

## The representation of Reog Ponorogo's character construction in Marjan's beverage product advertisement

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** This research was motivated by the different approaches taken in Marjan's advertisement for Ramadan 2021 compared to previous years. Marjan is known for always showcasing local Indonesian culture explicitly in its advertisements so that the culture presented is identical to the original. In 2021, Marjan presented Reog Ponorogo with a superhero fantasy story, so Reog Ponorogo was implicitly displayed in the advertisement. **Purpose:** This research aims to determine the representation of the Reog Ponorogo character construction in Marjan's Ramadan 2021 advertisement. **Methods:** This research uses a qualitative method with Peirce's triadic semiotic analytic approach. **Results:** The representation of Reog Ponorogo construction characters in the Marjan advertisement for Ramadan 2021 was evident in the signs that represent Reog Ponorogo. Marjan's advertisement constructs the concept of fusing traditional culture with modern popular culture. **Conclusions:** The resulting fusion creates an advertisement that tells a superhero fantasy story but still carries the identity of Reog Ponorogo. The media construction is built to keep Marjan's advertisement relevant to the product's target market, with a message of unity and heroism that differs from its traditional counterpart. **Implication:** The presentation of traditional culture in media should be done with the utmost care so as not to conflict with the culture's traditional origin. Consumers are expected to start by getting to know the local culture inherent in themselves so that when this culture is presented in media, consumers can evaluate the media's presentation of culture in the created content.

**Keywords:** Advertisement; media construction; popular culture; Reog Ponorogo; representation

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## INTRODUCTION

Advertisements are inseparable from everyday life. The existence of advertisements in the surrounding environment is unavoidable. Advertisements can be found in various forms, from non-digital ones, such as banners or billboards on the roadside, television, newspapers, and magazines, to digital ones on the internet. Braca and Dondio (2023) explain that the craft of advertising has constituted a form of discourse, which shows a way of presenting something in a socially appropriate way to persuade people to purchase it in the same way that effective orators attempt to convince audiences to accept their messages and act upon them.

Advertising is a form of communication paid for by non-personal sponsors using mass media to persuade or influence the audience. Advertising is an activity used to persuade consumers through non-personal institutions. In this definition, advertising is a filler for mass media because it needs specific media that can reach many people. Therefore, advertisements often shown in various mass media are intended to influence and persuade the audience's attitudes. More specifically, they are directed at viewers who are potential consumers (Kerr & Richards, 2021; Richards & Curran, 2002; Wojdyski & Golan, 2016).

Advertisers must make their advertisements stand out to get more attention from the audience. This problem happened because, according to today's problem, there is too much competition

and too many advertising and promotional messages from multiple communication channels (Kumar & Gupta, 2016; Nieminen & Rapeli, 2019; Schwab et al., 2023). In order to capture market share, advertisement agencies must think hard and optimize their efforts to create an engaging advertisement that captures the viewers' attention, ensuring the effectiveness of their promotions as expected (Abdullah & Permana, 2021; Gavilanes et al., 2018).

According to Indriani et al. (2019), advertisements also create impressions. Through an advertisement, people will develop specific perceptions about what is being promoted. In this regard, advertisers always strive to create ads that are as good and as creative as possible to attract attention. Advertisements are powerful tools in marketing, combining audiovisual elements to deliver impactful messages that attract audiences. They go beyond promoting products by reflecting and shaping cultural values, making them relatable and memorable. Through creative visuals and engaging narratives, advertisements capture attention and evoke emotions, influencing consumer behavior.

The Marjan Ramadan 2021 advertisement combines technological utilization in television and film media. The Marjan advertisement uses television to reach a broad audience as a form of mass communication. It incorporates an audiovisual presentation that adheres to cinematographic principles, creating a combination that allows the advertisement

to be analyzed within the scope of television and film while remaining relevant to mass communication.

One of the most stand-out advertisements in Indonesia is for Marjan's syrup. Marjan focuses its advertisements on the month of Ramadan, during which the demand for syrup among consumers increases. Marjan's ads are aired earlier, towards the lead-up to Ramadan. It is based on the principle that the easiest way to implant a message into the consumer's mind is when advertising has little or no competition. With this strategy, Marjan profits and builds its brand image quickly as a syrup that must be bought during festive celebrations. The media and the timing of the airing also have an effect. Television and the internet significantly impact awareness, interest, and conviction stages, and the marketer intends to give regular reminders to consumers (Lambrecht et al., 2024; Sama, 2019), just like every Marjan advertisement reminds people that Ramadan is about to begin

every year.

Marjan's Ramadan 2021 advertisement brings a superhero story with a folkloric touch from East Java, Reog Ponorogo. However, the presentation differs from previous Marjan advertisements where the cultural aspect is explicitly displayed, or cultural results are displayed in its entirety. The art form can be identified directly, as seen in Figure 1 by Karapan Sapi (2013), Empak Bedug (2016), Ondel-ondel Betawi (2017), and Wayang Golek (2018).

