# THE SACRED NAME ON THE BOTTLE: THE SAUSSUREAN SEMIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE IN THE MARKETING CAMPAIGN OF HOLYWINGS INDONESIA

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#### Abstract

This research focuses on Instagram uploads from Holywings Indonesia which juxtapose two sacred names (Muhammad and Maria) with bottles of liquor (Gordon's Gin). The promotional upload then went viral until Holywings Indonesia was deemed to have blasphemed religion. This paper places the Holywings Indonesia promotional upload as a material object of semiotic studies. In the researcher's opinion, these uploads represent sign phenomena and tagging systems. Every language expression, image, color, and so on has a basis of meaning implied behind the sign. For research purposes, Saussure's scheme of signs (semiology) is used as a methodological tool in understanding the meaning of signs (markers and signifieds) uploaded by the Holywings Marketing Campaign.

**Keywords**: Holywings, Saussure's Semiology

## A. Introduction

In a marketing campaign, the promotion strategy demands uniqueness, uniqueness, and sometimes controversy <sup>1</sup>. A brand (brand) always requires innovation through a marketing campaign scheme to attract the attention of consumers. The more unique and controversial, the more likely it is to attract public (customer) attention<sup>2</sup>. The more different the concept of the campaign, the wider the potential to gain interest and seize public opinion. In a digital format, an upload has a greater chance of going viral when it meets the expectations of netizens about digital information.<sup>3</sup>.

Promotion is a place to prove a brand is able to win public attention. A marketing strategy is unique in line with the development of digital styles and communication media<sup>4</sup>. Promotion as a marketing communication medium is done to influence, convey something, persuade, and increase the target market of a company<sup>5</sup>. The level of promotion has now increased dramatically when it is marketed online, the large number of social media users makes promotional events more emphasized through digital. The purpose of promotion is to attract the attention of buyers to use services or buy products so that they can

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Maria Widyastuti, "Strategi Diferensiasi: Mencapai Keunggulan Kompetitif Yang Sustainable," *BIP's IURNAL BISNIS PERSPEKTIF* 3, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Francisca Hanna Febrianti and F Anita Herawati, "Perbandingan Implementasi Advertising Campaign (Studi Dokumen Tentang Perbandingan Implementasi Kampanye Coca Cola 'Open Happiness' Versus Pepsi 'Refresh Everything' Periode 2009 – 2011)," *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* (2013).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> (Dwivedi, et al., 2015; Srinivasan, 2018; Widayati and Augustinah, 2019)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Diana Rapitasari, "Digital Marketing Berbasis Aplikasi Sebagai Strategi Meningkatkan Kepuasan Pelanggan Application Based Digital Marketing As a Strategy To Improve Customer Satisfaction Core," *Cakrawala* 10, no. 2 (2016); Yulia Sari and Nadia Wasta Utami, "Komunikasi Pemasaran Digital Sebagai Tantangan Teknologi," *Jurnal Mahasiswa Komunikasi Cantrik* 1, no. 1 (2021).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Fandy Tjiptono, *Strategi Pemasaran* (Yogyakarta: Andi Publisher, 2015).

become regular consumers. Meanwhile, the branding process is a place to introduce to the public that the product or service is in accordance with the promised expectations. The higher the promotion value, the more products and services a company sells so that it gets a lot of profit. So, what if the promotions carried out by the marketing team like Holywings (HW) are considered taboo and even offend SARA? As a result of his upload, which juxtaposes two holy names for two religions with items that are unclean (haram).

HW is a company established for youth or the millennial generation as a place to hang out, with facilities in the form of bars, clubs and restaurants. HW can be called a discotheque which is then transformed over time to look like a tavern. Not only selling alcohol, HW also provides Food and Beverages (F&B) to be enjoyed. Today HW is a large company that has many branches in various places. Ivan Tanjaya, Eka Setya Wijaya, Marvin Saputra, and Hotman Paris were important figures in the founding of the company. Meanwhile, Gordon's dry gin and Gordon's Gin Premium Pink which are offered as promotions at HW are known as expensive alcoholic drinks originating from England which are recognized as the best-selling drinks in the world. Gordon's dry gin was first produced in 1769 with an alcohol content of 0-30%. With a selling price of around 400,000. In an Instagram upload, HW features the name Muhammad on the front of the bottle of Gordon's dry gin and next to it the name Maria on the front of the bottle of Gordon's Gin Premium Pink. for some people, especially those who are Muslim and Christian, the upload is a form of religious blasphemy.

