study are metaphors and the various meanings they have.

<sup>8</sup>Bogdan and Taylor (2013) emphasize that qualitative study is one of the study procedures that produces interpretive data in the form of speech, writing and the

behavior of the people being observed. This study described the semiotics by Roland Barthes that found in the Gucci's branding. The problem of formulation of this study is focuses on analyzing how can the Gucci's branding be explained by semiotic analysis and the relevance between Gucci's branding and representation of social status.

## **B. Finding and Discussion**

This part, discussing about the types of semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes that contained in the Gucci's branding. The first level discussion in this study is denotation to analyze the signs and meanings contained in the Gucci branding. Whereas in the concept of analysis based on Roland Barthes' theory, the second level of marking is connotative meaning. The connotative is the level of signification that explains between the signifier and the sign-in which there is a meaning that is not true. The connotative can produce a hidden second meaning or what he calls

<sup>8</sup> Bogdan & Taylor. *Qualitative Interpretative Research*. (London: Bloomsbury MIT,2013),p.11.

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myth. Besides, the connotation provides an overview of the ongoing interaction when the sign meets the user's emotions or is subjective and its cultural values for Barthes. There are several signs and meanings that will be analyzed through Roland Barthes' semiology of Gucci's branding, including:

#### **Data 1a: Quality is remembered long after price is forgotten**

Denotation: The quotation that in the advertisement explains that in this Gucci's website consumers do not doubt about the quality of the product. It wants to convey the impression to the readers that when someone wants a good commodity's quality, they must pay a expensive price to get it. Simply, quality depends on the price. However, it shows that the Gucci commodity is only intended for a group of people who shop without thinking about the price, namely people who have upper class social status.

**Data 1b → Connotation:** Based on her fashion using Gucci with her

statement in which one's of Indonesia top artist, Luna Maya's post on her Instagram with 32 M followers December 6, 2019, said **"You can sit with me"**. It connotes that the aims of it is to provide the sentence itself. It is used to state that Luna Maya has endorsed Gucci because everyone knows that Luna Maya is an artist in Indonesia. Therefore, based on the statement of Luna Maya on her instagram post is to attract the intention of the first impression of the consumers when they saw her instagram post. It means that everyone who want to align with her must use Gucci first.

#### **Data 2a: We champion inclusivity, diversity, and equality, so that everyone in our global community can be their authentic, unique, and diverse selves.**

According to data 2a, it has meaning that Gucci can be consumed by all of the people in this world. Even they are upper class or lower class.

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**Data 2b → Connotation:** Olla Ramlan's statement as a model, artist with 17,5 M Followers on Instagram. In her post said that **"If you like it, wear it! #GucciOverture #GucciBeloved"**. In addition, it is the only way to show that by using a Gucci commodity can make a person who obsessed for being yourself. In fact, Gucci's price is expensive so everyone cannot use Gucci even if they like it, because it is intended for high class people. Simply, Gucci only certain people can use it or exclusive.

### **Data 3a: To Gather Together**

**Denotation:** It conveys that the meaning of it is intended for everyone who are wants to gather together in comfort and full of confidence, they can wear the Gucci's product as their outfit.

**Data 3b → Connotation:** As we know that, Bunga Citra Lestari is an singer and top models with 19,4 M followers said on her Instagram post in which use Gucci's fashion as her outfit on November 30, 2018 that **"Gucci Gang"**. Bunga Citra Lestari statement wants to give the

information to the people that we can be together when you use Gucci so it belongs to their gang. However, with the expensive price of the product, it just can be consumed by upper class.

**Data 4a: Powered by Creativity and collaboration, we are reducing our environmental impact and protecting nature, while also prioritizing inclusivity and respect, so that everyone in our global Gucci community is free to express their authentic, diverse selves.**

**Denotation:** It explains that Gucci emphasizes about the approach to build and develop an open environment, inviting and involving all people with different backgrounds, characteristics, abilities, status, conditions, ethnicity, culture, and others. In addition, it does not eliminate the uniqueness in yourself.

**Data 4b → Connotation:** As we know, Ayu Dewi is an artist with 12,1 M followers on Instagram, presenter, model which is focuses on fashion. Ayu Dewi said

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on her Instagram post with her gang in which use Gucci's fashion as her outfit that **"Wanna Sit With Us? Sure if Ur #GucciManifesto enuf #AyuDewiStory"**. Ayu Dewi's statement wants to give the information to the people that whoever wants to be with us, then at least have to use Gucci first so it belongs to their gang. However, with the expensive price of the product, it just can be consumed by upper class.

#### **Data 5a: Diversity, equity, and inclusion defines Gucci**

**Denotation:** It emphasizes that the main goals of Gucci are helping everyone in the world that creates identity harmony in diversity, equity, and inclusion in order to get people's empathy. Moreover, nowadays there are a lot of problems or issues that contain various world conflicts.

**Data 5b → Connotation:** However, Jessica Mila as an actress, and model states on her Instagram post (25/06/2021) that **"Stepping out from some brunch time with my Gucci girls #GucciOverture**

**#guccibeloved"**. It connotes that everyone who wants to be equal and into the alley of Jessica Mila must use Gucci first. Indirectly, it determines social class differences that represent a person's social status in society when using Gucci. Besides, it also emphasizes the message that whoever, whenever, and wherever can be a part of the Gucci gang with buying original product of Gucci.

However, the study finds the myth that motivates Gucci's branding because most of the people are associated with Gucci's branding as determination of social status. In fact, the literal meaning is they are only a commodity. The Gucci's branding is used to create the ideology of the myth that is created by citizens. Based on the statement above, it is important to know the deep meaning of some signs. It means that with knowing the meaning, we can know the actual explanation, and actual information behind the sign especially in Gucci's branding. This study finds 5 Gucci's brandings to analyze. This study shows that there is some meaning that is created by the influencers to the

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consumers through the commodity thus it is creating a new perspective that using Gucci can determine a person's social status.

### C. Conclusions

Based on the formulation of the problem of this study. Based on this study, it concluded that representation of social status towards Gucci can be known through several stages of meaning, namely: Denotation, Connotation, and Myth.

In denotation, it emphasized about the literal meaning of a sentence that published by Gucci itself. In the next stage, connotation, the meaning of an object was created by socio-cultural and personal (subjective and emotional) associations of the sign particularly in relation to class/social status, gender, age, ethnicity of the interpreter. In the last stage, myth, was ideology or belief that formed in society.

The purpose of this study to identify how can the Gucci's branding be explained by semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes and the relevance Gucci's branding and representation of social status. According to the findings and analysis, the result can be drawn as follows:

1. However, the study finds the myth that motivates Gucci's branding because most of the people are associated with Gucci's branding as determination of social status. In fact, the literal meaning is they are only a commodity. The Gucci's branding is used to create the ideology of the myth that is created by citizens. Based on the statement above, it is important to know the deep meaning of some signs. It means that with knowing the meaning, we can know the actual explanation, and actual information behind the sign especially in Gucci's branding.
2. This study finds 5 Gucci's brandings to analyze. This study shows that there is some meaning

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that is created by the influencers to the consumers through the commodity thus it is creating a new perspective that using Gucci can determine a person's social status.

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