With the Marjan Ramadan 2021 advertisement campaign "Rayakan Kemenangan (Celebrates Victory)" not explicitly showing Reog Ponorogo, it raises a question about the motivation behind constructing the original character of Reog Ponorogo into a fantasy story of a superhero character. It becomes the background for this research to examine the signs present in the advertisement, aiming to see how the representation of the construction



Source: Youtube Channel Marjan Boudoin, January 2021

**Figure 1 In previous years, Marjan's advertisements presented local cultural products explicitly**

of Reog Ponorogo character is depicted in Marjan Ramadan 2021 advertisement.

The Marjan advertisement is an audio and visual advertisement that requires visual design or planning in its production process, such as in character design. Therefore, Peirce's semiotics is suitable for this research because it is based on Zhang and Sheng's (2017) explanation regarding the icon trichotomy that shows signs of similarity, indexes indicating phenomenal attachment, and conventional symbols. It is considered to provide detailed answers on how the Marjan Ramadan 2021 advertisement represents the construction of the Reog Ponorogo character.

One of the semiotics studies popularized as another call for logic is the formal doctrine of signs brought by Charles Sanders Peirce. According to Peirce (1931), a sign is something that, to somebody, represents something else in some capacity. This something else is called the interpretant of the first sign, which in turn refers to the object. A sign has a direct triadic relationship with its interpretant and object. Peirce examines the sign's role in the semiosis process, which involves the sign relation. His theory of semiotics can be analyzed in several ways, one of which highlights three key components in the semiotic relationship: the sign itself, the previously mentioned object, and the interpretant. The semiosis process involves an entity called a representamen with another entity called an object. This process is significant (Matus, 2018; Niu, 2020).

According to Kalantzis and Cope (2020), Peirce classified how meaning relationships operate with one of its triads as icons, indices, and symbols. This statement forms the basis of semiotics analysis methods in this research. Yakin and Totu (2014) explain that the main principle of Peirce's semiotic theory is how the human mind and sign boundaries created the triadic system (representament, object, and interpretant) and the relativity regarding the three typologies of signs (index, icon, and symbol).

In this study, an assessment was made of how the signs in the Marjan Ramadan 2021 advertisement represent Reog Ponorogo and popular culture. The reason for the use of the popular culture concept is due to its widespread presence; popular culture influences how individuals perceive themselves, society, and the world in the given era. Sometimes, this influence is clear and intentional, but more often, it is subtle, indirect, and unintended, yet still powerful (Bulfin, 2017; Helfgott, 2015).

Representation is important in how meaning is produced and exchanged between parties in a culture. According to Danesi (2018), representation is a process of recording ideas, knowledge, and messages in various physical ways. It is the use of signs which connect, depict, imitate, convey, imagine, and are physically perceived. It is characterized as constructing a form  $X$  to draw attention to something materially or conceptually, namely  $Y$ , or in a specific form  $Y$ ,  $X = Y$ . The representation of a construction  $X$

can represent or provide a conceptual form of Y.

There is a connection between representation and construction. According to Rosfiantika et al. (2018), representation is also a form of construction. As human construction of thought grows, they will produce new representations by utilizing new signs recorded by individual intellectuals. Media is a construction of reality. This construction cannot be separated from advertising, a part of mass media. In essence, advertising constructs its reality by the advertising producers as part of the media production process. Media work involves constructing reality. Media content results from the work of media workers who shape and affect collective memories, traditions, and belief systems (Omidi et al., 2022; Sama, 2019).

The Marjan advertisement is a sign because, according to Keane (2018), a sign is a physical form that can be perceived by human senses and represents something beyond the sign itself. The Marjan advertisement is a medium with audiovisual elements that can be captured by sight and hearing. Therefore, because Marjan is an advertisement that is a sign, semiotics as an analytical tool can be used to examine the meaning behind an advertisement (Ardhianto & Manuel Son, 2019; Gretzel & Collier de Mendonça, 2019; Kucuk, 2015). A study of the advertisement message content is needed to see the processes and trends that may exist regarding the structure of the advertisement. This study provides a detailed picture of

the meanings of the signs constructed in the advertisement. The constructed signs form a sign system used as the primary study in semiotics. This study provides a detailed picture of the meanings of the constructed signs in the advertisement. Therefore, in this research, an analysis is conducted to examine what kind of signs are present in Marjan's Ramadan 2021 advertisement within Peirce's semiotic system to find out the system of representation that exists in the advertisement's construction.

