



Myth as Political Strategy: Barthesian Semiotic Analysis of Ideological Construction in Indonesia's 2024 Campaign Music Video

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-04-07 Revised: 2026-05-19 Accepted: 2026-09-20 Keywords: <i>Barthes's Semiotics; Campaign Music Videos; Indonesian Election; Political Communication; Ideological Naturalization</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.11570 Corresponding Author: Hendri Pitrio Putra hendripitrio@gmail.com Linguistics Department, Hasanuddin University, Makassar	<i>This study analyses the construction of political meaning in Oke Gas Prabowo Gibran Paling Pas, a campaign music video used in Indonesia's 2024 presidential election. Using a descriptive-interpretative qualitative approach, the study applies Roland Barthes's semiotic framework of denotation, connotation, and myth to 24 purposively selected scenes, focusing exclusively on lyrics and visual elements. The analysis shows that denotative representations of political figures, popular-cultural symbols, bodily performances, and campaign slogans acquire connotative meanings associated with familiarity, resilience, transformation, and collective legitimacy. These recurring connotative patterns generate four overarching political myths: joyful and relatable leadership; resilient and morally legitimate leadership; transformative leadership; and popular legitimacy and historical inevitability. The myths function strategically as political communication through three interconnected mechanisms: naturalizing ideological meanings through popular culture, legitimating political identities through symbolic association, and reframing potentially negative meanings through humor, appropriation, and semantic reversal. The findings further demonstrate that myth and ironic counter-signification operate simultaneously within the same campaign text: desirable political and identity-</i>

related meanings are naturalized as self-evident, while potentially negative meanings are reworked through humor and semantic reversal. The study contributes to political media semiotics by extending Barthesian analysis beyond ideological naturalization to demonstrate how naturalizing myth and ironic counter-signification can coexist within a single campaign text. This contribution provides a more nuanced account of ideological meaning-making in Indonesia's digital political communication and extends international political media research to an underrepresented Southeast Asian context.

1. Introduction

In the era of digital media convergence, music videos have evolved from mere visual accompaniments to musical works into complex multimodal texts. Within these texts, verbal, visual, performative, and auditory modes interact simultaneously to generate and direct meaning. Lyrics, narrative structures, gestures, facial expressions, visual composition, typography, animation, and cultural symbols do not function in isolation; rather, they intertwine as semiotic resources within a single communicative practice (Jirsa & Korsgaard, 2019; Korsgaard, 2017).

This multimodal nature is increasingly relevant in political communication, as audiovisual formats allow political actors to represent identities, values, and political narratives in ways that align with contemporary digital media consumption habits (Enli, 2017; Sahly et al., 2019). Furthermore, the concise, engaging, and highly shareable nature of audiovisual content enables complex political issues to be packaged in forms that are more readily recognizable to a broad audience (Bennett, 2012; Klinger & Svensson, 2015).

In the arena of digital political contestation, these characteristics make audiovisual content a strategic resource for boosting visibility, engagement, and public recall of political messages (Prior, 2013; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Therefore, campaign music videos cannot be adequately understood merely as entertainment or supplementary campaign material; instead, they should be viewed as multimodal political texts in which meaning is selected, structured, and represented through a variety of semiotic resources.

The political significance of music videos also lies in their ability to bring together political discourse and forms of popular culture. Popular media, including music videos, can construct political narratives that are accessible, engaging, and deeply resonant—particularly for digital audiences accustomed to consuming audiovisual content (Behr, 2022; Brusila et al., 2022; Way, 2022). Furthermore, research by Way (2019b, 2019a) indicates that integrating text, imagery, and music into campaign music videos shapes perceptions of political figures and issues more

strongly than conventional political communication formats. Meanwhile, Sakakeeny (2024) asserts that musical and visual elements can function as ideological instruments by leveraging popular cultural symbols to build collective identities, reinforce candidate images, and secure political legitimacy. In social media, visual resources also shape political identity through recurring conventions such as personalization, positive tone, and the construction of authenticity (Blasch, 2021; de-Lima-Santos et al., 2024). These findings show that contemporary political communication increasingly relies on integrating multiple modes to create representations that are easily recognizable and culturally resonant.

