

# THE MYTH OF MASCULINITY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FATHER'S ROLE IN THE KAPAL API ADVERTISEMENT 'SEMANGAT 100% SEORANG AYAH': A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS BY ROLAND BARTHES

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**Abstract** This study aims to reveal how the myth of masculinity and the construction of the father's role are represented in Kapal Api's advertisement entitled "Semangat 100% Seorang Ayah" (100% Spirit of a Father). This study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, tracing the meanings formed through visual, verbal, and narrative signs that appear in the advertisement. Data was obtained through literature study and analysis of several images from advertisements uploaded on Kapal Api's official YouTube channel, focusing on symbols that highlight the relationship between masculinity, work, and sacrifice. The results show that the advertisement constructs the image of a father as a hard-working, tough, and responsible figure. This is an ideal image of masculinity that has long existed in Indonesian culture. Coffee serves as a symbol of energy, determination, and zest for life that reinforces patriarchal values of men as the main breadwinners of the family. However, this advertisement also reveals a new layer of meaning by presenting the figure of a warm, loving father who is close to his family. This marks a shift in the representation of masculinity towards a more empathetic and humanistic portrayal. Thus, the Kapal Api advertisement not only reproduces the old myth of men as dominant figures, but also presents a narrative of balance between strength and gentleness. Through powerful visual and symbolic strategies, this study confirms that advertising plays an important role in shaping and negotiating social meanings about fatherhood and masculinity in modern Indonesian culture.

**Keywords:** Advertising, Semiotics, Myths, Masculinity, Fathers

## I. INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a form of mass communication that plays an important role in shaping society's view of social reality. As a medium with a persuasive function, advertising is not only created to offer products, but also to convey the values, norms, and ideologies that exist in society (Jefkins, 1995). Through a series of visuals, narratives, and symbols, an advertisement plays a role in shaping public perception of things that are considered to be ideal standards. This includes gender values, social roles, and power relations between men and women. In other words, advertising is not merely an economic tool, but also a cultural vehicle laden with ideological meaning. Puspita & Herdono (2025) in their study of advertising emphasize that advertising functions as a medium for forming new social meanings that reflect and simultaneously shape gender identity in the public sphere.

In the context of Indonesian culture, coffee has a unique position. It is not only seen as a beverage, but also as a symbol of identity, togetherness, and even masculinity. Prasetyo (2022) in his research on Caffino coffee advertisements found that the visualization of men in coffee advertisements on social media depicts strength, responsibility, and a work ethic that is synonymous with traditional masculinity, although it is beginning to be accompanied by elements of gentleness and

emotionality. For a long time, coffee advertisements in Indonesia have emphasized values such as decisiveness, hard work, responsibility, and a high spirit of life, where these values are culturally attached to male figures. This can be seen in various marketing campaigns for national coffee brands, such as Kapal Api, Torabika, and Luwak White Coffee, which often feature men as the main figures in their advertising narratives. Yuliyanti, Bajari, & Mulyana (2017) explain that the representation of men in Indonesian television advertisements is still dominated by the image of men as decision-makers and symbols of assertiveness, but is beginning to show empathy and concern for the family.

One advertisement that represents this is Kapal Api's "100% Father Spirit" advertisement. This advertisement depicts a father who works hard every day for his family, and a cup of coffee becomes a symbol of the spirit that keeps him going. The narrative is closely aligned with the general public's view of the father's role as the backbone of the family (Mulder, 1996). In this advertisement, a father's hard work, determination, and sincerity are the core messages, as if that is the ideal form of masculinity.

However, behind this positive representation lies an ideological layer that is interesting to explore further. Barthes (1972) explains that the media often works not only on the level of denotative meaning (literal meaning), but also

connotative and mythological meaning. Myth here does not mean fairy tales, but rather an ideological system that makes certain social constructs seem natural and indisputable. For example, when the media portrays men as strong and unyielding figures, the message is not merely a realistic depiction, but also a process of instilling an ideology about what it means to be a real man, which is considered ideal by society.