There are several versions of Reog Ponorogo's story. However, the Reog Ponorogo generally refers to a legend of a powerful character in the Ponorogo region. One version that is relevant to this research object is the Bantarangin version. However, in the Bantarangin version, there are still several other versions with various fragments of the story that are slightly different but give the same result, namely Klana Swandana, who fought against Singabarong to win a princess to be his queen.

In presenting the Reog Ponorogo culture, Marjan constructed their advertisement starting from the story and its characters with elements of popular culture. The popular culture that was used was modern superheroes. From the general perspective, according to Korte et al. (2019), the prominence or increasing trend of the superhero genre is just one indication of the increasing importance of heroic figures and heroic narratives in the twenty-first century, an era perceived by many as marked by widespread insecurity. However, the most



influential influence comes from American popular culture, which, according to Monika and Antonio (2022), is that superhero movies are a significant part of global consumer culture, leading to highly profitable businesses rooted in American popular culture.

Modern concepts like popular culture in traditional culture have already been used in different contexts. For example, a study by Nugraheni et al. (2021) found that Jaipongan dance still holds its local value even if it is influenced by popular culture and more modernized concepts. Another study by Sugihartati (2020) shows that popular culture (fashion, cyber, film, television, music, and festival) could influence the sense of cultural identity in traditional culture to the youth group.

This research examined how the concept of popular culture is conveyed in the Marjan Ramadan 2021 advertisement through its storyline, which incorporates elements of Reog Ponorogo, a traditional Indonesian art form. The advertisement blends cultural heritage with modern visual techniques, creating a narrative that appeals to contemporary audiences while referencing cultural identity. Using Peirce's semiotics approach, this study analyzed the signs and symbols within the advertisement to uncover how it constructs meaning. It highlights how Marjan strategically integrates elements of popular culture with Reog Ponorogo to deliver a message that resonates with viewers and indicates the construction of Marjan's advertisement on Reog Ponorogo with various

elements of popular culture to fit the message the advertiser wants to convey.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The qualitative research method was used in this study. This research focuses on examining a social issue without using numerical data that requires mathematical processing; therefore, the qualitative approach is considered most appropriate for discussing the topic determined by the researcher. In addition, this research examines the signs in the Marjan Ramadan 2021 advertisement and interprets the relationship of meaning within the signs. Thus, the semiotics approach is used in this research. According to Barnham (2019), semiotics favor the qualitative and in-depth analysis of social and human signifying practices and the analysis and interpretation of texts.

In this research, data triangulation was carried out. Triangulation is a method that uses multiple data sources to improve the credibility and reliability of findings. Researchers can verify their results by incorporating different perspectives, methods, and data and develop more accurate and culturally sensitive insights. This approach also enriches analysis, providing a more profound understanding and decisive conclusions (Gibson, 2017; Stamenkov, 2023).

Jentoft and Olsen (2019) summarized various definitions of triangulation from multiple experts, which said that triangulation means retrieving data from multiple sources and comparing those across the data sources. From

the explanations before, it is concluded that triangulation is the process of seeking the truth of certain information through various sources of data collection. For example, this research uses various written documents, archives, historical documents, official records, personal notes or writings, and pictures or photos.

By triangulating data sources, the researchers validated the data by examining it using three methods. The first method is observing Marjan's advertisement to get the whole look. The second method is documentation, including books, journals, and theses that discuss Reog Ponorogo. The third method is an interview. The interview was conducted to obtain validation about how the advertisement was constructed from the advertisement scriptwriter's perspective in order to introduce the Marjan product and culturalists for their perception of this advertisement.

This research examined the representation of Reog Ponorogo's character construction in Marjan's Ramadan 2021 advertisement and analyzed it through the lens of Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotics. The study identifies how cultural elements are embedded in the advertisement and how these elements communicate meaning through signs. Using Peirce's semiotic framework, the research classified the signs into three categories: indexical, iconic, and symbolic. Indexical signs in the Marjan advertisement establish a cause-and-effect relationship, directly linking the visuals to Reog Ponorogo. On the other

hand, iconic signs highlight visual and thematic similarities between the advertisement and elements of Reog Ponorogo and popular culture. Lastly, symbolic signs carry conventional meanings widely recognized and agreed upon by audiences, further reinforcing the connection between the advertisement and cultural values. The study explores how cultural representation is constructed and communicated effectively through this analysis.

The discussion is arranged chronologically by looking at the first appearance while following the story in Marjan Ramadan 2021 advertisement from the first episode to the last episode. In detail, the things discussed include the character of Singabarong, the character of Kelana, the plot of the rivalry between Singabarong and Kelana, the plot of the union of Singabarong and Kelana, and the character of Reogman.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first semiosis is a character named Singabarong, as seen in Figure 2. From the representamen identification, Singabarong has a muscular physique dominated by brown and red colors, with thick hair and long fang-like teeth, trying to lift a car to help change its tire. At the same time, a voice-over narration says, "This is Singabarong, the mighty one."

