

## **The Symbolic Meaning of Wonderful Indonesia TVC (A Visual Journey through Banyuwangi Version)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

One of the promotional activities of Wonderful Indonesia is through advertising on television (TVC). It is aired both on the national television, as well as pay-tv aired in various countries. In 2016, Indonesia was ranked 47 out of 144 countries. The purpose of this study was to find the symbolic meaning of wonderful Indonesia version of A Visual Journey through Banyuwangi. It aims to examine connotative and denotative meaning contained in the advertisement. The identity of Indonesian, culture and philosophy is reflected in the advertisement. Semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes who claimed that social life is a sign of its own system was adopted as a research method. Data was collected through observations and interviews to complete the analysis. The results showed that the video "A Visual Journey through Banyuwangi TVC" contained denotative and connotative meaning. Denotative meaning refers to depiction of Banyuwangi in East Java, such as waterfalls, traveling to there, the uniqueness of natural stone and see the activities of tourists and local people in their daily activities. While the connotative meanings are attributed to Indonesian culture and philosophy, such as humble and harmony.

*Keywords:* Banyuwangi, symbolic meaning, TVC, visual journey

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In order to increase the number of tourists visiting Indonesia, the government of Indonesia, through the Ministry of Tourism, introduced a tourism programme called Wonderful Indonesia. In 2015, Indonesia was among the top 100 destinations for tourists and in 2016 it was ranked 47th

out of 144 countries though it was still below Singapore which ranked 41. In 2019, Indonesia plans to attract 20 million foreign tourists to Indonesia (Jokowi-TV, 2016). One of the promotional activities in Wonderful Indonesia is advertising via television (TVC), both national and private television in Indonesia, as well as pay-tv aired in various countries. Wonderful Indonesia promotion is done through TV Commercials, Vignettes, and TV Series. The advertisement was made up of 24,000 spots, 25 TV Series, and 6 Weeks Social Media Campaign on CNBC (Consumer News and Business Channel). The advertisements were broadcast during prime time and regular time. Indonesia also targeted global media, such as Discovery Channel, Travel and Living Channel, Asian Food Channel, Fox International, Channel News Asia, CNBC, CNN International, and BBC World among others (Gibbons, 2016).

A Visual Journey through Banyuwangi was produced and aired in 2016. The aim of this study was to find a symbolic meaning of Wonderful Indonesia: A Visual Journey through Banyuwangi. It will examine the denotative and connotative meanings contained in the advertisement. Therefore, this paper is expected to benefit prospective tourists who will visit Indonesia to have better understanding behind the meaning of these images. The study will also contribute to knowledge on the culture of Indonesia through the display of images of tourist attractions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Today advertisement plays an important role in persuading customers to purchase products and services. However, expenses of advertisement can be prohibitive compared with other promotional activities (Jolodar & Ansari, 2011). Advertising is a form of creating social reality which was supported by Ulani Yunus who opined reality is the result of human creation in mind, which is creatively gained through the power of social construction to the social world around. In short, social reality is a description of a thing that exists in the society which is constructed by mass media through programme display or advertising campaign (Yunus, Angeline, & Ramadanty, 2017). The process of communication is not easy. TVC Wonderful Indonesia is targeted at various groups and with various cultural backgrounds. According to Khizbullin et al. (2017), the misunderstanding caused by communication can impair planning and cause some nations to be left behind by others.

This study examines television advertisements produced by Chelsea Yamase and Travis Burke with cameraman Mikai Carl. The scene is a raging waterfall with small turtles being protected and allowed to escape into the open sea. The scene later shifts to an overland journey using a car to explore the forests. This is followed by scenes of residents involved in clearing the hills and by cutting through stones, football match among local teens, friendliness of the people, clean white beaches, the waves on the beach, and a clear green sea. Scenes

also focus on surfing followed by sunset with beautiful beaches (Yamase & Burke, 2016). Banyuwangi's tourist spot is part of the conservation effort and preservation of culture (Firzan, Keumala, & Zawawi, 2017). Engagement of professional evaluators as specialists in conservation projects may be considered by heritage owners, organisations, or authorities to yield a better outcome and results.

