

Semiotic Analysis Photo Of The Alm. Reca Ence In Solo International Performing Arts Event As City Branding Effort Of Surakarta City

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Abstract – This research aims to analyze the visual meaning in the photographic documentation of the Solo International Performing Arts (SIPA) event as part of the city branding strategy of Surakarta. By using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, this research unravels the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings of three photographs by photographer Reca Ence, which record representative moments during SIPA. The analyzed photos include images of traditional dance, audience atmosphere, and night stage, each of which depicts cultural values, social participation, and the vitality of art in the city's public space. The results show that photography in the SIPA event not only functions as documentation, but also as a visual communication medium that shapes the image of the city as a cultural center that is inclusive, creative, and open to the international world. Through the visual elements contained in the photographs, Surakarta is positioned as a city that maintains its local identity while being active in the global cultural network. This research reinforces the understanding that event photography has an important role in shaping public perception and strengthening city identity in the context of city branding.

Keywords – Semiotics, Photography, SIPA, City Branding, Surakarta

I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, cities are not only seen as geographical or administrative spaces, but also as entities with identities and images that can be developed through visual communication strategies. The concept of city branding emerged as a form of strategy to build a positive image of the city to attract tourists, investors, and local residents. One effective way to support city branding is through organizing events, such as cultural festivals, music concerts, or creative exhibitions, which can create collective experiences and strengthen local identity (Walenta et al., 2024).

In an era of globalization and increasingly fierce competition between cities, city branding has become an important strategy in building identity, attracting tourists, and developing the creative economy (Wiyana et al., 2018). Cities are not only competing in terms of infrastructure or public services, but also in how they represent themselves through symbols, culture, and unique experiences that they offer (Terrensia, Aidah, Aulia, Desiva, Lusi, Erwinda, 2024). One approach that is becoming increasingly prominent is the use of cultural experiences—including performing arts and cultural festivals—as a medium for shaping and conveying the image of a city (Muktiyo et al., 2018). The city of Surakarta (Solo) is one of the cities in Indonesia that actively utilizes its cultural wealth as a strategic asset to strengthen its identity. The Solo International Performing Arts Festival (SIPA),

which has been held regularly since 2009, has become one of international cultural events showcasing performing arts from various countries (Harjutri et al., 2023). This festival is not only a platform for cultural expression but also a tool for cultural diplomacy and a city branding instrument. However, the effectiveness of SIPA as a city branding strategy requires further analysis (Bambang Widodo, n.d.). How are the cultural experiences presented in this festival packaged to build the city's image? Are the visual, narrative, and symbolic messages in the festival capable of forming a positive perception of Solo City in the eyes of both local and international audiences? To what extent has the festival succeeded in representing the city's inclusive, creative, and globally competitive identity? These issues are important to examine, considering that cultural festivals are no longer merely entertainment or tourism agendas but have also become complex strategic communication tools. In this context, understanding branding strategies through cultural experiences is crucial, especially in seeing the relationship between visual elements, cultural narratives, and city image-building objectives (Dewati & Dr. Meitolo Hulu, S.ST., M.M., 2023).

Events as a space for cultural and social expression are often captured through photographic media (Orzech et al., 2017). Photos of an event are then spread through various channels, both mass media and social media. However, photography does not only function as visual documentation, but also as a representation that contains meaning. In this case, the semiotic approach becomes relevant to analyze how visual meanings in event photography are formed, constructed, and communicated to the public (D'Aloia & Parisi, 2016). Through semiotic analysis, event photography can be read as a "visual text" that conveys the symbols, values and identity of the city. Visual elements such as objects, colors, composition, and gesture have the potential for deep meaning, both denotatively and connotatively (International & Autumn, 2013). Thus, this research aims to examine how event photography contributes to city branding through a semiotic approach.