Thus, the Kapal Api advertisement “100% Spirit of a Father” can be read as a cultural text that constructs the myth of hegemonic masculinity, a concept introduced by Connell (1995) to explain the dominant form of masculinity that places men as leaders and rational figures. In the hegemony of masculinity, men are required to fulfill certain social expectations, such as being the main breadwinner and holding moral responsibility for the family (Gill, 2016).

Thus, the Kapal Api advertisement “100% Spirit of a Father” can be read as a cultural text that constructs the myth of hegemonic masculinity, a concept introduced by Connell (1995) to explain the dominant form of masculinity that places men as leaders and rational figures. In the hegemony of masculinity, men are required to fulfill certain social expectations, such as being the main breadwinner and holding moral responsibility for the family (Gill, 2016).

Roland Barthes' semiotic study is relevant to analyzing this phenomenon because his approach is able to reveal layers of meaning hidden behind seemingly simple signs (Sobur, 2012). Barthes divides the sign system into two levels, namely denotation (literal meaning) and connotation (cultural meaning), so that the interaction between the two gives rise to myths, namely ideological meanings that naturalize a particular worldview (Barthes, 1972).

Furthermore, these types of advertisements contribute to the formation of social awareness. Advertisements not only reflect reality, but also create new realities that shape the way people perceive themselves and their environment (Effendi & Ismaya, 2024). When fathers are portrayed in advertisements as the source of strength in the family, this image symbolically reinforces the view that the main responsibility lies with men.

However, on the other hand, the representation of a gentle and warm father in this advertisement also opens up space for alternative interpretations. It signifies a transformation of values in modern society, where men are beginning to be allowed to show their emotional side without being considered weak (Prasetyo, 2022). This phenomenon is in line with the emergence of the concept of new masculinity.

Thus, this research is important for two main reasons. First, to understand how Kapal Api's “100% Spirit of a Father” advertisement produces meaning about masculinity through its visual and narrative sign systems. Second, to reveal how myths about the ideal man are presented and normalized in the context of Indonesian culture.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, which views signs as a system of meaning consisting of three levels, namely denotation, connotation, and myth (Barthes, 1972).

This approach is used to reveal how messages and ideologies are constructed through visual signs in advertisements. The main focus of the research is directed at the levels of connotation and myth, because these two levels are directly related to the process of cultural meaning formation and the naturalization of ideology behind visual representations (Sobur, 2004).

Through powerful visual and symbolic strategies, this study affirms that advertising plays an important role in shaping and negotiating social meanings regarding the role of fathers and masculinity in modern Indonesian culture. This study is based on Roland Barthes' (1915–1980) theory of semiotics, which emphasizes that signs in the media do not only convey denotative meanings. According to Barthes, media texts such as advertisements are not neutral spaces, but rather means of conveying social values that society considers normal or natural. Therefore, every visual element in an advertisement, from expressions and colors to lighting and narrative, has ideological potential that can shape public perceptions of social reality (Barthes, 1972).

Data collection was conducted through literature studies and visual analysis of several screen captures from Kapal Api's “Semangat 100% Seorang Ayah” advertisement uploaded on Kapal Api's official YouTube channel. The selection of screen captures was made by considering the strength of representation in depicting the values of masculinity, hard work, and sacrifice of fathers.

Data analysis was conducted through semiotic stages as proposed by Barthes, namely by identifying visual signs, interpreting the connotative meanings that emerge, and revealing the myths behind the construction of these meanings. The interpretation process was conducted qualitatively, taking into account the socio-cultural context of Indonesian society. Thus, the results of the analysis are expected to show how Kapal Api advertisements construct the image of fathers as ideal workers who are in line with hegemonic masculinity values (Berger, 2014).

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION



Tiap orang punya semangatnya masing-masing untuk selalu 100%.