From the index, the lifted car is a sign that shows Singabarong's strength in the form of physical power. From the icon, the name "Singabarong" is similar to the



Source: Youtube Channel Marjan Boudoin, December 2021

**Figure 2 Singabarong's Character**

name Singabarong in Reog Ponorogo. The appearance of a fierce-looking muscular man with fangs and brownish-red skin color represents Singabarong's characteristic as a tiger, a hallmark of Singabarong in the story of Reog Ponorogo.

From the identification of the representant and object, the character of Singabarong in the advertisement represents the character of Patih Singalodra/Prabu Singabarong from the original story of Reog Ponorogo. Meanwhile, the representation of Singabarong, which represents popular culture, can be seen in how this character wears armor connected with a strap to protect his shoulders.

Another sign of popular culture representation is also identified from the object of Singabarong. It is identified with an iconic sign that the appearance of Singabarong's costume resembles the costume of popular culture characters who have superhuman physical strength, namely a suit of armor

in the form of shoulder protectors that are connected by fasteners. From the identification of representant and object, the character of Singabarong in the advertisement represents elements of popular culture through his armor, which represents popular culture characters with superhuman physical strength. From the combination of two sides of representation, we could discuss how the ad was represented and constructed the Singabarong character for specific reasons.

In the original story of Reog Ponorogo, there are two main characters: Singabarong and Raja Kelana. We took the names of these two characters as they are the story's main characters. The story would not make sense if we did not choose the main characters. We chose the most well-known name among all the options. (Informant 1, interview, 12 May 2022)

With such appearance and actions, a similarity can be found in the portrayal of Singabarong's appearance in the story of Reog Ponorogo, starting from a male figure and strong physical strength. The only thing



not covered by this is that the lion's head was used as a reference. However, all the literature found in this research and the interview with Reog Ponorogo, a culturalist, shows that Singabarong's animal identity is that of a tiger.

Singabarong is not a lion but a tiger with long hair. There is no lion in Java back then. (Informant 2, Interview, 29 May 2021)

The character design in popular culture can be seen in the costume design of modern pop culture characters. Typically, characters with strong physical abilities are depicted wearing costumes with bare chests and shoulder pads connected by straps. The scriptwriter confirmed this and explained that it was intended to attract a younger target audience.

The design is meant to attract a younger audience. From here, we align our vision to create a fusion of traditional stories that the younger generation can accept. (Informant 1, interview, 12 May 2022)

Although the design of the Singabarong character is combined with modern popular culture, the impression of a tiger is still visible.

The dreadlocks with Caplokkan's typical color in the Dadhak Merak mask in the Reog Ponorogo art, the makeup of the Singabarong character formed from the dominant reddish-brown coloring, the motifs on the Singabarong's body, and its ferocity are still preserved with the prominence of the Singabarong's fangs.

The second semiosis is a character named Kelana, as seen in Figure 3. From the representament identification, Kelana is shown with a physical appearance dominated by the colors blue and green, with thick hair and various accessories resembling peacock feathers, introduced with narration by a voice-over saying, "And Kelana, as fast as lightning."

Part of Kelana's character that represents Reog Ponorogo can be identified from the object concept of Peirce semiotic with index and icon. From the index, Kelana, who saves the child, highlights his speed and agility. His name echoes Klanaswandana from Reog Ponorogo's story. With a sleek, aerodynamic costume, Kelana's



Source: Youtube Channel Marjan Boudoin, December 2021

**Figure 3 Kelana's Character**

The representation of Reog Ponorogo's character construction in Marjan's beverage product advertisement  
(Rizki Ardiatama Wijaya, Asep Suryana, Fajar Syuderajat)

blue and green colors and peacock feather details symbolize the peacock imagery tied to the character Klana from the original story of Reog Ponorogo in the Bantarangin version.

From the identification of the representant and object, the character of Kelana in the advertisement represents the character of Patih Klana Wijaya or Prabu Kelana in the story of Reog Ponorogo in the Bantarangin version. Meanwhile, Singabarong, which represents popular culture, can be seen in Kelana, who moves fast while rescuing a child, producing a visual effect in the form of lightning.

It is identified with an iconic sign. The visual effect of lightning on the character Kelana resembles the lightning that appears on popular culture characters, representing the power of a speedster. The visual effect of lightning when Kelana uses his power symbolizes the power of speed within him. From the identification of representation and object, the character of Kelana in the advertisement represents a popular cultural element through the visual effect that appears when Kelana uses his power, which represents a popular cultural character with the power of a speedster.

From the combination of two sides of representation, we could discuss how the ad was represented and constructed the Kelana character for specific reasons. The name “Kelana” selection shows an iconic connection to Reog Ponorogo. The name Kelana is present in Reog Ponorogo as the name of one of the characters, Klana Swandana. It is also supported

by the fact that Klana and Singabarong are two character names in Reog Ponorogo.