This research will discuss the upload as an object of study, and place the elements in the upload as a basis for signs that have meaning. The sign has the highest position as the interpretation of the intended

message in an object. Everything that can be observed can be called a sign. So that the controversy that was built by the HW company can be analyzed and explained the signs contained behind the meaning of the marketing strategy which are then considered to have insulted two great names in two religions.

The researcher has conducted a search for relevant literature sources for this study, namely: Hasyim's writings (2014) in Construction of Myths and Ideologies in Television Commercial Texts: A Semiological Analysis. This research is a dissertation that focuses on commercial television advertising media in Indonesia, and not emphasizes the importance of denotation (product excellence), but places more emphasis on symbolic signs that represent the reality of the simulacrum. Commercial advertising works like a simulacrum which makes the product and image built in the human mind look natural and as it is, but the reality is the opposite. Lalu Ramadhana, et al, (2020) in Representation of Masculinity Identity in Gudang Garam Cigarette Advertisements for Men's Have a Taste describes a representation of male characters who are attractive and live a free life with adventure. In this paper, men who like extreme sports also represent masculinity. Whereas Patriansah (2020) in Poster Analysis of public services advertising by sepdianto satutra: Study of Saussure semiotics shows that the entire visual appearance on this poster represents a reality that occurs in society, namely cases of violations or violence in the household. It is hoped that this poster will provide information to the wider community so that they always maintain harmony in the household in order to achieve the goal of a safe and peaceful life. The Study of Saussure semiotics shows that the entire visual appearance on this poster represents a reality that occurs in society, namely cases of violations or

domestic violence. It is hoped that this poster will provide information to the wider community so that they always maintain harmony in the household in order to achieve the goal of a safe and peaceful life. The Study of Saussure semiotics shows that the entire visual appearance on this poster represents a reality that occurs in society, namely cases of violations or domestic violence. It is hoped that this poster will provide information to the wider community so that they always maintain harmony in the household in order to achieve the goal of a safe and peaceful life.

Semiotics is a systematic study that studies a symbol (sign) and everything related to a sign systematically. The relationship of signs to an object is an interpretation of a semiosis scheme (Mudjiyanto & Nur, 2013; Sartini, 2014). Semiotics (or semiology) For Ferdinand de Saussure, is the study of the role of signs as part of social life (Budiman, 2011). Semiology here is a conceptual framework that understands the relationship between signs as an important part of prevailing social life (Piliang, 2004).

In his Course in General Lingustics, Saussure mentioned semiotics as "the study of the role of signs as part of social life". This definition implies that sign relations are a dominant part of prevailing social life. For Saussure the semiotic system and the social system are both interrelated. Saussure in this case talks about social conventions that regulate socially the use of signs, namely the selection of combinations of signs so that they have social meaning and value, and the use of signs in a certain way. (Sobur, 2018). Signs and social life are two related aspects.

The most important main argument from Saussure's theory is the principle that language is a system of signs, and each sign consists of two parts, namely the signifier and the signified (Fitri, 2017; Mudjiyanto & Nur, 2013). The sign is a unity of the signifier (concrete) and the signified (abstract). A marker is a "meaningful sound" or a "meaningful doodle". Therefore, the signifier is the material aspect of language. What was said, what was heard, what was written, and what was read. On the other hand, signifieds are mental images, thoughts, or concepts (Bertens, 2001; Sobur, 2018). To understand language, it must be seen "synchronously", as a network of relationships between sound and meaning. We cannot look atomistically or individually (Sobur, 2018).