Figure 1. Father Wakes Up Early and Gets Ready to Start the Day

Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

Denotatively, this image shows a man who has just woken up in the morning. He feels the sunlight coming through the bedroom window, with a calm but determined expression.

This visual uses warm yellow lighting that signifies an optimistic morning atmosphere. From a cinematographic aspect, this scene opens the narrative about the daily life of an adult man in the context of a household. Then there is a white visual that can be interpreted as smoke or steam from something.

At a deeper level, the scene represents the responsibility and discipline of a head of the family who is ready to start the day with renewed enthusiasm. The sunlight shining on the father's face is also a metaphorical symbol of hope and devotion.

Meanwhile, at the mythical level, this scene affirms the ideology that real men are those who are always ready to start the day early, work hard, and be the breadwinners of the family. This myth reinforces the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995), namely the dominance of masculine values that consider hard work and determination to be the natural characteristics of men. Thus, this advertisement normalizes the view that productivity and moral strength are central to the identity of modern Indonesian men.



Figure 2. Coffee brewed and stirred  
Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

Denotatively, this image shows warm steam rising from a cup and a small spoon stirring a thick black liquid. The warm lighting and the camera's focus on the movement of the hand give an intimate and meaningful impression.

At a connotative level, the act of brewing and stirring coffee is not just a routine activity, but a symbolic ritual. The stirring motion reflects the process of gathering one's spirits before starting the day, as if coffee were a source of energy and inner strength. The steam rising from the cup reinforces the impression of warmth, comfort, and mental readiness. In the context of Indonesian culture, brewing coffee also symbolizes the moment when a person prepares themselves to face social realities and life's responsibilities.

At the mythical level, this scene reinforces the narrative that coffee is the "fuel of masculinity." Through simple actions, the advertisement instills the myth that a man's strength and spirit are born from the habit of drinking coffee, especially Kapal Api coffee, which is closely associated with masculinity.

Barthes (1972) refers to this phenomenon as the process of mythologization, in which everyday objects, in this case coffee, are elevated to symbols of moral and social identity. Thus, brewing coffee here is not just a functional act, but an ideological representation of the maturity, responsibility, and calmness characteristic of working men.



Figure 3. Father enjoying coffee in the kitchen  
Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

Denotatively, this scene depicts a father enjoying a cup of coffee with a satisfied and calm expression, while in the background a woman, assumed to be his wife, is preparing food in the kitchen. This visual composition emphasizes the warm and simple domestic everyday life typical of Indonesian households.

On a connotative level, the scene depicts the balance of roles within the family, where the father acts as the energy source and leader, while the mother performs domestic support functions. The two are depicted as harmonious, yet still within a traditional role structure.

Meanwhile, at the mythical level, this advertisement reproduces the patriarchal ideology that places fathers at the center of productivity and public roles, while women are placed in the domestic sphere. This myth reinforces the idea of hegemonic masculinity as proposed by Connell (2005), that ideal masculinity is represented through economic dominance and mental fortitude that supports the welfare of the family.



Figure 4. Father smiling with his child and wife behind him  
Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

Denotatively, this image shows a father and child smiling together in the child's room, while the mother is seen in the background, watching lovingly. The text reads, "There comes a time when you become a parent," emphasizing that this is a visualization of a small family consisting of a father, mother, and child.

At the connotative level, this moment presents an image of emotional warmth in the relationship between father and child and a happy little family. The father is portrayed not only as a provider, but also as a figure who takes on a role and is emotionally involved in raising children.

In myth, this advertisement marks a shift in the narrative of masculinity towards a more affective and attentive form. It depicts what Dermott (2008) refers to as intimate fatherhood, a concept of a father who is gentle, emotionally close, yet maintains his symbolic position as the head of the family. Thus, the advertisement combines traditional values of leadership with modern values of emotional warmth, creating an ideal father figure for contemporary Indonesian society.