However, a question remains: not merely how audiovisual media represent politics, but how such representations acquire the status of seemingly natural meaning. Previous research has examined how music, imagery, performativity, and cultural symbols articulate political identities and narratives (Blasch, 2021; de-Lima-Santos et al., 2024; Way, 2019a, 2019b). Yet attention to the ideological processes linking sign structures to the naturalization of meaning remains relatively limited. In other words, while previous research has extensively explained what is represented and how multimodal resources are employed, it has not always explored how these sequences of representations become meanings perceived as natural, normal, and unquestionable. Addressing this gap is crucial in campaign music videos, where political signs operate simultaneously through language, imagery, the body, music, visual style, and popular cultural symbols. Consequently, an approach is needed that goes beyond merely cataloging signs or identifying communication strategies; instead, it must explain how signs shift from immediate, apparent meanings to cultural and ideological ones.

Semiotics provides a conceptual foundation for understanding this process. Saussure conceptualized the sign as a relationship between the signifier and the signified, whereas Peirce emphasized the dynamic relationship among the representamen, the object, and the interpretant (Chandler, 2022; Joseph, 2022). This study does not compare these two traditions; instead, it adopts Roland Barthes's semiology because it focuses on how signs acquire ideological meaning and become naturalized. The Barthesian framework helps us understand signification at two levels. At the first level, the sign produces denotative meaning; at the second, it acquires connotations through social, cultural, and historical associations (Barthes, 1972, 1974). When this connotative meaning functions as a signifier within a second-order signification system, a myth is formed.

In political communication, the Barthesian myth does not refer to false stories, fictional narratives, or legends, but to a system of signification that makes historical and cultural constructs appear natural, universal, and self-evident (Barthes, 1972, 1974). Thus, myth's ideological function lies in naturalization: specific representations are accepted as common sense, while the social and historical processes that shaped them become less visible. This concept is relevant for analyzing political communication because political identities and values can be

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constructed indirectly through cultural symbols, visual styles, bodily expressions, gestures, music, and the representation of public figures. Barthesian analysis thus enables research to move beyond what is displayed to how such displays generate specific conceptions of candidates, society, leadership, and political values.

In this study, multimodality and Barthesian semiology serve distinct yet complementary analytical functions. Multimodality describes the text's material character and identifies how lyrics, images, gestures, typography, animation, music, and performativity interact as resources for meaning-making. A broader multimodal framework could account for interactions among these modes, but it does not necessarily explain how such interactions become naturalized as ideological common sense; Barthesian semiology is therefore adopted for the interpretive stage of the analysis.

More specifically, multimodal analysis identifies and describes the co-occurrence and interaction of verbal and visual signs. In contrast, Barthesian semiology provides the conceptual mechanism for tracing how these signs generate denotative and connotative meanings and, through repeated cultural associations, become organized as political myths.

Distinguishing these functions is important because it prevents multimodal description from being conflated with ideological interpretation. Therefore, multimodality addresses the material and relational organization of signs, while Barthesian semiology addresses their cultural, ideological, and naturalizing effects. Because this study focuses analytically on lyrics and visual elements, it does not claim to provide a comprehensive analysis of the video's musical or auditory dimensions.

In the Indonesian context, this gap is particularly relevant to studying the Prabowo-Gibran campaign's communication. Previous research has addressed image construction through the "gemoy" (cute/cuddly) gimmick using a semiotic approach (Prasetyawan et al., 2025; Yarnis & Muksin, 2024), while Purwanto (2024) examined the campaign song, the subject of the current study, through a persuasion lens.

