

# MEANING IN THE PROCESS OF SIGNIFICATION BY THE ADVERTISEMENT OF HONDA

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## ABSTRACT

This study mainly deals with the process of signification in order to reveal how meaning is created by the advertisement of Honda HR-V 2014 through the use of expressions. In this study, “Meaning” is an integrated form consisting the three elements which are denotative form, connotative form, and myth form. Using qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012), the writer did this study based on Barthes’s process of signification (1987) and Peirce’s indexicality (1931-58). From the analysis, the writer found out that meaning is created by indexicality. The index connects the product and the traits that the product possesses. Then, the use of expressions in the advertisement visualises the index of the product. The index which was visualised by the use of expressions which produces denotative meaning and connotative meaning. Those denotative meaning and connotative meaning are perceived by the audiences and creates myth which naturalises the index itself. It can be concluded from this study that meaning is created by the index and has undergone several steps in order for audiences to perceive the myth and become unaware of the index.

**Key Words:** Process of Signification, Indexicality, Metaphor, Connotation, Denotation, Mythic of Automobiles Advertisement

## INTRODUCTION

Advertisement, according to Harris (2004), tries to affect or alter the reality of the audience, in the sense that advertisement is designed to establish a new image or point of view regarding a certain product. In addition, advertisement is also designed to trigger the emotional needs or impulsive needs regarding that certain product. Since language and image are the media of communication in the advertisement, therefore, analysing advertisement using process of signification will be the most effective as process of signification interrogates “the falsely obvious” which is to make explicit what too often remains implicit in the texts and practices of popular cultures.

As Chandler (2007) cited Roland Barthes’s theory (Barthes 1957, 124; 1961; 1967a,89-94;1967b, 27ff; Hjelmslev 1961, 114ff), the process of signification involves two levels in it and each level will produce a sign in which will be signified in the next level. The first order of signification is that of denotation in which signifier and signified will produce a sign. The second order of signification will operate at the system of connotation in which the sign produced from previous level will become a signifier and will produce another signified and will create another sign. In the process of signification, denotation is often referred as the literal meaning of a sign whereas connotation is referred as the personal or socio-cultural interpretation of a sign.

Furthermore, Barthes (1957) also claims that at the level of the secondary signification or connotation, a myth is produced for consumption. The myth in which Barthes means is an ideology understood as a body of ideas and practices, which by actively promoting the values and interests of dominant group in society, defend the prevailing structures of power. In that sense, myth could be identified as a suggestion of perception beyond what people could see or perceive.

In its practices, myth naturalises indexicality in the sense that the appearance of myth cover-up the existence of index, thus, making people/audiences do not aware of the existence of the index. This naturalisation of the index makes audiences do not question the index anymore and consider the myth within the product as something natural. In this study, by analysing the advertisement, the writer want to find out the myth behind the advertisement of Honda HR-V 2014 to find out how meaning is created in the process of signification.

According to Barthes, “meaning” is defined as an integrated form consisting of the denotative meaning of the sign, connotative meaning of the sign, and myth. Denotative form of the sign is a part of language which must be taken for granted. Connotative meaning of the sign is regarded as an intended/perceived meaning of signs according to the framework of signs (codes)

which is very socio-cultural and personal. Last, myth which is understood as an ideology in the form of suggestion of perception which acts as a body of ideas and practices.

Furthermore, the writer also uses the theory of Peirce’s indexicality of the sign (Peirce, 1931-58, p. 1.291, p. 2.243 as cited in Chandler, 2007, p.36) to be able to associate one sign to another sign to understand the meaning, and the myth which lie within the verbal expression which is supported by the visual expression in the advertisement since Peirce’s triadic modes of the sign talks about differences in “modes of relationship” or “types of relationship” between the signifier and the signified. Indexical itself refers to the relation between signifier and signified where the signifier and the signified is directly connected in some way, for example watch or clock (signifier) is an *index* of time of the day (signified). Understanding about Peirce’s triadic modes of the sign will create a better understanding in the association between signs or between signifier and signified.

The index of automobiles is more or less the same between cars as Tuminelli (2004) explained in the introduction of his book that the automobile has always been as much about style as engineering, not simply a means of transportation but a status symbol meant to impress others and project the success of its owner. In that sense, he also explained that car also has function to define the social entities as he said, “Cars connect people and places, they define how our world looks, they link private and public spheres: Anyone who drives a car likes being on show, and he cannot—perhaps does not want?—to be ignored. Car boost the personality: I drive therefore I am”.

## METHODS

This research was conducted using qualitative content analysis method by Schreier (Schreier, 2012) to describe the creation of meaning in the process of signification by the advertisement of Honda HR-V 2014 in a systematic way. The main instrument of this research was the writer himself as he was the one who collected the data from the mentioned source above (requesting e-brochure), and the writer himself who analysed the data. The sources of data were

Heading	Denotative meaning	Connotative meaning	Myth
The Daring Achiever	A person who achieves a high level of success.	Honda HR-V 2014 is an index of strength, bravery, gallantry.	By owning Honda HR-V 2014, the owner will be seen as someone gallant, brave, strong.

limited to the e-brochure of Honda HR-V in 2014 and Honda CR-V in 2015 which could be accessed at [honda-indonesia.com](http://honda-indonesia.com). The advertisement itself used English language as the header and tagline and Indonesian language for the description as the writer chose to analyse only the heading as well as the description (excluding technical terms) of the features of the product and images about the product.