Previous research on Wonderful Indonesia by Wulandari confirmed that tourism campaign with the content analysis, textual and visual information of the website was important to attract tourists. Each picture is classified into the list of image dominant attribute to see the visual representations on the website. This study classified the pictures based on the visually appealing layout and attractive images of Indonesia (Wulandari, 2014). Ulani Yunus (2012) stated that Barthes's maps could be drawn from the denotative sign consisting of the signifier and the signified, but at the same time the sign also had denotative and connotative meaning. Denotation is the first level of signification system, while the connotation is the second level. In this case, the denotation was associated with the closure of meaning while the connotation was identical to the operation of ideology, which he called the 'myth' and serves to reveal and provide justification for the dominant values prevailing in a given period. In the myth, there is also a three-dimensional pattern of the sign, the signifier and the signified. At the first level (language) Barthes called signifier (1) and signified

(2), a combination of both yield sign (3) on the first level. In the second stage, sign (3) back into a signifier (I) and combined with the signified (II) and a SIGN (III). There is a second level, a MYTH, also called a *metalanguage* (Yunus & Tulasi, 2012).

In this study, TVC as a form of communication can be translated as a message according to the situation and according to Wurtz (in Yunus, Sari, & Patriana, 2016), communication varies with roles and relationship, with concern for belonging and fitting in and occupying one's place. In this case, communication will depend on the circumstances in which communication takes place.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research adopted the semiotic analysis method of Roland Barthes where social life was a sign with its own system. Saussure was what Barthes referred to in investigating the relationship between the signifier and signified on a sign. Reality, according to Barthes, was composed of: external and internal reality. Barthes called external reality as the denotation, which was the most obvious meaning of the sign. The connotation as used by Barthes describes the interactions that occur when the sign evokes feelings or emotions of the culture (Kurniawan, 2001). Connotations have subjective meaning or at least intersubjective meaning with codes while denotation is a sign related to the object (Sobur, 2003). Signifier and signified is the subject of this study supported by theory and based on findings of previous researches.

Data for study was obtained through observation of the advertisement, video recording, and images. Data was also obtained from interviews of several sources.

Translating symbols in Indonesia is very important (Yunus & Tulasi, 2012).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Wonderful Indonesia can be declared a successful advertisement as Indonesia is now ranked 47<sup>th</sup> out of 144 countries based on the World Economic Forum and Tourism Competitiveness Index in terms of its tourism appeal. The Ministry of Tourism has three formulas to attract 20 million tourists: encourage direct flights to tourist areas, build 100 thousand tourism themes in Indonesia, and promotion through digital media. Tourist arrivals in Indonesia has seen a steady increase year by year. In January 2016, the number of Indonesian tourists was recorded at 851,462 a drop from January 2017 where the number of Indonesian tourists totalled 1032,930. If compared between January 2016 and January 2017, it is an increase of 21.31 % (Indonesia\_Investment, 2017).

### Denotative Meaning in a Visual Journey through Banyuwangi TVC

One of the most popular tourist destinations is Banyuwangi district, located at the eastern tip of Java Island. It attracts 1.5 million domestic tourists and 30 thousand foreign tourists annually. The usual tourist destinations are promoted in Banyuwangi (Farhan, 2016).

**Ijen Crater.** *Ijen* crater is a natural scenery above an altitude of 2,368 meters above sea level. A crater measuring 20 km walled caldera as high as 300-500 meters. *Ijen* is one of two traditional sulphur mining areas in Indonesia after *Welirang*. It is the biggest Crater Lake in Java. The sulphur Crater Lake lies between natural dams of deeply etched rock. It is 200 meters deep and contains about 36 million cubic meters of steaming acid water, shrouded in a smelling swirling sulphur cloud. Inside the crater, different colour and size of stones are found. Indeed, the crater of *Ijen* is a beautiful garden of stone as well (Banyuwangi Tourism, 2016).

**Plengkung Beach.** *Plengkung* beach or also called G-Land is very popular among domestic and foreign surfers. *Plengkung* beach has waves that are ideal for surfing and has a nickname The Seven Giant Waves of Wonder. This is because the waves in these places are shaped as seven large rolls with a height of up to 6 meters. Indonesia is proud of the *Plengkung* Beach at the eastern tip of Java Island. Aside from its enchanting natural beauty, the long curving coast line here is recognised as one of the best-surfing sites on earth. It is a paradise for surfers offering some of the most outstanding waves in the world. The international surfers have surfed 7 rolls of waves that can reach up to 6 meters high (G-Land, 2016).