Figure 5. Helping out in front of the bakery  
Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

At a denotative level, the image shows a father delivering goods to a bakery, where a middle-aged woman, known to be his mother, is receiving the delivery. The special writing displayed in the background serves as a visual marker that reinforces the positive impression of the main character's actions. The text that reads "There are times when you are also a child" reinforces the description that this is a visualization of the dual role of a boy who is still attached to his mother even though he is married.

Connotatively, this scene does not merely depict economic or professional activities, but expands the representation of male responsibility in social and emotional dimensions. The moment when the father helps his mother shows that even though he has taken on the role of head of the family, he still bears the responsibility of being a devoted son. This scene presents a balance between strength and gentleness, as well as productivity and caring.

At the mythical level, this advertisement reinforces Indonesian cultural values that place filial piety as the highest form of morality. Within Barthes' (1972) framework in

Mythologies, this scene transforms a simple act into a greater moral symbol that true masculinity is not only measured by economic success, but also by one's ability to maintain relationships and responsibilities towards one's family of origin. The myth that is constructed is that the "ideal man" is not only a hard worker, but also a child who remains humble and devoted. This value combines two ideologies, namely patriarchy as the main pillar of the family and local values as children who respect their parents. This makes the figure of the father in this advertisement a representation of masculinity that is whole, human, and rooted in local culture and values.



Figure 6. Congested roads and traffic jams  
Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

Denotatively, the image shows a crowded city street with vehicles packed together, depicting the reality of traffic jams and urban hustle and bustle.

Connotatively, this visual signifies the harsh struggle of life in a big city, where every individual must fight and survive. In the narrative context of the advertisement, this traffic jam symbolizes the challenges of life that men must face every day.

In mythical terms, city life is depicted as an arena of masculine struggle for men and a place where a man proves his fighting spirit and toughness. In line with Mosse (1996) in *The Image of Man*, this scene reinforces the stereotype that being a man means facing pressure and having to remain steadfast in the face of adversity.



Figure 7. Father at the office, discussing with colleagues  
Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

Denotatively, this scene shows two men engaged in serious discussion in an office. One of them, the main character in this advertisement, stands with active body language and a

determined expression, while his colleague sits listening attentively. This visual composition places the main character in a physically and symbolically higher position, creating the impression that he has authority and control over the situation. The bright lighting, combined with the neat and modern office atmosphere, further reinforces the impression of professionalism and productivity, which is the main context of this scene.

At the connotative level, the interaction between the two characters represents the relationship between power and responsibility in the workplace. The father figure appears as an active, solution-oriented, and results-oriented character, which are characteristics that are culturally attached to the ideal standard of masculinity. In the context of Barthes' semiotics, visual signs such as standing position, serious expression, and hand gestures that emphasize arguments serve to communicate the connotative meaning that being a man means being a rational and reliable decision maker. The workspace itself becomes a symbolic code that reinforces the meaning of productivity, efficiency, and leadership.

Furthermore, at the mythical level, this scene brings to life the classic narrative of productive masculinity, which is a social construct that places men at the center of economic and professional activities. Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) in their theory of hegemonic masculinity explain that the dominant form of masculinity in society is often constructed through the image of men who are rational, work-oriented, and in control in the public sphere. This advertisement reinforces this myth by presenting the world of work as the main space where masculine values are tested and proven.

Through Barthes' lens (1972), this myth works by naturalizing ideological values and making certain characteristics such as rationality, leadership, and emotional control appear to be natural male traits. In fact, these values are the result of social and cultural constructs that are continuously reproduced through the media. In this context, Kapal Api advertisements serve as a tool for reproducing the ideology that links coffee consumption with masculine performance. The act of 'drinking coffee' becomes a symbol that activates energy, focus, and work ethic as the three main attributes in the hegemonic image of masculinity.