These studies show that Prabowo-Gibran campaign communication has leveraged popular culture forms and communication strategies to foster audience rapport. However, existing research has not systematically traced the movement of meaning from denotation to connotation and subsequently to myth as a form of ideological naturalization. Consequently, the research gap in the Indonesian context lies not in a lack of studies on multimodal political communication, but in limited analysis of how multimodal signs in campaign music videos are transformed into political myths and how these myths function in constructing the campaign narrative.

To address this gap, this study analyzes the campaign music video "Oke Gas Prabowo Gibran Paling Pas" in the context of the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election, using an analytical framework that moves from sign to denotation,

connotation, and myth, and finally to political communication strategy. This framework enables the identification of verbal and nonverbal signs, the interpretation of literal and cultural meanings, the examination of myth formation arising from recurring connotative patterns, and the linking of these mythological constructs to the political communication strategies represented in the video. The study makes no claim to measure audience persuasion, changes in voting behavior, or electoral impact; rather, it focuses on the representational and ideological structures observable within the audiovisual text.

Based on this framework, the study addresses three questions: (1) how denotative and connotative meanings are constructed through verbal and nonverbal signs in the video; (2) what political myths emerge from these signs and how they naturalize specific ideological meanings; and (3) how political communication strategies are represented through the semiotic structures and myths that shape the video's overall narrative. Through these questions, the study contributes to semiotics and political communication by showing how Barthesian semiology can analyze ideological naturalization in multimodal political texts, while also expanding research on campaign music videos in the context of digital politics in Indonesia.

2. Method

This study employs a descriptive-interpretative qualitative approach to analyze how political meaning and ideology are constructed in the campaign music video "*Oke Gas Prabowo Gibran Paling Pas*." A qualitative approach was selected because it enables the researcher to interpret signs, representations, and meaning relations within the surrounding socio-political context (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Primary data were obtained exclusively from the music video uploaded to Richard Jersey's official YouTube channel on January 15, 2024 (Richard Jersey, 2024). The video was purposively selected for its connection to the Prabowo-Gibran campaign and its scenes with relatively high semiotic salience in verbal and visual signs, including lyrics, symbols, political figures, cultural representations, and campaign slogans.

The video was subsequently segmented based on visual changes, scene composition, or significant narrative developments. From the entire sequence, 24 scenes were purposively selected as units of analysis. Semiotic density is understood here as the presence of interconnected verbal and/or visual signs that contribute to the formation of political representations—such as combinations of lyrics, typography, gestures, characters, objects, cultural symbols, and slogans. Scenes that merely repeated previously identified sign configurations without offering a distinct semiotic or narrative function were excluded from the analysis corpus. This selection was based on considerations of semiotic variation and relevance, rather than the scenes' alignment with any specific interpretation.

Data collection involved systematically documenting selected scenes

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through screenshots and transcriptions of relevant lyrics. All data were then organized into an analysis matrix comprising scene numbers, verbal and visual signs, and their denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings. No campaign metadata, social-media comments, audience responses, or external campaign materials were treated as primary data.

On-screen textual elements embedded within the video were analyzed as part of the visual-verbal data, whereas external political events and culturally specific references were used only as contextual knowledge when necessary to interpret signs already present in the video. Such contextual information was not treated as additional empirical evidence or as an independent unit of analysis. The analysis process draws upon Roland Barthes's concept of signification, which distinguishes between the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth (Barthes, 1972, 1985). Denotation is used to identify directly observable representations; Connotation is used to interpret the cultural and political associations inherent in a sign, whereas myth is used to identify the process of naturalization—whereby specific ideological meanings appear as natural or a matter of common sense.

Following the scene-level analysis, we grouped recurring semiotic patterns into eight themes. The four primary myths presented in the results section emerged inductively from these recurring patterns rather than being predetermined by a theoretical framework. The analysis process involved condensing data, presenting it in a structured way, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles et al., 2014). To ensure the credibility of the interpretation, given the politically sensitive nature of the campaign material, the analysis recognizes that semiotic interpretation is not entirely independent of the researcher's cultural and political knowledge.