For Saussure, linguistic signs have at least two unique characteristics: linearity and arbitrariness (Budiman, 2011). Signs in Saussure's approach are concrete manifestations of sound images, and are often identified using sound images as signifiers. The signifier and the signified are mentalistic elements whose sign express an image or concept as two inseparable components. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is independent (arbitrary), both by chance and by decision. Arbitrator in the sense of the signifier does not have a natural relationship with the signified. Language is a symbolic system. On the other hand, the noise of voices, whether human, animal or other sounds can only be called a language or function as a language if the sound or sound expresses, describe or convey ideas and understanding. Therefore, the sound image must be part of the convention system, agreement system and sign system.

A sign without a signified has no tendency (meaning) so it cannot be called a sign. Signs, on the other hand, cannot be communicated or understood separately from their signifiers. The signified or signified is contained in the sign itself and thus represents a linguistic factor. "The signifier and the signified are a unity like the two sides of a sheet of

paper". Every linguistic sign, according to Saussure, basically combines a concept and a sound image, without specifying a name (Hamzah, 2021; Mudjiono, 2011). The sound made from spoken words is a signifier and the concept is called a signifier, while the concept is called a signified. These two elements are completely inseparable. Separation destroys only words. For example, if it takes any word, it must denote not only another concept (a distinguishable concept), but also another sound (a distinguishable sound). Saussure's notion of sign refers to the relative autonomy of language to reality. However, more fundamentally Saussure expressed what for most modern humans is the most influential principle in his theory of language: the signifier and the signified are arbitrary. According to this principle, the structure of language is no longer seen as manifested in etymology and philology, but is best captured by the way language expresses itself (i.e., a particular linguistic ensemble or construction). Saussure's notion of sign refers to the relative autonomy of language to reality. However, more fundamentally Saussure expressed what for most modern humans is the most influential principle in his theory of language: the signifier and the signified are arbitrary. According to this principle, the structure of language is no longer seen as manifested in etymology and philology, but is best captured by the way language expresses itself (i.e., a particular linguistic ensemble or construction). Saussure's notion of sign refers to the relative autonomy of language to reality. However, more fundamentally Saussure expressed what for most modern humans is the most influential principle in his theory of language: the signifier and the signified are arbitrary. According to this principle, the structure of language is no longer seen as manifested in etymology and philology, but is best captured by the way

language expresses itself (i.e., a particular linguistic ensemble or construction).

For Saussure, signs include at least two intrinsic characteristics: linear and arbitrary" (Budiman 1999:38). The relationship between the signifier and the signified can be accidental or arbitrary (free). In addition, the basic principle of semiotics put forward by Saussure is dyadic or dichotomy. This concept can be interpreted that a sign consists of two parts that cannot be separated. The first part is called the signifier and signified. The relationship between the two is inseparable. A sign cannot work if both parties agree to produce what is referred to as a reference (external reality). Everything can be said as a sign if something can represent something other than itself.

## **Research Methods**

This research uses descriptive qualitative method. A number of procedures in research are carried out to solve problems according to the point of view and approach used by researchers. Qualitative research is always descriptive, meaning that the data analyzed and the results of the analysis are in the form of a description of the phenomenon, not in the form of numbers or coefficients about the relationship between variables<sup>6</sup>. In general, research is an attempt to answer questions and solve existing problems<sup>7</sup>. Research contains a series of efforts with

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Aminuddin, *Pengembangan Penelitian Kualitatif Dalam Bidang Bahasa Dan Sastra* (Malang: Yayasan Asih Asah Asuh Malang, 1990); Farida Nugrahani, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Dalam Bidang Pendidikan Bahasa, Universitas Veteran Bangun Nusantara*, vol. 44, 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Agung Widhi Kurniawan and Zarah Puspitaningtyas, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif* (Yogyakarta: Pandiva Buku, 2016).

procedures that are arranged systematically and aim to solve problems and report research results.

Research methodology is a series of procedures used in obtaining scientific knowledge or knowledge (Suryana, 2010). In this case is the goal to be achieved in research. The method used in this study uses a qualitative research approach. This qualitative research was conducted naturally and exploratively. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary sense that is expected to be able to adapt to the research environment. Therefore, researchers who use qualitative methods are required to be armed with broad theory and insight to conduct face-to-face interviews, analyze and construct the object under study to further clarify it. Research using this approach places more emphasis on meaning and value (Siyoto & Sodik, 2015). This research focuses on the semiotic study of the sacred names contained in the two bottles in the HW promotion and focuses on sign elements that have meaning related to the study of Saussurean semiology in them.

