

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter present a discussion of research on semiotics. It consists of background of research, research question, research objective, research significance, and definition of key terms.

### **1.1 Background of Research**

The language and visual of advertising evolve to changes in consumer needs, society, and culture. For consumers to relate to commercials, advertising must be relevant to the current state of society and closely related to the target audience. As a result, the product itself is fading from advertisements, which now promote the vaguer “brand.” Brand becoming the people or society itself and wanting to be personal to form relationship with their consumers, the product become increasingly irrelevant and sometimes even invisible. More than simply promoting a product, media advertising promotes something else, notably a system of ideas via myth or discourse as a means of establishing a new reality around the promoted commodity. According to Baudrillard (2005) advertising produces a particular meaning for reality, and as a result, when we consume a product, we also take its meaning through advertising. Thus, consumption of the product becomes less important as the priority shifts to the consumer’s understanding of its meaning conveyed by the ad.

By excluding products promoted through advertisements, brands or company now inform and engage people to participate in social movement. Anti-racism is one of the topics that is often brought up in advertising. Brands represent racial diversity in their advertisement to raise awareness of anti-racism by featuring other races as their main character or topics. Additionally, other well-known brands have started many campaigns as well as indicating their ideology against racism through advertisements due to an incident that shocked the people of America and the world on May 25, 2020 where American police officer killed a black man named

George Floyd. Floyd was accused of buying cigarettes with counterfeit money which was later arrested and seventeen minutes later, Floyd was unconscious and pinned beneath three police officers, showing no signs of life. Thus, many well-known brands focus on promoting awareness of racial equality and to fight racism, particularly in American society, which continues to adhere to the concept of white supremacy.

Even before the incident, Nike brand has been consistent in their campaign against racism by collaborate, signing contract with black athletes, continuing their reputation of seeking controversy and long-established branding strategy based on personal value as an everyday ideology related to the social movements. The company was founded by Bill Bowerman and Phil Knight on January 25, 1964, as “Blue Ribbon Sports,” and changed its name to Nike on May 30, 1971 (Britannica, 2022). Nike is an American multinational corporation that designs, develops, manufactures, and sells footwear, apparel, equipment, accessories, and services worldwide. The brand supports a number of well-known athletes and sports teams, using the globally recognized trademarks “Just Do It” and the Swoosh logo. Nike’s engagement with social issues has a long history. A 1995 ad for ‘Just Do It’ featured openly gay athlete Ric Munoz, while the same year’s ‘If You Let Me Play’ campaign made an emotional appeal to the audience to make the case for increasing women’s involvement in sport. Nike routinely features famous black athletes such as Bo Jackson, Michael Jordan, and Tiger Woods in its advertising campaigns, with some ads embracing radical racial politics. Besides, Nike based on all journalistic or sports-related websites, is the largest and most popular brand in America even worldwide with revenue nearing \$45 billion. This way, Nike can easily raise awareness about anti-racism campaign advertisements and attract more attention from consumers or viewers.

Apart from its product and athletes, Nike, are well-known for its provocative advertising campaigns. They attempting to eradicate a notion of racism by promoting the value of equality through sports, emphasizing that the world of sports is about more than physical competition. Thus, their advertisements contain a

variety of linguistic and visual signs, each with a complex meaning. The brand intends to spread the myth that sports contain social values such as mutual respect, brotherhood, and equality.

Despite the controversy, both Nike's sales and its reputation continued to increase as more people bought Nike products. Consumers are indirectly participating in the campaign created within adverts. While the advertising campaign is only a marketing strategy, the usage of linguistic signs and visual signs in the Nike advertisement is worth studying further to have a better understanding of how the advertisement communicates its message and ideology through signs.

As a reference, previous study who have conducted semiotic-related research helped significantly in this study. The research is based on three types of previously conducted research with the same subject but different focuses on the object. The first study is a thesis by Ririn Kirana (2020) with the title Denotation, Connotation and Myth in *Trolls* Movie by Mike Mitchell (A Semiotic Study Base on Roland Barthes). The research used Roland Barthes approach focusing on the color of the movie of *Trolls*. The data was a scene that contained a character and their main color with comprised a total of 10 data. For the result of the research, it focused to explained what primary color does each character had and interpret it with Roland Barthes approach: denotation, connotation and myth. Although the model of Kirana's research slightly almost the same, the way the data was interpreted is different. Kirana's research focused on how color represent each character, meanwhile, this research is how an advertisement campaign impact social life and issues.