Therefore, the researcher did not treat interpretive readings as neutral or exhaustive accounts of meaning. The researcher addressed positionality by separating observable textual features from culturally informed inferences and ideological interpretations, and by subjecting interpretive claims to peer debriefing and an audit trail. The researcher conducted peer debriefing with two peer reviewers with academic expertise in semiotics and political communication who independently reviewed selected interpretations and discussed points of disagreement with the researcher. Disagreements were resolved through reference to the observable textual evidence, the corresponding lyrics, and the operational definitions of Barthesian denotation, connotation, and myth rather than through majority agreement.

This study specifically analyses lyrics and visual dimensions. The study did not systematically analyze music, rhythm, vocals, or sound effects, and therefore did not treat them as independent analytical dimensions.

3. Result

The analysis of 24 purposively selected scenes identified recurring patterns in how denotative and connotative meanings are constructed and transformed into political myths. The scenes were first analyzed individually using Barthes's three levels of signification (denotation, connotation, and myth) and then grouped into eight thematic clusters based on recurring semiotic patterns and the political communication functions they represented.

From these clusters, four overarching myths emerged inductively: joyful and relatable leadership; resilient and morally legitimate leadership; transformative leadership; and popular legitimacy and historical inevitability. These myths overlap rather than function as mutually exclusive categories, as the same verbal or visual signs may contribute to more than one ideological construction. In political communication, these myths are articulated through three representational strategies identifiable in the text: naturalizing political meanings through popular culture, legitimating political identities through symbolic association, and re-signifying potentially negative meanings through humor and irony.

Table 1. Semiotic patterns and emergent political myths in the music video

Scene	Signs	Denotative meaning	Connotative meaning	Emergent political myth	Political communication mechanism
1–3	Cartoon candidates, “02,” <i>Festival Riang Gembira</i> , night market	Candidates and supporters are represented in a festive setting	Youthfulness, warmth, accessibility, and familiarity	Joyful and relatable leadership	Candidate personalization
4–6	“IKaN,” crossed-out <i>cupu</i> , #SorryYe	Fishing scene, meatball cart, and supporters viewing phones	Economic aspiration, stigma reversal, solidarity, and counter-discourse	Resilient and morally legitimate leadership	Reframing and counter-discourse
7–9	Blue campaign group, criticism on phones, smiling	Supporters move forward while candidate figures read critical	Determination, composure, confidence, and resilience	Resilient and morally legitimate leadership	Reframing and delegitimization of criticism

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	candidates	comments				
10–12	“Kerja Nyata Tanpa Batas,” vegetable seller, magician-like figure, gold	An ordinary economic scene is followed by a visual transformation into gold	Hope, upward mobility, and immediate socioeconomic transformation	Transformative leadership	Simplification of socioeconomic transformation through visual metaphor.	
13–15	Raffi Ahmad, Emil Dardak, Arumi Bachsin, Bobby Nasution, Kahiyang Ayu, V-sign	Public figures dance and display a V-shaped hand gesture	Popularity, familiarity, unity, and symbolic endorsement	Popular legitimacy and historical inevitability	Symbolic association and endorsement	
16–18	Political coalition, <i>pencak silat</i> , anti-hoax slogans, open door	Supporters, martial-arts performance, and an opening door are shown	Defense, cultural identity, openness, and moral positioning	Resilient and morally legitimate leadership	Cultural legitimization and victimhood framing	
19–21	Food, starfruit, “Sego Goreng Iwak Endok”	Welfare symbols and humorous political references are displayed	Social assistance, irony, appropriation, and semantic reversal	Resilient and morally legitimate leadership	Ironic counter-signification and humor	
22–24	“Indonesia Maju,” “Indonesia Masa Depan,” candidate image	Supporters and candidate images appear in a celebratory setting	Collective hope, national future, and shared political destiny	Popular legitimacy and historical inevitability	Collective identification and naturalization of political choice	

Table 1 presents the recurring semiotic patterns identified in the video's 24 scenes, showing how observable verbal and visual signs develop into connotative meanings and, through repetition and association, into four overarching political myths. The following eight clusters elaborate these patterns while distinguishing textual observation from cultural interpretation and ideological reading.