By examining the relationships between signifiers (the physical form of a sign) and signifieds (the concept or idea represented by the sign), semiotic analysis allows us to explore the underlying messages and ideologies present in various forms of media (Ray, 2020). This analytical approach is rooted in the belief that meaning is not inherent in objects or words, but is constructed through cultural and social contexts. In this way, semiotic analysis helps us to better understand how communication shapes our perceptions and influences our understanding of the world around us (Chandler, 2007). Semiotic analysis also helps us to uncover hidden meanings and biases that may be present in media texts, revealing the power dynamics at play in shaping our cultural narratives (Yaumi, 2024). Through this critical lens, we can deconstruct the ways in which language, images, and symbols are used to convey messages and shape our beliefs and values. By applying semiotic analysis to various forms of communication, we are able to unpack the complex layers of meaning that exist beneath the surface, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of the ways in which communication influences our thoughts and behaviors.

For example, a semiotic analysis of a political campaign ad may reveal subtle cues and symbols that reinforce certain ideologies or stereotypes. By examining the framing, language, and visual elements of the ad, we can better understand how it seeks to persuade and manipulate public opinion. Photography plays a crucial role in branding, as it has the power to evoke emotions, convey messages, and shape perceptions (Denpasar, 2024). The images chosen to represent a brand can communicate its values, identity, and personality to consumers in a way that words alone cannot. In today's visually-driven society, where attention spans are short and competition is fierce, high-quality photography can make a brand stand out and leave a lasting impression on potential customers. Whether it's through product shots, lifestyle images, or behind-the-scenes glimpses, photography has the ability to humanize a brand and create a connection with its audience (Rohmani et al., 2025). In an age where authenticity and relatability are valued, the right photograph can be the difference between a brand being forgotten or remembered. Photography has the power to evoke emotions, tell stories, and capture moments that resonate with viewers on a deep level. It allows brands to showcase their values, mission, and unique selling points in a visually compelling way. By carefully selecting the right images and using them strategically across various marketing channels, businesses can build a strong visual identity that sets them apart from competitors. In essence, photography is not just about taking pictures; it's about creating an experience for the viewer and forging a connection that goes beyond words.

Moreover, in today's digital age where attention spans are shorter than ever, captivating photography is essential for grabbing the audience's attention and making a lasting impression. With the rise of social media platforms like Instagram and Pinterest, where visual content reigns supreme, the demand for high-quality photography has never been higher. Businesses that invest in

professional photography are able to stand out in a crowded market and attract more potential customers. This is why incorporating photography into a comprehensive marketing strategy is crucial for any brand looking to succeed in the modern landscape.

In addition to social media, professional photography can also elevate a brand's website, print materials, and advertising campaigns. Whether it's showcasing products in an online store, creating eye-catching banners for a trade show booth, or designing a visually stunning brochure, high-quality photography can make a significant impact on a brand's overall image and reputation. Consumers are more likely to trust and engage with a brand that presents itself in a polished and professional manner, and photography plays a key role in achieving this. By investing in professional photography, businesses can communicate their values, personality, and unique selling points in a way that resonates with their target audience and sets them apart from competitors.

II. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretative research type. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on interpreting the meaning of visual signs in event photography using semiotic theory (Journal, 2020). Qualitative research allows researchers to explore context and symbolic meanings that cannot be measured quantitatively (Mudjiyanto & Nur, 2013). The object of this research is Solo International Performing Arts (SIPA) event photography organized in Surakarta City. The focus of the analysis is directed at photographs documenting art performances, stage atmosphere, audience, costumes, city settings, and other visual elements that appear in SIPA documentation.

The photos analyzed were taken from official documentation (government media, SIPA website), online media, and other open sources. The selection of photos was done purposively based on visual criteria that represent the cultural identity and symbols of the city. The object of this research is Solo International Performing Arts (SIPA) event photography organized in Surakarta City. The focus of analysis is directed at photographs documenting art performances, stage atmosphere, audience, costumes, city settings, and other visual elements that appear in SIPA documentation. The photos analyzed were purposively selected from official documentation as well as the work of photographer Reca Ence, who is known to actively capture artistic and cultural moments in the city of Surakarta, including SIPA. Reca Ence's photographs are considered to have strong aesthetic and symbolic values, and are able to represent the spirit of local culture in a communicative visual frame.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research analyzes three photographs by Reca Ence that capture moments at the Solo International Performing Arts (SIPA) event. The three photos were selected based on the diversity of visual elements and their potential in shaping the image of Surakarta City. The analysis was conducted using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, including denotative, connotative and mythical meanings.