The second study is a thesis by Ainun Siti Fatimah (2020) entitled Myths of Life on The Instagram Quotes of Rupi Kaur Through Roland Barthes's Semiotical Approach. The research used Roland Barthes approach focusing on the myth of Rupi Kaur quotes. The data itself collected from Instagram of Rupi Kaur comprised a total of 25 data. For analyzing the data Fatimah uses signifier and signified then myth. The signifier is a meaning and form of existing quotes, while, signified is a concept of the quotes. The forms and the concepts or meanings in these quotes are

related to things that are found in everyday life. While, this previous research and this research almost has the same focuses on the result of analyzing data which is how certain word, image, symbol or other represent daily and social life, but the way to analyze the data is different. Fatimah research uses signifier and signified then myth, this research uses denotation, connotation and myth.

The third study is a thesis by Tazkiyatul Fikriyah (2011) entitled *A Semiotic Analysis on The A-Mild Advertisement Using Roland Barthes' Theory*. The research focuses on the linguistic and non-verbal signs of 5 different *A-Mild* cigarette advertisement. Its health factor affects the making of cigarette advertisement without adding an image or a text that represent cigarette itself, thus the advertisement different or in other word unique from any other kind of product. Those are the myth of a cigarette advertisement the research analyze. This research and Fikriyah's research are somewhat the same in term of analyzing the myth on how an advertisement is created or made in certain style and type. But different in term of data and why those myth appears.

## **1.2 Identification of Problem**

Based on the background, advertisements take advantage of emotion to persuade people to purchase a specific brand by containing linguistic and visual signs of anti-racism to shape people thoughts and perceptions about their product. Consumers are also consuming the message or idea conveyed by purchasing the product. In other words, consumers become a part of the ideology formed in advertising. Thus, the research attempt to analyze the use of linguistic signs and visual signs of anti-racism in Nike adverts, stated in the following research question:

1. What is the denotation of anti-racism in linguistic and visual signs in Nike advertisement campaigns based on Barthes' theory of semiotics?
2. What is the connotation of anti-racism in linguistic and visual signs in Nike advertisement campaigns based on Barthes' theory of semiotics?

3. What is the myth of anti-racism in linguistic and visual signs in Nike advertisement campaigns based on Barthes' theory of semiotics?

### **1.3 Research Objective**

From the research question stated before, the objective of this study are as follows:

1. To identifies the denotation of anti-racism in linguistic and visual signs in Nike advertisement campaigns.
2. To identifies the connotation of anti-racism in linguistic and visual signs in Nike advertisement campaigns.
3. To identifies the myth of anti-racism in linguistic and visual signs in Nike advertisement campaigns.

### **1.4 Research Significance**

This research is expected to provide benefits and contributions to either theoretical and practical which are supposed to assist the general public by allowing them to better understand the meaning of language through the use of signs found in semiotics and other related fields. Furthermore, the following benefits are expected as a result of this research:

#### **1.4.1. Theoretical**

- a. This study contributes to the field of semiotics by interpreting the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth. Specifically, under the perspective of Roland Barthes' theory which was applied in this research with the advertisement campaign of Nike brands.
- b. This research is intended to explain the social message conveyed by Nike brands advertisements.

### **1.4.2. Practical**

- a. The findings of this research may be helpful as an additional source of information for other researchers. It serves as an example of the interpretation of advertisement under semiotics theory.
- b. The findings of this study can be applied to the expansion and development of linguistic knowledge for English literature student, particularly in the subject of semiotics, which focuses on signs that are encountered in everyday life.
- c. This research is expected to contribute ideas for advertisers so that they can make advertisements that are more creative, with terms of meaning and in accordance with community cultural so that in the future they can produce better quality advertisements.

## **1.5 Definition of Key Terms**

### **1. Linguistic Signs**

Linguistic sign is a fundamental concept in the study of language and refers to the relationship between a linguistic form (such as a word or sound) and its meaning. Linguistic sign can be a word, utterances, plots, whether its system, grammar, lexicon or a phrase, clause, and sentence.

### **2. Visual Signs**

Visual signs are symbols or images that convey meaning through visual form such as logo, picture, color, geometric figure, or symbol to convey meaning.

### **3. Anti-Racism**

A belief or doctrine that rejects the supremacy of one racial group over another and promotes racial equality in society. The goal of anti-racism is to challenge racism and actively change the policies, behaviors, and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions.

#### 4. Nike

Nike is an American multinational corporation that designs, develops, manufactures, and sells footwear, apparel, equipment, accessories, and services worldwide. The brand supports a number of well-known athletes and sports teams, using the globally recognized trademarks “Just Do It” and the Swoosh logo.

#### 5. Advertisement Campaign

An advertisement campaign is a coordinated series of promotional activities, designed to communicate a specific message or set of messages to a target audience in order to achieve a particular marketing goal. The aim of an advertisement campaign is to raise awareness of a product, service, or brand, to generate interest and desire among potential customers, and ultimately to encourage them to take a particular action, such as making a purchase or subscribing to a service.