**Rajegwesi Coastal.** It is located in the *Sarongan* Village, *Pesanggaran* district and offers very interesting scenes. The sand is brown and very tender. Besides the

natural beauty and its historic value, tourists can also see the life of the surrounding community. Rajegwesi is one of the nature-based tourism destination areas in Meru Betiri National Park. Administratively, the park is located at two regencies, Jember and Banyuwangi, East Java, coordinates 8.5333°S, 113.7833°E. It spans across 580 km of varying topography including sandy, coastal plains, mangrove swamps, lush rainforests, and highlands of over 1,000 m. Meru Betiri National Park has several tourism areas; one of them is Rajegwesi, a coastal area (Raharjo & Hakim, 2015).

### **Green Bay**

Green Bay has clear water and its greenery is fascinating. Tourist attractions in Banyuwangi include Meru National Park area Betiri with soft white sand surrounded by tropical forests. Tourists can swim, snorkel, playing along the beach and go fishing. To get to Green Bay, or commonly called the *Teluk Ijo* by local residents, the traveller must go to Pesanggaran village first. Green Bay or *Teluk Hijau* is located in Banyuwangi, southern Pesanggaran, Sarongan village. This is a hidden paradise in East Java. Or one can go towards Pesanggaran-Sukamade-Sarongan along the route to Merubetiri National Park Sukamade coast. On the east and west side there are metamorphic rocks. There is clear sea water which is and greenish and with beautiful atmosphere. On the east, there is a fresh waterfall (eastjava.com, 2015).

### **Kalibendo Waterfall**

Located about 20 km from the city centre of Banyuwangi, *Kalibendo* waterfall offers incredible views of the beautiful and soothing, crystal clear waters and rivers with cold water flowing from the waterfall. Kalibendo is located at west of the city centre. There are not many foreign tourists here and it is surrounded by rubber plantations. Some of the workers traditionally load the latex with an average weight for about 70 litres using bamboo. Visitors can find other plants, such as cloves and coffee, and there is also a coffee processing factory nearby. The areas are still very still surrounded by green rain forest. Around 2 km walk through the river, there is a waterfall, clean and fresh ideal for swimming (ijenminertour.com, 2015).

Denotative image above contained in the TVC posted in the Indonesian Traveller in October 2016 has been seen by 9009 viewers with the theme a Visual Journey through Banyuwangi.

### **Connotative Meanings in a Visual Journey through Banyuwangi TVC**

The object of this research is video or audio visual to understand the connotative meanings of a visual image. As mentioned by the South Korean researchers who introduced and applied an innovative method of semantic network analysis, South Korea, as well as the failure of science communication. In short, the supporters' internet representations connote concerns in daily life that motivated their sympathy and activism (Kim, 2011). In a Visual Journey through Banyuwangi TVC, overall

grant symbol markers are aired which is a marker of life; green trees reflect the natural serenity, baby turtles as a symbol of concern for the environment, the activity of tourists and local residents describe the dynamics of a life full of passion.

### **Elements of Symbols in a Visual Journey through Banyuwangi TVC**

Water has connotative meaning as the giver of life and freshness in enjoying life. Water flowing in the form of waterfalls offers hope in life. The green colour gives peace. This is shown in Figure 1.



*Figure 1. Kalibendo waterfall hinted life*

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheIndonesiaTravel>

The trees around the waterfall reflect hope and passion in life. The meaning of reality is also dynamic. It used to be a waterfall is a sign of danger, but now is seen as fluid and dynamic. They create the impression that the results of social activity are unchangeable. The critical theory provides an ‘analysis of the mystical consciousness that is unclear about itself’ stated by Marx (Fuch, 2016). Research reveals connotative meaning differ based on cultural backgrounds. Unfortunately, in this kind of research, it revealed important things related to things deeper than the denotative meanings. It is certain expressions are used to make a prediction about the future of people either because of what they are engaged in at present or as a piece of advice (Rabab’ah & Al-Saidat, 2014).