Data analysis was the process after the writer had done the data collection completely. First of all, the writer analysed the verbal expression in Honda HR-V car advertisement to understand its meaning by looking for its translation in the dictionary (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 8th edition) and find the association with other thing that could help in understanding the meaning and answering the first research question. Then, the writer analysed the visual expression in the advertisements, relate it with the verbal expression, and answering the second research question. Last, by using Peirce’s triadic modes of the sign, the writer used the answer of the previous two research questions to find out how myth operates within the advertisement.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The title of the page which is “THE DARING ACHIEVER” is the tagline of the product or the phrase which symbolises the product itself. Literally speaking, the phrase “daring” which is an adjective from the tagline of the product “The Daring Achiever” means brave, willing to do something dangerous or unusual things which involve danger or taking risks (Oxford Advanced Learner’s

Dictionary 8th edition). According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 8th edition, the phrase "achiever" which is a noun from the tagline of the product "The Daring Achiever" means a person who achieves a high level of success, especially in their career (after an adjective). Then, the literal meaning of the tagline is obtained by combining the literal meaning of both phrases which generate a combined meaning which is: a brave person who achieves a high level of bravery and willing to do something dangerous or unusual things or in other words, a very brave person who is fearless. Therefore, the signifier "The Daring Achiever" and the signified "a very brave person who is fearless" has become a sign in the denotative level.

By looking at the literal meaning of the tagline which should be used to describe a characteristic of a human being, therefore, it could be understood that the tagline of the product is using a feature of metaphor which is personification to make an inanimate object possess a certain characteristic of human being. Personification in this advertisement is used to highlight the qualities of the car in later heading by making it similar to the character and body of human being. Using Peirce's triadic modes of the sign related with cultural perspective as a code to analyse the tagline deeper, it could be comprehended that societies see bravery as an index of confidence, high endurance, gallant, and strength as someone would not possess such bravery if they are not confident, strong, gallant, and has a high endurance. Therefore in the tagline, the personification feature of metaphor plays an important role which is to describe several traits which are the criteria or characteristics for a person to be called as "The Daring Achiever" who are confident, high endurance, strong, determined, and gallant because those things are always associated with bravery in society. Like in this case with the tagline "The Daring Achiever", connotation is not always used to suggest another meaning, but could also be used to refer to something else connected or associated with it if looked from different perspective. Since the tagline of the product is one of the application of metonymy which is a part of the car but could represent the whole car in its application, the connotation of the tagline "The Daring Achiever" also applies to Honda HR-V 2014 car as the tagline is a part of the car itself and representation of the car in its meaning. Therefore, the second level of signification which is at the level of connotation in the tagline by using personification feature of metaphor is also used to refer Honda HR-V 2014 which is "The Daring Achiever" as an index of strength, gallant look, high endurance, determination, confidence and therefore possesses those characteristics as well. In conclusion, at the second level of connotation, the tagline "The Daring Achiever" which means "a very brave person who is fearless" acts as a signifier and generates the signified "index of strength, determination, high endurance, confidence, and gallant" and makes another sign which is "The Daring Achiever is an index of strength, determination, high endurance, confidence, and gallant. Since "The Daring Achiever" is used as a tagline of the product Honda HR-V 2014, the connotation also applied to the product as well to tell that Honda HR-V 2014 is "The Daring Achiever" and is an index of strength, determination, high endurance, and gallant.

It is a myth that an index is something that people want to possess in the society to build up reputation as index is directly connected to a certain traits or phenomena, thus, possessing an index to that trait means that we have a connection to that trait through the index. For instance, watch or clock which is an index of time of the day is possessed to build more awareness of the time of the day in the sense to be able to accurately monitor the time of the day. Another example, a book which is an index of knowledge or information is possessed to access the information or knowledge inside it. The more book a man has, the more knowledgeable he is seen in the society. Furthermore, Tumminelli (2004) also said, "Car boosts personality: I drive therefore I am". In this case, through the tagline "The Daring Achiever" as a signified, and Honda HR-V 2014 as a signifier, it gives information that Honda HR-V 2014 is an index of strength, gallant, determination, and high endurance. Therefore, by possessing Honda HR-V 2014 which is an index of strength, gallant, determination, and high endurance, it is believed that the owner has a connection to those traits which are strength, gallant, high endurance, and determination. In conclusion, the myth in this tagline "The Daring Achiever" is by owning Honda HR-V 2014 which is an index of strength, gallant, determination, and high endurance, the owner will be seen as someone who is brave, strong, gallant, determined, and has high endurance.