## **B.** Discussion of the Findings

Promotional uploads for Holywings Indonesia have positioned the F&B network which is on the rise as the subject of perpetrators who are considered to have blasphemed religion. Starting from a marketing campaign uploaded via HW's Instagram account (@holywingsindonesia). There are two versions of this post, (a) promotional uploads in Indonesian and (b) promotional uploads in English. Substantially the two images have an attachment in the form of the same message substance, namely HW visitors who have the names MUHAMMAD (M) and MARIA (F) will get drinks (khamr) for free. Even so, there are several different details from the two elements of the

promotional post image, for example the layout and narration, so that the elements in each are related and complement one another.

Figure (a)



Image (a) above is a promotional post for the Indonesian version of HW which includes several sign elements, namely the markers that appear in the promotional upload, as follows: 1. Holywings logo; 2. Narration (caption) promotion: "Wanted! Those who have Muhammad & Maria, we give them Gordon's Dry Gin or Gordon's Pink for free"; 3. Two bottles of Gordon's brand gin; and 4. HW's tagline: "Never Stop Flying".

If each marker element (concrete sign) in figure (a) above is related between one marker element and other marker elements, it can be concluded that the signified scheme (abstract sign) in the upload is HW carrying out promotional practices (marketing campaign) in a unique (not to say controversial) way to attract customer interest by giving free drinks (a bottle of expensive gin) to HW visitors who have the names Muhammad (M) and Maria (F). The word "OR" that appears on the Indonesian version of the liner makes it an option for male (Muhammad) or female (Maria) visitors to get a free bottle of Cordon's Gin. Gordon's Dry Gin for Muhammad while Gordon's Gin Pink Premium for Maria.

Figure (b)



Image (b) above is a promotional post for the English version of HW which includes several sign elements, in the form of markers implied in promotional uploads, as follows: 1. Holywings logo; 2. Promotion date: July 23, 2022; 3. Narration (caption) promotion: "Where is...? these names get free bottles! Every Thursday/Bring your ID Card/Dine-In

Only, No Keeping and Take Away/Available at: Club 1 Pentagon, Mega Kuningan, Campus Karawaci, Pondok Indah PIK, Ground Tj Duren, Bandung Karangsari, Kertajaya, Graha Famili and Medan; 4. Two passport photos (with the image of two prisoners being photographed against a background measuring their height while holding their identity cards and writing MUHAMMAD & MARIA) on each photo is written "one bottle: Gordon's Dry Gin for man" (left) and "one bottle: Gordon's Pink for women" (right); and 5. HW's tagline: "Never Stop Flying".

If each marker element (concrete sign) in image (b) above is related between one marker element and other marker elements, the signified scheme (abstract sign) in the promotional upload can be concluded to be the same as the previous upload, that HW conducts promotional practices (marketing campaigns) through unique (and even controversial) methods in the form of free drinks (a bottle of expensive gin) for visitors who can show their identity (via KTP etc.) as Muhammad (M) and Maria (F). This promotion is also limited to certain HW branches. With simple requirements: free drinks cannot be taken home and must be enjoyed on the spot (at the HW outlet).

Figure (c)

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If the two images (a and b) are aligned to show the full version of the HW promotional upload, that is, the two versions of the image are uploaded in one promotional upload (in two layers) from the official Holywings Indonesia Instagram account. With the addition of a caption, as a marker system, "Tell Muhammad and Maria to go to Holywings right now!!" written in capital letters and two exclamation points. The two layers complement each other and have a complete message. So that the implied message (marker) from the image (marker) will automatically appear in the mind of the reader (viewer) the promotional upload is a form of emphasis and confirmation to the public that the promotion is openly available for HW visitors at the branch specified with conditions and predetermined conditions.