A. Traditional Dance Photos



1. Denotation

This photo shows a group of female dancers wearing Javanese traditional costumes with typical traditional dance movements. The stage setting is decorated with cultural ornaments with warm-colored stage lighting.

2. Connotation

The traditional costumes, dancers' concentrated expressions, and graceful movements reflect the preservation of local culture. The gold and red colors give the impression of splendor and pride in cultural heritage.

3. Myth

This photo represents Surakarta as a “cultural city” that still maintains traditional values. The myth formed is that the city is a living center of Javanese culture, not only a symbol of the past, but also part of contemporary life.

B. Photos of the Audience



1. Denotation

This photo shows audience members of different ages watching the performance. Some are smiling, clapping, or recording the performance with their cell phones. The background shows the crowd and stage lights from a distance.

2. Connotation

Intergenerational interaction, enthusiastic expressions, and the act of documenting the performance show emotional involvement and a sense of belonging to the event. This portrays SIPA as an inclusive and festive public space.

C. Myth

This photo builds a narrative that the people of Surakarta are open to culture, creative, and welcoming of differences. It reinforces the image of the city as a vibrant place full of cultural energy.

C. Nighttime Stage Photos



1. Denotation

The photo shows SIPA's main stage at night, with colorful lighting, the architectural background of Fort Vastenburg, and dancers appearing as silhouettes.

2. Connotation

The artistic lighting and stage composition give a dramatic, professional, and grand impression. The presence of the old fort as the background shows a blend of history and modern artistic expression.

3. Myth

This image builds an image of Surakarta as a city that is able to combine traditional values and modernity in a creative space. The open stage in a historic space illustrates the city's courage to remain globally relevant without losing its local identity.

The three photos analyzed show that the SIPA event functions as a means of visualizing the values of the city of Surakarta. Traditional dance reinforces the narrative of a cultural city; the atmosphere of the audience shows the collective spirit and openness of the community; while the night stage symbolizes the vitality of art and the courage to perform in the global realm.

In the context of city branding, these elements become an important part in shaping the city's visual identity-which is then communicated through the media, both locally and internationally. Such photographic visuals shape positive perceptions of the city, while expanding the meaning of the city as a dynamic cultural space.

Signifiers and signified in photography refer to the relationship between the elements within an image and the meaning or concept they represent. Signifiers are the visual cues or symbols within a photograph that convey a specific message or idea, while the signified is the actual meaning or concept that the viewer interprets from those signifiers. Understanding this relationship is essential for photographers looking to create impactful and meaningful images that resonate with their audience. By carefully selecting and arranging signifiers within their photographs, photographers can effectively communicate their intended message and evoke the desired emotional response from viewers. This process involves thoughtful composition, lighting, and subject choice to ensure that the signifiers are clear and powerful. Additionally, photographers must consider the cultural and social context in which their images will be viewed, as different audiences may interpret signifiers in varying ways. By mastering the relationship between signifiers and signified, photographers can craft images that not only capture attention but also provoke thought and emotion in their viewers. This deeper level of communication can elevate a photograph from a simple visual representation to a work of art that resonates on a profound level.

in a photograph is a complex and fascinating process. Signifiers are the visual elements within an image that convey meaning, such as colors, shapes, and composition. Signifieds, on the other hand, are the ideas or concepts that these visual elements represent. When these two elements work together harmoniously, they create a powerful synergy that can evoke a wide range

of emotions and interpretations in the viewer. By understanding how signifiers and signifieds interact, photographers can create images that not only capture the viewer's attention but also communicate a deeper message or story. This can be achieved through careful planning and consideration of each visual element in the frame. For example, the choice of colors can evoke different moods or emotions, with warm tones like reds and oranges often conveying energy and passion, while cool tones like blues and greens can create a sense of calm or tranquility. Shapes and composition can also play a crucial role in directing the viewer's gaze and creating visual interest. By strategically placing subjects or objects within the frame, photographers can guide the viewer's eye and create a sense of balance or tension within the image. Ultimately, the combination of these signifiers and signifieds can result in a photograph that not only captures a moment in time but also tells a compelling story or conveys a powerful message.

include using specific colors to evoke certain emotions or associations, such as using red to signify passion or energy. In addition, the use of certain props or objects can also act as signifiers, like using a globe to symbolize global reach or a camera to represent creativity and innovation. By carefully selecting and arranging these elements in a photo, photographers can effectively communicate the desired message or brand identity to their audience. This strategic use of signifiers and signifieds is essential in creating impactful and memorable branding photography that resonates with viewers on a deeper level.