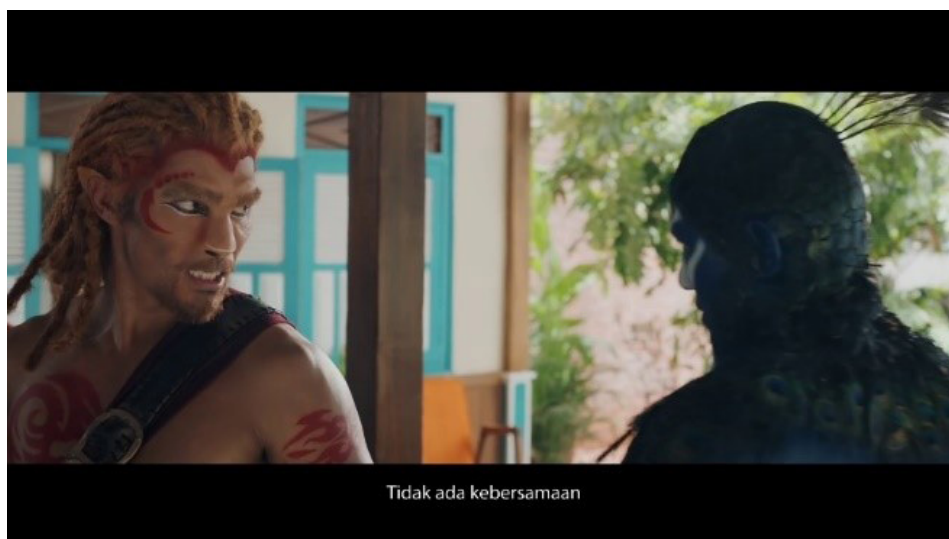
The visual aspect of Kelana’s physical body correlation can be found in the story of Reog Ponorogo. According to the Bantarangin version, the impression of the peacock was associated with the identity of Klana Swandana. “Then Patih Klana Wijaya transformed into a peacock that always displays its beautiful tail” (Lisbijanto, 2019).

According to the scriptwriter’s explanation, Kelana was given the power of super speed to balance out the physical strength already present in the character Singabarong. Thus, it was decided that Kelana’s power would be a speedster, which was taken from the name of his kingdom, Bantarangin, which was inspired by the word “angin (wind)” from the kingdom’s name.

Since Kelana is said to have come from the Bantarangin kingdom, it was decided that his power would be related to speed, which fits with the kingdom’s name, which is inspired by the word “angin” (wind). So, to make it easier for the audience to understand, we decided to use lightning and wind effects to show Kelana’s power. (Informant 1, interview, 12 May 2022)

Although influenced by modern pop culture, Kelana’s design preserves its connection to Klana Swandana from the original story. The dominant blue color, peacock feathers, and lighter costume highlight agility. Kelana’s bare chest, simple pants, and neat hairstyle create a sleek, aerodynamic look, contrasting with the bulkier Singabarong character.

The third semiosis is the rivalry between



Source: Youtube Channel Marjan Boudoin, December 2021

**Figure 4 Rivalry between Singabarong and Kelana**

Singabarong and Kelana's Character, as seen from Figure 4. From the representation identification, Singabarong and Kelana face each other with a cynic look, while a voice-over narration says, "But there is no unity between them."

Part of the character's rivalry that represents Reog Ponorogo can be identified from the object concept of Peirce semiotic with index, icon, and symbol. From the index sign, Singabarong and Kelana face each other with a voice-over explanation stating, "But there is no unity between them," indicating their rivalry. From the iconic sign, the rivalry between Kelana and Singabarong reflects the conflict between Singabarong and Klanaswandana from their original story. From a symbolic sign, Singabarong and Kelana facing each other with a cynical look and not being friendly symbolize their disagreement.

From the identification of the representament and object, the rivalry between Kelana and Singabarong in the advertisement

reflects the conflict between Singabarong and Klanaswandana from the original story of Reog Ponorogo in the Bantarangin version. From the identification of representation from the sign, we could discuss how the ad was represented and constructed the Kelana character for specific reasons. In the advertisement, the two superhero characters are portrayed as rivals despite both helping the people around them. When Singabarong and Kelana meet, they are depicted as giving each other a disdainful look, symbolizing their lack of harmony. The voice-over further explains that there is no togetherness between them.

The rivalry between the two superhero characters in the advertisement is seen as an iconic representation of the conflict between Klanaswandana and Singabarong in the original Reog Ponorogo story. In that story, Klanaswandana and Singabarong compete to win the hand of Princess Dewi Sanggabuana, daughter of the Kediri Kingdom.

