



Myth Construction in Baby Diaper Advertisements: A Semiotic Analysis of Mamypoko Pants

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Abstract

Advertising serves as a communication medium through which brands promote their products and construct persuasive messages for consumers. Baby product advertisements, such as those for Mamypoko Pants diapers, not only promote but also create myths that shape parents' perceptions. This study aims to analyze the myths represented in Mamypoko Pants baby diaper advertisements using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method, with the main data source taken from the official Mamypoko Pants YouTube channel. Verbal and nonverbal elements in the advertisements were examined to identify meanings at both denotative and connotative levels, leading to the discovery of underlying myths. The first level (denotative meaning) reveals the product's identity and the advantages emphasized in the advertisements. Meanwhile, the second level (mythic meaning) shows how cultural values are embedded within the ads. The study found that the myths constructed in the Mamypoko Pants advertisements include comfort, freedom, excellence, and happiness, all of which work together to persuade consumers. This study contributes to the understanding of how semiotic analysis can uncover socio-cultural meanings in contemporary advertising, particularly within Indonesia's consumer culture.

Keywords: *advertising, baby diapers advertisement, myth, Roland Barthes, semiotics*

Introduction

Advertising, derived from the Dutch words *advertentie* and *reclame*, functions as a medium for conveying ideas, values, and product information to the public (Hendriana, 2015; Salama et al., 2022). It plays a vital role not only in promoting goods and services but also in shaping consumer behavior and cultural perceptions. As Klepper (in Liliweri, 1992) explains, the term originates from the Latin *ad-vere*, meaning “to turn toward,” implying a communicative process aimed at persuading audiences. Advertising thus operates as both an economic and cultural force—drawing attention, stimulating desire, and embedding social values into consumer practices (Vidyarini, 2007; Frith S Frith, 1989).

Within the modern global context, advertisements play a central role in constructing meaning in consumer culture. They do not merely present information but also communicate social ideals and cultural myths. Berger (1972) argues that every advertisement makes a single proposal—to transform one’s life by purchasing something more. Through this lens, advertisements can be read as cultural texts filled with signs that convey ideological meanings (Ghandeharioun S Badrlou, 2018). Semiotic analysis, particularly that of Roland Barthes, offers a powerful framework for decoding how advertisements signify both literal and cultural meanings.

This study focuses on baby product advertising, specifically Mamypoko Pants diaper commercials. Baby products are among the most competitive segments in the consumer market, where emotional appeals—such as care, comfort, and happiness—are used to persuade parents. These advertisements often embed myths of the “ideal mother” and “happy baby” as cultural values associated with good parenting. MamyPoko Pants is one of the famous baby diaper products in Indonesia. Its advertisements often feature various signs and codes designed to attract attention and build a positive image in the eyes of consumers. Using Barthes’ semiotic framework, this study seeks to uncover how Mamypoko Pants advertisements construct and communicate such myths.

Barthes’ semiotic theory distinguishes between two levels of meaning: denotation and connotation, which together form myths. Denotation refers to the literal meaning of a sign, while connotation encompasses cultural and emotional associations shaped by social context (Barthes, 1957). Myth, as a second-order signification, naturalizes ideology—making certain cultural values appear universal or “common sense.” Applying this theory, the present study examines how Mamypoko Pants advertisements signify myths of comfort, freedom, excellence, and happiness, and how these myths reinforce consumer ideologies in parenting culture. This research will analyze the myths built into the advertisement. As the second level of meaning, myth makes the first level of meaning a foundation for creating new meanings. Myth is a dual system consisting of a linguistic system and a semiological (mythical) system. The following is a description of the flow of the formation of the sign system, according to Roland Barthes (1957: 187):



Figure 1. Roland Barthes Sign Map (Barthes, 1957:187)

While previous studies have employed Barthes' framework to analyze myths in literary works and films (Awalia et al., 2021; Afnira, 2023; Ismatullah, 2013), few have examined baby product advertisements within the Indonesian context. This study fills that gap by applying Barthes' semiotic theory to contemporary advertising discourse. The research contributes to a broader understanding of how advertising functions as a medium of cultural reproduction and ideological persuasion in modern Indonesian society.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, aiming to interpret and describe the meanings of signs found in *Mamypoko Pants* advertisements. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring semiotic phenomena because it focuses on natural contexts, interpretative processes, and subjective meanings (Moleong, 2016). The researcher functioned as the main instrument, supported by documentation techniques for data collection.