Color plays a crucial role in branding photography, as it can evoke specific emotions and associations in viewers. Different colors can convey different messages and elicit varying responses from audiences. For example, warm colors like red and orange are often associated with energy and passion, while cool colors like blue and green can evoke feelings of calmness and trust. By carefully selecting the right color palette for a brand's photography, photographers can help reinforce the brand's identity and values. In addition to color, composition is another important element in branding photography. The way in which elements are arranged within a photo can greatly impact the overall message and effectiveness of the image. Composition techniques such as framing, leading lines, and symmetry can help draw the viewer's eye to key elements and create a sense of balance and harmony in the photo. By paying attention to both color and composition, photographers can create visually striking and impactful images that effectively communicate a brand's message to its target audience.

Another important aspect of branding photography is the use of lighting. The way in which a photo is lit can greatly affect the mood and tone of the image. Whether using natural light or artificial lighting, photographers must consider factors such as direction, intensity, and color temperature to create the desired atmosphere. Lighting can also help to highlight key elements of a brand's products or services, drawing the viewer's attention to specific details. By carefully considering lighting techniques, photographers can enhance the overall visual impact of their images and effectively convey the brand's message.

The composition of a photograph plays a crucial role in shaping the viewer's perception of a brand. The way in which elements are arranged within the frame can influence how the audience interprets the image and the message it conveys. For example, a cluttered composition may suggest chaos or disorganization, while a clean and minimalist layout can convey a sense of sophistication and professionalism. Additionally, the placement of key elements within the frame can draw the viewer's eye to specific areas, helping to emphasize important aspects of the brand or product. By carefully considering composition techniques such as framing, leading lines, and the rule of thirds, photographers can create images that effectively communicate the brand's values and identity.

These techniques can also help create a visual hierarchy within the image, guiding the viewer's attention to the most important elements. By utilizing leading lines to direct the viewer's gaze or by framing the subject in a way that draws focus, photographers can ensure that the message they are trying to convey is clear and impactful. In addition, the rule of thirds can be used to create balance and harmony within the composition, making the image more visually appealing to the audience. Overall, understanding and implementing these composition techniques can greatly enhance the effectiveness of visual communication in photography.

include the use of specific color palettes to evoke certain emotions or associations with a brand. For example, warm tones like red and orange can convey energy and passion, while cool tones like blue and green can suggest calmness and trustworthiness. In addition, the placement of a product or logo within the composition can reinforce brand identity and recognition. By

strategically incorporating color and composition techniques, photographers can create images that not only look visually appealing, but also effectively communicate the desired message to the target audience. This attention to detail is crucial in creating cohesive and impactful branding imagery. It is important for photographers to understand the psychology behind color choices and composition in order to effectively convey the desired message. By creating images that resonate with viewers on an emotional level, brands can establish a strong connection with their audience and leave a lasting impression. Additionally, by consistently using these visual elements across all marketing materials, brands can build a recognizable and cohesive identity that sets them apart from competitors. and perpetuate harmful representations of certain groups in branding. It is important for photographers to be mindful of the impact their images may have on societal perceptions and to strive for diversity and inclusivity in their work. By challenging stereotypes and showcasing a more accurate and representative portrayal of diverse communities, brands can not only broaden their appeal but also contribute to positive social change. In this way, photography has the power to shape narratives and influence attitudes, making it a crucial tool in the branding process.