(Figure 8. Father at the office, brewing black coffee)

Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

Denotatively, we see a man preparing coffee at his office desk with the Kapal Api logo clearly visible in the foreground.

In connotation, this scene restores the symbol of coffee as a 'ritual of spirit'. Coffee becomes the link between domestic and professional spaces, as if it were a bridge of energy between home and work.

In myth, brewing coffee at the office reinforces the idea that 100% enthusiasm is a moral obligation for working men. Barthes (1972) explains that myths serve to make social values seem natural. In this context, hard work and relentless enthusiasm are presented not as choices, but as the essence of true masculinity.



Figure 9. Two men drinking coffee on a rooftop in the afternoon

Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

Denotatively, two men are seen enjoying coffee on a rooftop with a backdrop of the sunset sky and a distant view of the city. They chat casually while smiling. On a connotative level, this scene creates a reflective atmosphere and a warm sense of camaraderie between the men. This moment highlights the social side of masculinity and solidarity, friendship, and pride in a day's hard work.

In the realm of myth, advertising shapes a positive image of masculinity in which solidarity among men is romanticized as a form of strength and emotional balance. Steve Craig (2002) in Men, Masculinities and Media argues that the media plays a role in softening male figures without undermining the patriarchal structures that support them. This shows how the media creates a more complex and multi-dimensional form of masculinity without eliminating traditional aspects of dominance (Craig, 2002). In addition, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) emphasize that the construction of hegemonic masculinity continues to evolve by incorporating solidarity and emotional balance as male strengths within the contemporary social framework.

Denotatively, this scene shows a man looking at his wife and child sleeping soundly from behind the bedroom door. He stands in dim lighting, with a gentle but tired expression.

Connotatively, this moment depicts silent affection, a form of love that needs no words. He does not wake his family, but simply gazes at them with a relieved expression, as if his responsibility has been fulfilled. The text on the screen, "But

I always try 100% to make them happy," reinforces the meaning of a father's silent sacrifice.



Figure 10. Father comes home late at night and sees his wife and child already asleep

Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

At the mythical level, this scene brings to life the classic narrative that fathers are silent protectors. This image naturalizes the idea that male sacrifice is the most noble form of love, that men do not need to express their feelings verbally, but rather through hard work and presence. This myth is in line with Indonesian culture, which values masculinity based on the ability to bear burdens without complaint (Connell, 2005).



(Figure 11. Father drinking coffee while continuing to work at night)

Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

Denotatively, this scene shows a father brewing coffee in his kitchen at night. He appears to be sitting in front of his laptop, surrounded by a calm and dimly lit home. Around him, his family is already resting, while he is still staring at the screen with complete focus. The presence of a cup of coffee is the main visual element that signifies an activity that requires energy and alertness at a time that should be used for rest.

On a connotative level, this moment depicts a personal choice that signifies a father's preference to continue working rather than sleep. This is not merely a gesture of professionalism, but a symbol of the great responsibility he

holds as the head of the family. Coffee here serves as a symbol of productivity and represents the strength to fight fatigue in order to provide for the family. This scene also reinforces the image of men as rational, hardworking, and dedicated. These characteristics are often associated with the social construction of ideal masculinity in Indonesian society.

The myth naturalizes the idea that male sacrifice is the highest form of love. Scenes of staying up late and working alone not only demonstrate responsibility, but also construct exhaustion as a moral virtue. In other words, exhaustion is romanticized and transformed into a symbol of masculinity and a man's love for his family.



Figure 12. Father's birthday celebrated by children, wife, and mother

Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

Denotatively, we see the wife, children, and mother arriving with a cake with lit candles. They are smiling, full of warmth, while the father looks surprised and happy.

Connotatively, this is a symbol of emotional appreciation. The family appreciates the father's hard work, which he has been doing quietly all this time. The words on the screen, "Thank you for never telling us," emphasize the idea that a father's love is often hidden in his actions, not his words.