"The group of Prabu Klono Sewandono

arrived at the Lodaya Forest. It was only until midway that Singobarong confronted the group. The battle of Prabu Klono Sewandono and Singobarong was inevitable” (Sulton et al., 2020).

The scriptwriter confirmed the rivalry between the two characters and explained that the essence of the conflict between Klanaswandana and Singabarong, which is reflected in their lack of harmony, was taken from the original story. Therefore, the relationship between the two characters is not hero-villain but hero-hero, who are not in harmony with each other.

Because we take it from the traditional story where they fight over Dewi Sanggalangit, so we take the essence of their disaccord. (Informant 1, interview, 12 May 2022)

The fourth semiosis is the fusion between Singabarong and Kelana's Characters, as seen from Figure 5. From the representation identification, Singabarong and Kelana look at each other and shake hands firmly. Then, they fuse into one.

Part of the character's fusion that represents

Reog Ponorogo can be identified from the object concept of Peirce semiotic with index and icon. From the index sign, Singabarong and Kelana began to fuse into one, indicating the fusion of two characters into a new character. From the icon sign, the fusion between Singabarong and Kelana resembles the fusion between Singabarong and Merak from its original story.

From the identification of the representament and object, the fusion of the two characters (Singabarong and Kelana), resulting in a new character (Reogman), represents the storyline of the fusion between Singabarong and the peacock in the original story of Reog Ponorogo. Meanwhile, the representation of the characters' fusion represents popular culture, which can be seen when Singabarong and Kelana exchange glances before shaking hands firmly, creating a visual effect of lightning from their hands. Then, they fused into one with a voice-over narration, saying, “And now, it is



Source: Youtube Channel Marjan Boudoin, December 2021

**Figure 5 Fusion of Singabarong and Kelana**



time to unite our strength.”

Another sign of popular culture representation is also identified from the object of the character's fusion. It is identified with an iconic sign that the fusion between Singabarong and Kelana resembles the fusion between characters in a popular culture known as “fusion.” The sign was symbolized by the firm handshake during the fusion process, symbolizing the unity between Singabarong and Kelana.

From the identification of representamen and object, the fusion of Kelana and Singabarong represents an element of popular culture through their fusion process, commonly known as “fusion.” From the combination of two sides of representation, we could discuss how the ad was represented and constructed the character's fusion with rivalry backstory for a specific reason. Singabarong and Kelana face each other and shake hands firmly, symbolizing unity. A glowing blue and yellow light appears from their grip, and the two characters fuse into one character.

According to the scriptwriter, both characters were portrayed in this way by taking the essence of the fusion that occurred between Singabarong and the Kelana peacock so that the two characters, who have been adapted into superheroes, still carry the essence of the original story of Reog Ponorogo.

So, we took the essence of fusion because the beginning and ending should still have the essence of the original Reog Ponorogo story. The fusion is the unity of

two characters who are not in harmony, so the issue of the ad is about two characters who are in conflict, and the solution is that they are united and have a happy ending. (Informant 1, interview, 12 May 2022)

Based on various sources, iconically, if it is related to the unity of Kelana and Singabarong in the advertisement, the fusion between Singabarong and the peacock is indeed mentioned and present in the original story. Singabarong, who lost, became a two-headed creature consisting of his head, which is a tiger's head, and the head of a peacock. “But strangely, the peacock bird is tightly attached and becomes one with Prabu Singabarong's head” (Putra & Arba, 1989).

Although the peacock, not Klanaswandana, fuses with Singabarong, there is still a connection to Kelana, as some versions of the story link the peacock with Klanaswandana's identity. While the characters do not fully merge, the concept of combining the peacock and tiger is present. This fusion, common in pop culture, strengthens both characters. The advertisement uses this fusion concept, reflecting heroism and unification, appealing to a young audience familiar with this popular cultural theme.

The message could be connected with Indonesian nationalism, “unification.” This sign is connected with how Indonesians are narrated in popular culture. The popular culture that narrated Indonesian imagination is being one nation by nationalism (Arps, 2023; Felani et al., 2020). Another concept contained in the unification is solidarity. According to Liu