Photographers have a responsibility to use their platform to promote inclusivity and challenge harmful stereotypes. By actively seeking out diverse subjects and representing them in a positive and authentic light, photographers can help break down barriers and foster a more inclusive society. In doing so, they can play a crucial role in shaping the way that brands are perceived and ultimately contribute to a more equitable and just world. Photographers who prioritize diversity in their work not only have the power to shape public perceptions and influence societal norms, but also to drive meaningful change within the industry itself. By actively advocating for inclusive practices and challenging traditional standards of beauty and representation, photographers can help create a more welcoming and accepting environment for all individuals. This not only benefits the subjects of their photos, but also helps to create a more authentic and relatable brand image for their clients. Ultimately, by embracing diversity in their work, photographers can contribute to a more equitable and just world for all. In addition to promoting diversity and inclusion through their work, photographers can also use their platform to address important social issues and advocate for change. By capturing powerful images that shed light on pressing issues such as social injustice, environmental degradation, or systemic inequality, photographers have the ability to spark important conversations and inspire action. Through their lens, they can amplify the voices of marginalized communities and bring attention to issues that may otherwise go unnoticed. By using their art as a tool for social change, photographers have the power to make a real impact on the world around them.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the semiotic analysis of three photographs by Reza Ence in the Solo International Performing Arts (SIPA) event, it can be concluded that photography has a strategic role in supporting the city branding efforts of Surakarta. Through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, it is found that:

1. Traditional dance photos emphasize the preservation of local culture and build Surakarta's image as a cultural city rich in historical and artistic values.
2. The photo of the audience atmosphere displays high social involvement, emphasizing the image of a city that is inclusive, open, and friendly to cultural expressions from various circles.
3. The nighttime stage photo shows a blend of historical elements and modern art, building a narrative of a creative city that is active on the global cultural stage.

The denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings contained in the photographs combine to form a visual and symbolic perception of Surakarta as a vibrant, dynamic, and international cultural city. Through SIPA event photography, the image of the city is not only shown visually but also built through deep symbolic meanings.

Thus, photographic documentation of cultural events such as SIPA is not only a visual archive, but also a strategic communication medium in building and disseminating city identity (city branding).

In conclusion, it is evident that photography is a powerful medium that can be used to drive social change and raise awareness about important issues. From documenting protests and movements to capturing the beauty of nature in peril, photographers have the ability to influence public opinion and inspire action. By harnessing the power of visual storytelling, photographers can serve as advocates for those who are often overlooked or marginalized. It is important for photographers to continue using their art to shine a light on social issues and push for positive change in our society.

One way photographers can do this is by collaborating with non-profit organizations and advocacy groups to visually communicate their messages and campaigns. By lending their talents to these causes, photographers can help amplify the voices of those fighting for social justice and equality. Additionally, photographers can also use their platforms to educate and inform the public about important issues, sparking conversations and igniting change. Through their powerful imagery and storytelling, photographers have the ability to make a lasting impact and drive meaningful progress in society.

In the world of branding, semiotic analysis can be a powerful tool for photographers to effectively communicate the values and messages of a brand. By understanding the signs and symbols that are associated with a brand, photographers can create images that resonate with consumers on a deeper level. This can help to build brand loyalty and create a strong emotional connection with customers. Additionally, semiotic analysis can also be used to identify potential cultural biases or stereotypes in photography, allowing photographers to create more inclusive and diverse imagery that reflects the values of a brand. Overall, the application of semiotic analysis in photography can help brands to create meaningful and impactful visual content that resonates with their target audience.

By understanding the signs and symbols that are embedded in our cultural consciousness, photographers can craft images that not only capture attention but also convey a message that aligns with the values and beliefs of their target audience. This level of intentionality in visual storytelling can make a significant difference in how a brand is perceived and remembered by consumers. In a world where visuals play a crucial role in shaping our perceptions and attitudes, the use of semiotic analysis in photography can be a powerful tool for brands looking to make a lasting impression.

Photography has the ability to evoke emotions, trigger memories, and communicate complex ideas in a single frame. By harnessing the power of semiotics, photographers can strategically choose symbols, colors, and compositions that resonate with their audience on a deeper level. This attention to detail can create a strong emotional connection between a brand and its consumers, ultimately influencing purchasing decisions and brand loyalty. In an age where visual content is king, the art of photography has become an indispensable tool for brands seeking to stand out in a crowded marketplace. By leveraging the power of semiotic analysis, photographers can elevate their storytelling and leave a lasting impact on their audience.

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