Mythologically, this scene serves as an emotional reconciliation between masculine roles and family affection. The advertisement reproduces a new myth about the concept of new fatherhood, namely that fathers remain strong but also deserve love and appreciation. This marks a shift from rigid masculinity to a more emotional form, as described by Dermott (2008).



(Figure 13. Father looking at his child's artwork titled "Great Father")

Source: Kapal Api Official YouTube Channel

Denotatively, the father's hand holds a picture drawn by his child, depicting himself as a figure wearing glasses and a Superman cape, accompanied by the words "Great Dad."

Connotatively, this picture articulates the child's affection and provides emotional validation for the father's struggles. The red cape is a sign of heroism, reinforcing the image of the father as the family hero.

At the mythical level, this advertisement constructs the figure of the ideal, perfect, and dedicated father. Barthes (1972) argues that myths such as this work by simplifying the complexity of reality. In other words, economic struggles, social pressures, and emotional exhaustion are reduced to an uplifting heroic image. However, on the other hand, this myth also serves to reinforce the symbolic appreciation of men as the center of power and love in the family.

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to reveal representations of masculinity and the role of fathers in Kapal Api's "Semangat 100% Seorang Ayah" advertisement through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, which combines in-depth analysis of visual, verbal, and narrative signs. Unlike previous studies that generally highlight coffee advertisements from the perspective of marketing strategies, brand image, or traditional masculinity alone, this study presents a new perspective by looking at how classic masculinity myths are reproduced and renegotiated in the context of contemporary Indonesian culture.

Another novelty lies in the finding that these advertisements not only reinforce patriarchal constructs that position men as hard workers and breadwinners, but also open up space for narratives of masculinity that are more empathetic, warm, and human.

Thus, this study contributes theoretically to media semiotics and gender studies by highlighting the shift in meaning in the representation of modern fathers in advertising media. Practically, this study also broadens our understanding of how the advertising industry can be an important arena for the formation and transformation of social values related to masculine identity in the modern era.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that Kapal Api's "100% Father Spirit" advertisement not only presents the father figure as the main character in the advertisement narrative, but also as a representation of social, cultural, and ideological values regarding the role of men in Indonesian society. Through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, it can be understood that every visual sign in the advertisement, from body gestures and lighting to scene dynamics, builds layers of meaning that reinforce the idealization of masculinity within the framework of local culture. The figure of the father is portrayed as a person of determination, sacrifice, and affection. He works hard tirelessly, choosing to stay awake at night to fulfill his responsibilities, and puts his family above his personal interests. These values not only represent the moral responsibilities of a man, but also show how Indonesian culture constructs men as protectors and pillars of the family. In this context, hard work and sincerity are two sides of the social myth of the "ideal father"—a figure who is physically

strong, emotionally patient, and spiritually steadfast. However, behind this positive message, the advertisement also shows how patriarchal values are still preserved in media construction. Men are still positioned as the main figures in the circle of productivity and sacrifice, while women's roles tend to be obscured in the domestic sphere. In other words, the spirit of 100% as interpreted in this advertisement also symbolizes the cultural burden attached to men that they must always be strong, capable, and never fail. Even so, the representation of fathers in this advertisement also shows a shift in the paradigm of masculinity. The father figure shown is not only rational and hardworking, but also warm and empathetic towards his family. This signifies the emergence of a new masculinity, where men can remain protectors without losing their emotional side. The Kapal Api advertisement successfully combines two seemingly contradictory values, strength and gentleness, into a harmonious whole. Thus, the Kapal Api advertisement not only promotes the product but also spreads the social myth of masculinity as the total spirit of a father. A cup of coffee becomes a symbol of energy, dedication, and boundless love that is integrated into the identity of Indonesian men. Through a strong visual and narrative strategy, Kapal Api has succeeded in reinforcing the image of the father as a representation of "100% spirit," namely sincerity, responsibility, and sacrifice, which form the foundation of family values and national culture.

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