When HW's promotional uploads (pictures a and b) are aligned, it can be compared that the Indonesian version's visual uploads have narratives that are not as sarcastic as in the English version. In the English version liner, the names Muhammad and Maria are specifically attributed to the bottle of Gordon's Gin. The appearance of the English version also

looks more crowded and the impression that is raised is like a challenge: "Where is....? These names get free bottles!

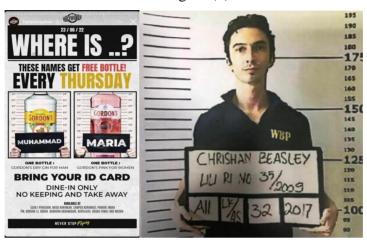
On the other hand, if the English version of the upload is observed carefully, the icon of two boxes appears, which are similar to a passport photo. In the box on the left there is a bottle of Gordon's Dry Gin and there is a Muhammad nameplate in front of it. Likewise with the box on the right with a bottle of Gordon's Pink and Maria's name pinned in front of it.

In Saussurean semiology, sign entities are formed by sign chains that have relations and not by sign substance (nature). The nature of meaning in Saussure's semiotics is also referential. The denotative meaning (language) is different from the connotative Barthes scheme (myth). The meaning of the first (actual) sign is formed by the reference of the sign that forms it so that it refers to something outside itself.

In the promotional upload for the English version, the square icon like a passport photo has a background in the form of a series of height measuring numbers and two hands that appear to be holding a nameplate (Muhammad and Maria). For those who see it in detail, the gin bottle bears a resemblance to the figure of a person in a half-body pose. By combining the marking elements in the box, it appears to have something in common with a photo of a convict who was arrested before being thrown into prison. Because of this, doubts arose: what was the designer of the Hollywings promotional design thinking about so that the two sacred names were equated like a criminal. Perhaps the image is mokeri (mockery) or mockery. Even though these two holy names are holy icons of religious people who always call for goodness and forbid consuming anything that is not good. In short, the appeal of kindness through the appearance of two holy figures is not in line with HW's business because

the two of them always prohibit drunken activities (consuming illicit goods).

Figure (d)



Another interesting thing to highlight is: why did HW choose Thursday (Thursday) for the promotion? The speculation that develops then the interpreter will associate this with the holy Muhammad (Islam) with a holy day for the people of Muhammad. For Muslims, Friday is a sacred day (sayyidul ayyam). In the Islamic almanac system, the turn of the day begins in the afternoon (entering Maghrib time). In other words, Thursday afternoon for Muslims has become Friday (or Friday night). Normally, Friday night is considered sacred because of its virtue. On the other hand, a visitor who wants to drink alcohol is absolutely impossible to go to HW during (productive) working hours. In short, Muhammad (and Maria) as evidenced by ID cards would visit HW after work on Thursday night (Friday night) to unwind with some expensive Gordon's gin. In other words, Muhammad (also Maria) was encouraged by HW to come to their outlet to get drunk instead of reciting Yasin or Al-Kahfi which is usually done by Nusantara Muslims on Friday nights because of

his priority. Perhaps, on the other hand, there is also a gender relation played by Holywing where in the English version it is mapped more binary, Gordon's Dry Gin (M) and Gordon's Gin Premium Pink (F).

#### C. Conclusion

The final verdict regarding the upload deserves to be called blasphemy which is none other than the court's authority, but if viewed from the Saussurean semiotic perspective, Holywings' upload meets the requirements to be claimed to have made massive use of elements of religious tagging as promotional material. Elements of religious signs are intended as a marketing strategy so as to trigger public attention. It is known that religious taboos easily spark controversy. In this way, the intention of the creator of the promotional upload will efficiently reap a broad and massive public response. From the Saussurean scheme it is also known that the system of religious marking in the promotional uploads for Holywings Indonesia is not only focused on the use of two sacred names which are paired with liquor bottles. Further, the icon that bears a resemblance to a criminal figure and Thursday which is designated as Holywings promotion day (in English promotional uploads) are other elements that these promotional uploads injure religious adherents who are consistent with their sharia and faith.

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