Figure 1. Scenes 1–3: Opening and construction of candidate identity.
Source: Screenshot from *Richard Jersey Official (2024)*.

The opening cluster establishes candidate identity through animation, the ballot number “02,” and the *Festival Riang Gembira* setting. Denotatively, Prabowo, Gibran, and Richard Jersey are represented as cartoon figures, while a figure wearing “02” enters a festive night market. Connotatively, the animated form and festive setting can be read as constructing the political figures as approachable, playful, and socially accessible. The phrase *Bersama Indonesia Maju* further associates the pair with collective national progress. At the mythological level, these signs contribute to a myth of joyful, relatable leadership, associating political leadership with familiarity, optimism, and entertainment.



Figure 2. Scenes 4–6: Grassroots economic narrative and response to criticism.
Source: Screenshot from *Richard Jersey Official (2024)*.

The second cluster combines economic imagery with symbolic responses to criticism. The *IKaN* sign, the crossed-out *cupu* in *Bakso Cupu Suhu*, and the hashtag #SorryYe form a sequence of symbolic reframing. The *IKaN* formulation can be read as an associative reference to *IKN (Ibu Kota Nusantara)*, while the fishing imagery links the reference to an everyday economic setting. The crossed-out *cupu* visually removes a negative characterization; in contemporary Indonesian colloquial usage, *cupu* may carry a derogatory association with someone perceived as uncool, naïve, or outdated. The hashtag #SorryYe similarly functions as a humorous counter-discourse toward criticism. Collectively, these signs contribute to the myth of

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resilient and legitimate leadership, reworking potentially negative meanings through humor, solidarity, and symbolic redefinition.



scene 7 scene 8 scene 9
Figure 3. Scenes 7–9: Legitimation through composure in the face of criticism.

Source: Screenshot from Richard Jersey Official (2024).

The third cluster reinforces this representation through bodily movement and expressions of composure. The campaign group advances while dancing, while figures resembling Prabowo and Gibran read critical comments without visible distress. The combination of the lyric *tabrak-tabrak masuk* and forward movement can be read as representing determination. The candidates' calm, smiling responses to criticism further frame composure as a desirable leadership trait. At the mythological level, these scenes contribute to the myth of resilient and legitimate leadership, in which remaining composed in the face of criticism is associated with strength and legitimacy. The representation may also position criticism as emotionally excessive, although the video itself does not establish whether particular criticisms are objectively justified or unjustified.



scene 10 scene 11 scene 12
Figure 4. Scenes 10–12: The promise of transformation and the magic metaphor.

Source: Screenshot from Richard Jersey Official (2024).

Scenes 10–12 construct political transformation through a striking visual metaphor. The slogan *Kerja Nyata Tanpa Batas* accompanies a sequence in which a plainly dressed woman carrying vegetables encounters a magician-like figure and her basket is transformed into gold. Denotatively, the sequence juxtaposes ordinary economic activity with an extraordinary transformation. Connotatively, the contrast can be read as representing socioeconomic aspiration and upward mobility. The magician-like figure may be interpreted as a symbolic representation of political leadership or governmental intervention, but this remains an interpretive reading rather than evidence of producer intention. At the

mythological level, the sequence contributes to the myth of transformative leadership, in which complex socioeconomic improvement is represented through an immediately visible and emotionally accessible transformation.



scene 13

scene 14

scene 15

Figure 5. Scenes 13–15: Symbolic capital through public-figure involvement.

Source: Screenshot from *Richard Jersey Official* (2024).