From those explanations about the verbal expression in the advertisement above, it could be comprehended that the verbal expression in advertisement of Honda HR-V 2014 plays with the image of bravery to alter the reality perceived by the audiences. Not relying solely on the verbal

expression, the visual expression in the advertisement also acts as an support enhance the meaning in the sense to make the meaning easier to understand. In the advertisement of Honda HR-V 2014, the visual expression supports the verbal expression by visualising the metaphor, visualising the design, and describing the features which is minor compared to the role carried out by the verbal expression.

In its establishment, myth itself is a developed form of index which is a direct connection between the signifier (an object) and the signified. Honda HR-V 2014 is advertised in that advertisement as an icon of bravery in which the product is as powerful as SUV although the engine is less powerful than other SUV, still, they are in the same range of power and costs less expensive as SUV. From those traits, Honda HR-V 2014 is believed to be an icon of bravery, gallant look, strength because unlike any other SUV which balances the premium features with the power of the engine, Honda HR-V 2014 is lacking in the sense of luxury from the features, on the other hand, it has a high performance engine, strength, which is as powerful as the other SUV, but with more affordable price.

From the analysis of the advertisement above, it can be comprehended how myth is established in the advertisement. First of all myth is established and created by connecting the actual product and the traits it possesses through the index. For instance, Honda HR-V 2014 is directly connected to the strength it possesses, making Honda HR-V 2014 as an icon of bravery. Then, those indexes is being carried out and told throughout the advertisement through the use of the verbal expression and supported by the visual expression to convince that the product is really the index of those certain traits. For instance, the verbal expression in the advertisement of Honda HR-V 2014 plays with the image of bravery as displayed to tell that Honda HR-V 2014 is an icon of bravery. The myth itself in the advertisement is a naturalised form of the index which is being carried out and told throughout the advertisement through the use of verbal expression and support from the visual expression. The audiences who are looking at the advertisement of Honda HR-V 2014 will be influenced by the verbal expression and the visual expression in the advertisement and will come to the understanding about the index that is conveyed in the advertisement. However, the audiences themselves does not perceive the index as it is. Instead, the audiences perceive the myth as myth naturalises the index itself, thus, making audiences do not aware of or question the index itself. Therefore, in that naturalisation process, the myth of automobiles as explained by Tumminelli (2004) that automobiles are not simply a means of transportation, but also a means of a status symbol to impress others and project the success of its owner so that it also boosts the personality of the owner is taken for granted and considered as a something natural. In other words, when audience sees a car advertisement whether it is Honda HR-V 2014, or any other car, they understand their distinguishing traits, they perceive myths instead of the index as myth naturalises the index. The audience perceive the myth that way, not because the reality which is connected with the product, but because of the influence from the connotative level in the process of signification which alters the reality inside the mind of the audience. Thus, while the creator creates index and told it throughout the advertisement, the audience perceives the myth as myth naturalises the index.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the findings, the writer comprehends that advertisement text deals with signs as it includes both verbal expression and visual expression in the sense that the visual expression supports the verbal expression to make the meaning in the advertisement easier to understand by the audience. In analysing how meaning is created by the advertisement, the process of signification is one of the choices as it deals with the unveiling of the meaning of signs and will be suitable to find how meaning is created.

In his finding, besides the analysis of the advertisement the writer found the index, icon, and the focus of the expression in the advertisement. From the advertisement of Honda HR-V 2014, the writer found that the advertisement advertises Honda HR-V 2014 as an icon of bravery, focusing on the use of the verbal expression to play with the image of bravery in mind. In that advertisement, myth, which carries the intention of the audience or the imagination of the audience regarding the product, naturalises the index. The naturalisation of the index by the myth makes audiences are not aware of the existence of the index and therefore consider the myth as something natural. Myth is

perceived that way because of the influence by the use of verbal expressions and the visual expressions in the advertisement.

In conclusion, meaning in the advertisement is created through three steps. First of all, the product is directly connected to the traits as an index. Then, that index is visualised and influenced by the use of the verbal expression and the visual expression in the advertisement. Thus, with those influences from the expressions in the advertisement, the index is naturalised by the myth, making people unaware of the index and consider the myth as something natural. Meaning itself has a very wide framework and semiotics which is often used in the advertisement is only one of those frameworks. In that sense, understanding how meaning is created in the advertising field will surely help in making meaningful and effective advertisement.

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# APPENDIX

**THE DARING  
ACHIEVER**

Untuk Anda yang berjiwa petualang dan berani menghadapi tantangan namun tetap mengutamakan penampilan, telah hadir sebuah perpaduan antara mobil SUV yang gagah dengan desain yang mengesankan. Nikmati perjalanan Anda dengan percaya diri, lakukan setiap rintangan di alam salju dan desain penuh gaya sesuai kepribadian Anda. Inilah persembahan crossover terbaru, yaitu **Honda HR-V. The Daring Achiever.**

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Go beyond. Aids to withstand great performance without being or looking like come from inside and outside of body.

Itaya Sadakazu. pleating to the eye or mind especially through the quality present in a thing or person.