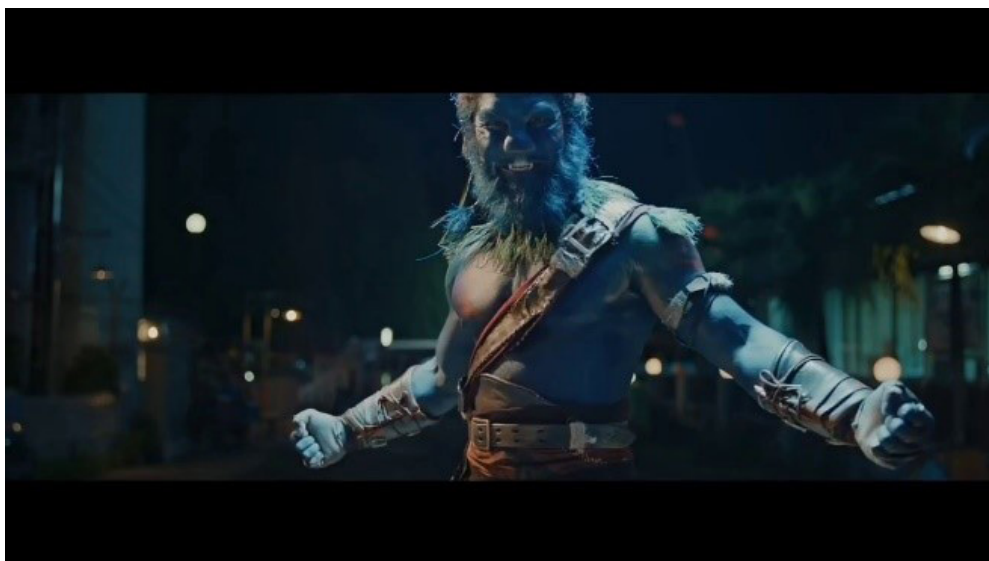
(2021), the essence of contemporary superhero movies is not just the battle between good and evil but the sense of justice and the mission that heroes carry in their hearts. These movies convey the values of strong individuals and firm solidarity. The solidarity is represented by how Singabarong and Kelana are constructed to be united in the story.

The fifth semiosis is the sign that shows Singabarong and Kelana fused into a new character named Reogman, as seen in Figure 6. From the representation identification, Reogman is shown with a physique that combines the two characters, dominated by the colors blue and red, thick hair, and visual effects of flashing light.

Part of Reogman that represents Reog Ponorogo can be identified from the object concept of Peirce semiotic with index and icon. From index sign identification, Reogman appears after Kelana and Singabarong's fusion, indicating the emergence of a new character

resulting from the fusion. From the icon sign identification, the word "Reog" in Reogman is similar to the prefix in Reog Ponorogo. The appearance, a combination of Singabarong and Kelana, ranging from the colors of blue and red to the peacock feathers and tiger fangs, reflects the Dadhak Merak in the Reog Ponorogo art.

From the identification of representament and object, the character of Reogman in the advertisement represents the fusion of Singabarong and the peacock in the Reog Ponorogo story, and its character design represents the leading performer in the Reog Ponorogo dance, the Dadhak Merak. Meanwhile, the representament of Reogman that represents the popular culture can be seen from the result of Singabarong and Kelana merging into a new character named Reogman, which appeared with a combination of the two previous characters' identities, dominated by blue and red colors, thick hair, and visual effects of lightning. The character's name, "REOGMAN!" was narrated



Source: Youtube Channel Marjan Boudoin, December 2021

**Figure 6 Reogman's Character**

The representation of Reog Ponorogo's character construction in Marjan's beverage product advertisement  
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by a voice-over.

Another sign of popular culture representation is also identified from the object of the character of Reogman. It is identified with an index sign that lightning's visual effects accompany Singabarong and Kelana's fusion, and their identities are still present, indicating the union of their strengths. From the iconic sign, the word “-man” in Reogman is similar to the names of superheroes in popular culture. The concept of fusion, in which the identities of the previous characters still exist as the result of the fusion, resembles the fusion of characters in popular culture.

From the identification of representament and object, the character Reogman in the advertisement represents a popular cultural element through a new character named with the suffix “-man” resulting from a merger or what is known as “fusion” in popular culture. From the combination of two sides of representation, we could discuss how the ad was represented and constructed the Reogman character for specific reasons.

In the origin story, it is mentioned that after Singabarong was defeated by Klana Swandana, a peacock bird attached itself to Singabarong's head, causing him to be affected by Klana's magic and transform into a two-headed animal. Barongan symbolizes this two-headed animal with the Dadhak Merak mask, which consists of a tiger mask with a peacock head and feathers on top of it.

“The body of Prabu Singabarong, which

was originally a complete human body, suddenly transformed. It became an animal's body, and thus a two-headed animal was created” (Putra & Arba, 1989).

When related to Reog Ponorogo, Reogman can be iconically associated with Caplokan on the Dadhak Merak mask. According to the story about the mask, Dadhak Merak represents the fusion of Singabarong (Tiger) and Kelana (Peacock). Similarly to the design of two previous superhero characters in the advertisement, various changes were made to keep Reogman relevant to the intended superhero context.

Dhadak Merak became one of the brief references in the design of Reogman's character. (Informant 1, interview, 12 May 2022)

Adding the suffix ‘-man’ to Reog highlights its identity as a superhero, similar to names in popular culture. Reogman suggests a humanoid figure with heroic traits while distinguishing it from the traditional Reog Ponorogo. This modification prevents misunderstandings or offense to cultural preservation efforts, as it lacks strong traditional roots.