Scenes 13–15 shift from policy and criticism toward symbolic endorsement. Raffi Ahmad, Emil Dardak, Arumi Bachsin, Bobby Nasution, and Kahiyang Ayu are represented dancing and displaying a V-shaped hand gesture. Denotatively, the figures are shown as public personalities participating in a collective performance. Connotatively, their public visibility may associate the candidates with popularity, familiarity, and social endorsement. The appearance of Bobby Nasution and Kahiyang Ayu may additionally evoke continuity with the political image associated with the Jokowi family, although the video does not explicitly state such a connection. These representations contribute to the myth of popular legitimacy and historical inevitability, particularly by associating political acceptability with popularity, social visibility, and perceived continuity.



scene 16

scene 17

scene 18

Figure 6. Scenes 16–18: Framing resistance and the symbolism of the open door.

Source: Screenshot from *Richard Jersey Official* (2024).

Scenes 16–18 construct resistance through political coalition, *pencak silat*, and open-door imagery. The martial-arts sequence, accompanied by references to “Hoaxes, Black Campaigns, Hate Speech, and Slander,” can be read as representing political struggle through a culturally recognizable idiom of defense. The use of *pencak silat* links resistance to an Indonesian cultural practice, while the open door,

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appearing within the *Indonesia Maju* visual environment, connotes openness and transition. Together, these representations contribute to the myth of resilient and legitimate leadership, positioning the candidate camp within a representational frame of defense against unethical political attacks while associating political struggle with Indonesian cultural identity.



Figure 7. Scenes 19–21: Welfare discourse and political humor.
Source: Screenshot from *Richard Jersey Official* (2024).

Scenes 19–21 combine welfare symbolism with humor and political satire. Supporters carrying food products visually represent the campaign's welfare discourse, while the starfruit and the phrase *Sego Goreng Iwak Endok* operate through culturally specific humor. The latter can be read as an allusion to the SGIE episode in the 2023 vice-presidential debate, when Gibran asked Muhaimin Iskandar about the State of the Global Islamic Economy (SGIE). Recasting the acronym through a humorous Indonesian phrase transforms a recognizable episode of political exchange into a more familiar and entertaining form of political representation. At the mythological level, the cluster contributes to the myth of resilient and legitimate leadership by reframing potentially negative political associations through humor and ironic counter-signification. This reading concerns the textual reconfiguration of criticism rather than evidence that audiences actually neutralized it.



Figure 8. Scenes 22–24: Conclusion and consolidation of collective hope.
Source: Screenshot from *Richard Jersey Official* (2024).

Scenes 22–24 consolidate the video's preceding representations through banners reading *Bersama Indonesia Maju* and *Indonesia Masa Depan*, followed by a large image of Prabowo and Gibran surrounded by supporters. Denotatively, the

scenes depict collective celebration and campaign imagery. Connotatively, the lyrics *Mari kita wujudkan, kita bisa putuskan* and *Karena di masa depan ada Prabowo dan Gibran* position political choice within a collective narrative of national progress. The candidate pair is represented not simply as one electoral option but as closely associated with the nation's imagined future. The cluster consequently contributes to the myth of popular legitimacy and historical inevitability, in which support for the candidates becomes symbolically aligned with collective national progress.

Based on these findings, the four overarching myths emerged inductively from recurring semiotic patterns across the 24 scenes. The first associates leadership with joy, accessibility, and emotional familiarity; the second portrays leadership as resilient and legitimate in the face of criticism; the third presents political leadership as a source of visible socioeconomic transformation; and the fourth links popularity, collective participation, and national progress to political legitimacy and historical continuity.

These myths overlap rather than operate as isolated categories: the same verbal or visual sign may simultaneously construct candidate identity, reframe criticism, and reinforce legitimacy. Across these overlapping myths, three broader political communication mechanisms emerge. First, popular-cultural naturalization embeds political meanings within familiar cultural forms, allowing candidate identities to be represented as accessible, desirable, and culturally recognizable.