Furthermore, the depiction of hatchlings heading to the ocean, reflect connotative meaning that man cannot dominate pleasure. Amid excitement and enjoyment of nature, people should keep in mind the preservation of other creatures. Overall, the symbols of Visual Journey through Banyuwangi TVC can be interpreted as follows: Air signifies life; green trees display natural serenity, young turtles as a symbol of concern for the environment, while the activity of tourists and locals describes the dynamics of life.

The coolness of the air via road travel and river journey brings forth emotion and sensation. The assumption is man controls the journey. We understand the new design approaches not in the sense of a universal principle but as a dynamic process that, dependent on the context and in the



Figure 2. The journey overland through the tea plantation  
Source: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheIndonesiaTravel>

exchange with other cultures, continually seeks new solution. Research on the cultural implications of imagery is most often approached from a theoretical perspective, pursuant to an art-historical or visual-studies inquiry (Baur & Felsing, 2016). The symbols of the image can be translated differently from time to time depending on the translator. The visualisation in this study was interpreted based on general Indonesian cultural perspective. According to Goodman (1986), people can set symbols together to form words when representing something, but the meanings of such words are given by users of these words. Crystal (2006) clarified this, "Words have no life of their own. It is people who have lived, and it is they who give life to words. Or death. And as people, and their societies, never stand still, neither do words (Omar, 2012).

This woman in the TVC ad show their posture and profile. She looks at the open sea with optimism and enthusiasm to meet

the open sea with confidence. Connotative meanings indicate the women can swim in the open sea with a feeling of serenity and joy. In addition to the natural beauty, the local residents are an attraction for tourists. On the contrary, the German films of 2008 are still of topical interest, because the suffering of its heroes are not exploited but revealed with humour, fine irony, decency. It is also a gentle reprimand of ignobility and lack of people's curiosity (Dragan, 2016; Lulic, 2016). Understanding the simplicity of locals is important as tourists join the locals in the game of football. One consequence of this development is the massive change in communication requirements (Baur & Felsing, 2016). The advertisements by Yasmin Ahmad are not only a work of aesthetics, but a cultural product that has opened up a dialogue between intellectuals, theologians and humanists on issues of religion and culture in Malaysia (Ngo & Baharudin, 2015).

**Interpreting Culture through Images**

**Waterfall.** Humans should not be arrogant, water will flow from top to bottom with maximum force. Flowing water is a form of encouragement to live life fully. Humility is for the prideful.

**Turtle babies** denote that one should not be greedy. Turtles are allowed to go to the open sea which means human beings must be involved in sustainability of other creatures.

**Stone in baskets.** Hard work is a part of Indonesian life. Stones with bright blue sheen indicates the beauty of hard work.

**Men’s bare chest.** Humans need to be involved with nature and treat it as a friend. This is evident from the enthusiastic locals playing football bare chested in muddy areas, while foreign tourists swimming and surfing describe the harmony of nature.

**Smiling boy.** It is an indication of sincerity like a child. Images of smiling children and foreign tourists who teach indigenous children show sincerity.

The symbols of Wonderful Indonesia “A Visual Journey through Banyuwangi Version” can be summarised in Table 1.

Table 1  
*The symbols present on wonderful Indonesia TVC (2017)*

| No | The Visuals      | The Meaning of Symbols                          |
|----|------------------|---|
| 1  | Waterfall        | Humans should not be arrogant                   |
| 2  | Turtle babies    | Interested in sustainability of other creatures |
| 3  | Stone in baskets | Hard work                                       |
| 4  | Man barred chest | The harmony of nature                           |
| 5  | Smiling boy      | Sincerity                                       |

**CONCLUSION**

Through the advertisement titled Visual Journey through Banyuwangi, TVC has managed to deliver denotative and connotative meanings as reality. Denotative meanings were in the form waterfalls, clean beaches, natural formations and tourist activities and the local population engaged their daily activities. The connotative meanings in the meantime were attributed to the Indonesian culture and its unique

philosophy such as unity with nature, hard work, humility, generosity, sincerity, intermingling of all cultures, Indonesian identity displayed through colour, upturned hands (denoting religiosity), and the red and white flag. Wonderful Indonesia is about the beauty of Indonesia, the friendly locals well as humility and harmony. Therefore, the natural beauty of Indonesia must be preserved.

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