The relationship is still related to superheroes (the “-man” in Reogman). It is the same as if we only use the word Reog; we are afraid it might not be well-received by the Reog performers themselves. We may misunderstand it, as they have an organization that preserves Reog Ponorogo. If we only use Reog, we are afraid it might offend them, whereas this is already a modified story. It is no longer rooted in strong tradition. It is a fusion of the story. (Informant 1, interview, 12 May 2022)

The difference between the original story and the advertisement is that Marjan is making

a construction effort to achieve its goal. Marjan's message is still directed toward its target consumers as an advertisement. The use of superhero identities and fusion styles that utilize popular culture concepts is seen as an effort to construct a more attractive and relevant story for a younger target market.

We were thinking of how to make the story of Reog Ponorogo more appealing and relatable to the current generation. We do not want it to be just an old tradition, but we want it to be able to attract younger audiences. Marjan's primary target audience is homemakers, but nowadays, even homemakers belong to a different generation than our mothers. I have become a mother who watches different things than my mother used to watch. We watch Netflix, Marvel Cinematic Universe, and so on. So, considering the current target market, which is getting younger, we want to stay relevant. (Informant 1, interview, 12 May 2022)

Historians and culturalists believe this advertisement is inaccurate from Reog Ponorogo's historical perspective. However, given his knowledge of its nature, it is understandable.

Some people from the team here realize that advertisement has economic and material functions. So, we can openly accept and understand that. Even though, from a literacy perspective, it is far from historical accuracy. (Informant 2, interview, 23 May 2021)

An essential aspect of advertising involves constructing messages that resonate with consumers. Marjan's product placement, shown when the characters have already stopped fighting and bonding while drinking refreshing Marjan syrup, creates a positive image of peace

and Hari Raya that correlates with the product. This construction helps build a favorable product image for potential consumers.

The product needs to be associated with a positive image, and it should not be associated with opposing characters. Ultimately, the goal of the advertisement is to make the product the story's hero, regardless of the characters involved. Therefore, the message conveyed in the advertisement should always be positive. (Informant 1, interview, 12 May 2022)

## CONCLUSION

As the focus of this research, it was found that the signs of the representation in the Marjan Ramadan 2021 advertisement show representations that refer to the original object of Reog Ponorogo. The Marjan Ramadan 2021 ad represents Reog Ponorogo through 5 signs in the ad, namely: (a) Singabarong's character representing the Singabarong character from its original story and the use of popular culture style for its character design, (b) Kelana's character representing the Klanaswandana character from its original story and the use of popular culture style for its character design, (c) The rivalry between Singabarong and Kelana representing the conflict between Singabarong and Klanaswandana from its original story, and the fusion concept of power with message of heroism and unification (d) The fusion of Singabarong and Kelana representing the fusion of Singabarong's body with the peacock and its original story, (e) The Reogman character representing the Dadhak Merak in Reog

Ponorogo art who has two heads, namely a tiger and a peacock head, and the use of popular culture name.

The Marjan Ramadan 2021 advertisement is a means of conveying a message. The central concept constructed in this advertisement is the fusion of traditional cultural and historical artifacts with various modern popular cultures, such as visual effects, art, and superheroes concept. The Marjan Ramadan 2021 advertisement builds a story with the concept of fusion. Starting from the fusion of Singabarong and Klanaswandana's pet peacock in the story of Reog Ponorogo, the fusion of the character Kelana with his pet peacock into one character, the fusion of traditional culture with modern popular culture, and the most prominent one is the fusion of the characters Singabarong and Kelana which in the Marjan ad symbolizes the unity of strength that depicts the title of this advertisement, which is "Rayakan Kemenangan (Celebrates Victory)." Thus, the placement built and attempted to be formed in the consumer's mindset is that Marjan syrup unites us in celebrating victory (the month of Ramadan is full of victories).

This research recommends that advertisers should be more careful in constructing a traditional culture that will be featured in their ads. While it is acceptable to develop local Indonesian cultures by using foreign popular cultures as an innovative reference to remain relevant to the newest generation, it would be better if local references could receive more

attention. Furthermore, if foreign references are used, it is hoped that advertisers will try to maintain the accuracy of the details taken from references to avoid conflicting with the traditional sources.

Using local culture for commercial purposes should also involve preserving its history and heritage to avoid conflicting with the traditional culture. In addition, consumers are encouraged to be more critical of the content presented in various media produced by content creators, mainly when the content includes various traditional cultural elements. The representation of traditional culture should be done with utmost care so as not to damage the central tradition of the culture as its origin. Consumers are expected to start by getting to know the local culture inherent in themselves and becoming more critical so that when this culture is presented in media, consumers can evaluate the media's presentation of culture in the created content.

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