Second, symbolic legitimation links candidates to celebrities, political figures, cultural practices, and collective participation, constructing legitimacy through recognizable social and cultural symbols. Third, ironic counter-signification reframes potentially negative meanings through humor, appropriation, and semantic reversal, turning existing political associations into alternative, more favorable representations. Taken together, these mechanisms show how the video's political communication strategies are represented through the interaction of semiotic structures and emergent myths: naturalization constructs desirable political meanings, symbolic association extends their legitimacy, and ironic counter-signification manages potentially unfavorable meanings.

4. Discussion

A semiotic analysis of 24 scenes in the music video *Oke Gas Prabowo Gibran Paling Pas* shows that this audiovisual text can be understood not merely as campaign entertainment but also as a site of ideological construction. Three primary semiotic mechanisms emerge in this construction: the naturalization of ideology through popular culture, the establishment of legitimacy through symbolic capital, and the reframing of criticism through humor and ironic counter-signification. These mechanisms do not operate in isolation; rather, they are interconnected, forming a coherent system of political communication, as detailed

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in the following three subsections.

First, the video naturalizes political meaning by embedding it within forms of popular culture familiar to the audience. Within a Barthesian framework, myth operates by transforming meanings into representations that appear natural and self-evident (Barthes, 1972). Through this logic, elements such as cartoons, festive imagery, *pencak silat* (martial arts), culinary motifs, humor, and visual metaphors allow political claims to be recognized instantly without lengthy policy elaboration. A similar pattern appears in Barthesian analyses of Prabowo Subianto's "gemoy" (cute/cuddly) persona, which demonstrate how a stern military image was re-naturalized into a playful, approachable one through a sequence of denotations, connotations, and myths at the visual level (Prasetyawan et al., 2025; Yarnis & Muksin, 2024). This parallel reinforces the argument that the naturalization of myth in the Prabowo-Gibran 2024 election campaign is not an isolated phenomenon confined to a single video, but a strategic representational pattern that recurs across media formats, from animated characters to music videos.

Second, public figures serve as a mechanism for symbolic legitimation. Figures such as Raffi Ahmad, Emil Dardak, Arumi Bachsin, Bobby Nasution, and Kahiyang Ayu link the candidate pair to celebrity visibility, political familiarity, and proximity to established power. This interpretation aligns with research showing that celebrity endorsements can shape social perceptions of political actors, though the magnitude of the impact depends on audience characteristics and the surrounding political context (Agina & Ekwevugbe, 2017; Chou, 2015). Therefore, the presence of public figures in this video can be understood as a symbolic association constructed within the text, rather than as empirical evidence of persuasion directed at the audience.

Third, humor and irony function as mechanisms to reframe potentially negative meanings. The crossed-out term *cupu* (uncool/lame), the hashtag #SorryYe, and the phrase *Sego Goreng Iwak Endok* (fried rice with fish and egg) transform potentially detrimental political associations into something humorous and culturally relatable. This mechanism is interpreted heuristically as "ironic counter-signification," referring to the appropriation, reversal, or redirection of existing meanings. A similar pattern appears in the broader Southeast Asian context: studies of political internet memes in the Philippines show that humor can serve a dual function—simultaneously naturalizing and deconstructing dominant ideological myths—depending on the direction of the sign reversal used by the content creator or reposter (Calimbo, 2016). This parallel reinforces the claim that ironic counter-signification is not unique to Indonesia, but a regional pattern in digital political communication across Southeast Asia that relies on online humor culture.

This distinction between mythic naturalization and ironic counter-signification opens the way for a more nuanced understanding of humor's function in political discourse. Humor does not automatically strip away the political

content of a critique; Conversely, humor can elicit recognition, solidarity, or even critical engagement among diverse audiences. Experimental studies on political humor indicate that political messages packaged with wit generate varied and non-uniform responses among audiences (Koivukoski et al., 2024; Verhulsdonk et al., 2022). Thus, the scenes analyzed in this study should be understood as attempts to reframe the criticism embedded within the text's structure, rather than as evidence that such criticism has truly been neutralized in the eyes of the audience.

These three mechanisms, popular-cultural naturalization, symbolic legitimation, and ironic counter-signification, embed political messages in culturally familiar forms that fit the communicative conventions of contemporary digital political culture (Febriandy et al., 2024; Wahyudi et al., 2026). Rather than relying primarily on extended policy arguments, the video communicates political meanings through humor, celebrity visibility, cultural symbols, bodily performance, visual metaphor, and emotionally recognizable representations. This configuration may indicate a representational tendency in which political communication is articulated less through extended argumentative discourse and more through affectively oriented forms of political expression (Behr, 2022; Wahyudi et al., 2026; Way, 2022). However, this observation concerns the representational structure of the campaign text rather than an empirically demonstrated shift in audience reception.

Overall, the findings reveal two complementary yet functionally distinct semiotic operations. Myth naturalizes meanings associated with politics and identity, whereas ironic counter-signification reworks potentially negative meanings through appropriation, inversion, and humor. The identification of these two coexisting operations within a single political media text constitutes the study's primary theoretical contribution. It extends previous research on Prabowo-Gibran's political communication, which has either identified specific political myths and symbolic constructions (Prasetyawan et al., 2025; Yarnis & Muksin, 2024) or examined the persuasive dimensions of the campaign song (Purwanto, 2024), by distinguishing between the process of ideological naturalization and the process of ironic re-signification within the same textual formation. This distinction suggests that political meaning in campaign media may be constructed through both affirmative and defensive semiotic operations: myth makes particular political meanings appear familiar and self-evident. At the same time, ironic counter-signification redirects potentially unfavorable meanings without necessarily eliminating their political referents.

Nevertheless, these findings should not be interpreted as evidence that the video generated voter support or directly contributed to Prabowo-Gibran's electoral victory. Electoral outcomes are shaped by a constellation of political, social, economic, institutional, and campaign factors that extend far beyond a single audiovisual artifact. Moreover, this study examines the representational and ideological structure of one campaign music video rather than audience reception

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or electoral behavior. The study's contribution therefore lies in textual and ideological analysis: it explains how political meanings are constructed, naturalized, and re-signified within the campaign text, while leaving questions about audience interpretation, persuasive effects, and electoral consequences to reception-oriented and comparative research.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed the construction of political meaning in *Oke Gas Prabowo Gibran Paling Pas* using Roland Barthes's semiotic framework. Analysis of 24 purposively selected scenes shows that lyrics and visual signs operate across denotative, connotative, and mythological levels to construct representations of leadership, welfare, legitimacy, cultural identity, and national progress.

Four overarching myths emerged inductively from recurring semiotic patterns: joyful and relatable leadership; resilient and morally legitimate leadership; transformative leadership; and popular legitimacy and historical inevitability. These overlapping myths naturalize historically contingent political meanings as familiar and desirable through three interconnected mechanisms: popular-cultural naturalization, symbolic legitimation through association, and the reframing of criticism through humor and irony.

The study's principal theoretical contribution lies in identifying the coexistence of Barthesian myth and ironic counter-signification within a single campaign text. The latter is used heuristically to describe how potentially negative meanings are appropriated, reversed, and re-signified through humor. This distinction extends Barthesian analysis beyond ideological naturalization by showing how naturalizing and counter-signifying processes may operate simultaneously in political communication.

The study is limited to one campaign music video, 24 purposively selected scenes, researcher-dependent interpretation, and analysis of lyrics and visual elements only. It does not measure audience reception, persuasion, or electoral effects. Future research could compare campaign media across candidates, elections, or countries and combine semiotic analysis with audience interviews, digital ethnography, or reception studies to examine how political meanings are interpreted, negotiated, and contested.

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