The primary data were obtained from a 30-second Mamypoko Pants X-tra Dry diaper advertisement available on the official Mamypoko Indonesia YouTube channel (uploaded on April 4, 2024). The data consist of verbal elements (spoken or written text) and nonverbal elements (visuals and gestures). Secondary data were gathered from books, journal articles, and online references relevant to advertising semiotics and myth analysis. Data were collected using the documentation method, following Lofland's (Moleong's, 2016) framework. The researcher observed and transcribed the advertisement, noting linguistic and visual cues that could function as signifiers and signifieds. Supporting documents, such as theoretical literature and previous studies, were also compiled to contextualize the analysis.

The data were analyzed using Roland Barthes' two-level semiotic model, consisting of denotation analysis: identifying the literal meaning (first-order signification) of each verbal and visual element in the advertisement; and connotation and myth analysis: interpreting second-order meanings that reflect cultural and ideological values. Through this process, the study revealed how connotative signs construct myths surrounding the product, such as comfort, freedom, excellence, and happiness. The analysis was conducted interpretatively by

cross-referencing visual cues, linguistic expressions, and cultural contexts.

Results and Discussion

Although the Mamypoko Pants advertisement contains multimodal elements such as images, colors, sounds, and movements, this study focuses only on the verbal and visual (nonverbal) aspects. The analysis follows Barthes' two-level semiotic model, emphasizing how linguistic and visual signs construct meaning at the denotative, connotative, and mythic levels. Other modes, such as sound or editing techniques, are acknowledged as supporting contexts but are not the focus of interpretation.

This study analyzed verbal and nonverbal signs in the Mamypoko Pants X-tra Dry advertisement using Roland Barthes' two-level semiotic model. The analysis revealed how denotative meanings at the first level evolved into connotative and mythical meanings at the second level, constructing persuasive cultural narratives.

Verbal and Nonverbal Signs

Following Barthes' two-level model of signification, the analysis identifies how these linguistic and visual elements construct meanings at the denotative, connotative, and mythic levels. The first step involves describing the observable verbal and visual features in the advertisement, which are then interpreted according to their cultural and ideological implications.

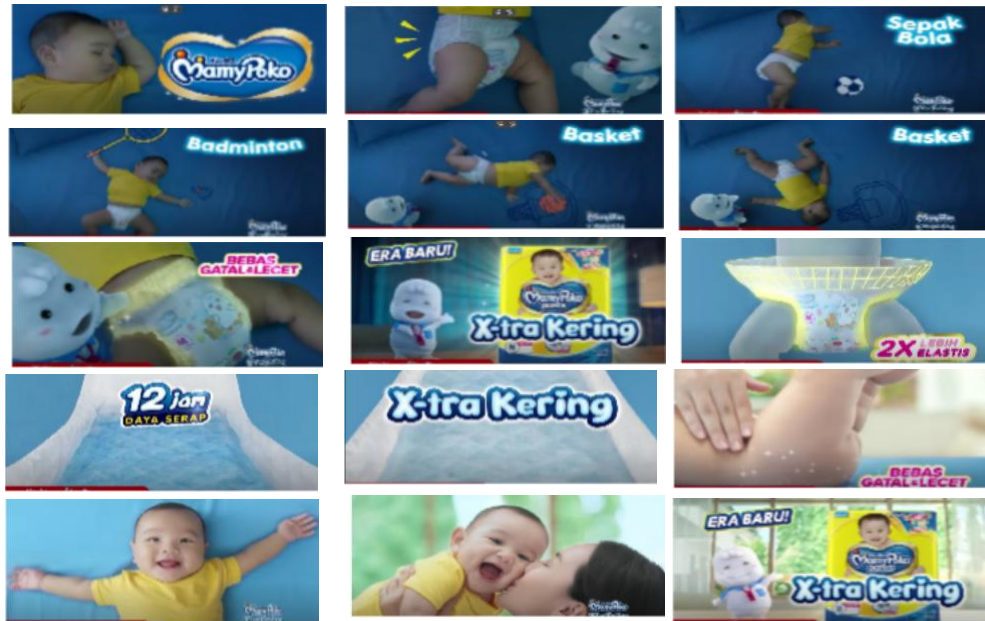
Verbal Signs

The advertisement presents six key verbal texts that highlight the product's advantages:

1. "Saat tidur kamu banyak gerak, seperti atlet sepak bola, badminton, basket hingga berputar posisi" ("When you sleep, you move a lot, like an athlete playing football, badminton, or basketball").
2. "Kulitmu tetap nyaman, bebas gatal, dan lecet" ("Your skin stays comfortable, free from itchiness and rashes").
3. "Mamypoko X-tra kering baru! 2x lebih elastis: memeluk lembut saat banyak gerak" ("New Mamypoko X-tra Dry! Twice as elastic: softly hugs during movement").
4. "Serapannya 12 jam X-tra kering, bebas gatal, dan lecet" ("12-hour absorption, extra dry, itch and rash free").
5. "Bangun dengan senyum juara" ("Wake up with a champion's smile").
6. "Mamypoko: X-tra kering!" (Advertising tagline).

At the denotative level, these sentences describe the functional qualities of the product: long-lasting dryness, elasticity, and skin protection. At the connotative level, they symbolize activity, happiness, and parental trust in the brand. For instance, comparing a baby's movement to that of an athlete connotes strength and vitality—

traits not typically associated with infants, but used here to evoke admiration and emotional appeal.



Nonverbal Signs

Nonverbal elements strengthen the persuasive power of the advertisement. The visuals show a baby sleeping yet moving actively, supported by bright lighting and soft colors that connote warmth and care. The mother's smile and gentle gestures symbolize affection and security. Together, these signs produce an impression of harmony between the product and parental love.

The background music is cheerful and rhythmic, representing energy and freedom. The repeated visual emphasis on the product's elasticity and dryness visually reinforces the verbal claims. Thus, the visual and auditory modes interact with the verbal text to create a unified message of comfort and happiness.

Signification of Advertising

The analysis begins by identifying key verbal and nonverbal elements (signifiers) present in the *Mamypoko Pants X-tra Dry* advertisement. Following Barthes (1957), these elements are first described at the denotative level (what is literally shown/said). They are then interpreted at the connotative level (cultural and emotional associations) and finally read as components of larger myths that serve ideological functions. The table below summarizes principal verbal texts and salient nonverbal cues extracted from the 30-second advertisement; subsequent subsections provide detailed, evidence-based readings of each sign.

Table 1. Summary of principal signifiers and multi-level readings

No.	Signifier (verbal / salient nonverbal cue)	Denotative reading (first-order)	Connotative reading (second-order)	Myth / ideological function
1	“Saat tidur kamu banyak gerak, seperti atlet sepak bola, badminton, basket hingga berputar posisi” + footage of an actively moving sleeping baby	Baby moves a lot while sleeping; visual of baby turning/rolling while wearing the diaper	Movement equated with strength, agility, vitality; baby as mini-athlete; mobility = health	Myth of Freedom S Vitality: diaper enables unfettered movement, natural growth; normalizes activity even during sleep
2	“Kulitmu tetap nyaman, bebas gatal dan lecet” + close-up of smooth baby skin	Skin remains comfortable; absence of rash or irritation	Healthiness, bodily integrity, maternal care; product as protector of bodily wholeness	Myth of Comfort S Protection: purchasing product = ensuring child’s bodily wellbeing
3	“Mamypoko X-tra kering baru! 2x lebih elastis: memeluk lembut saat banyak gerak” + “ERA BARU” visual	Product novelty; twice elasticity; gentle hugging fit	Technological advancement, superior fit, brand innovation; association with modernity	Myth of Excellence S Progress: product framed as superior, modern choice for a discerning parent
4	“Serapannya 12 jam X-tra kering, bebas gatal, dan lecet” + demo of liquid being absorbed	12-hour absorption capacity; quick dryness	Reliability, endurance, trustworthiness; ability to sustain through night	Myth of Reliability: consumption provides security and continuous protection
5	“Bangun dengan senyum juara” + baby waking smiling; mother’s affectionate response	Baby wakes up smiling; mother kisses baby	Happiness as outcome of product use; parental emotional reward	Myth of Happiness S Emotional Fulfillment: buying equals producing joyful family life
6	“Mamypoko: X-tra kering!” (tagline) + repeated product shots	Brand tagline emphasizing extra dryness	Tagline functions as condensed promise; repetitive framing Increases memorability	Myth of Brand Identity S Trust: slogan naturalizes Product advantage as common sense

The six verbal and visual signifiers above represent the advertisement's primary semiotic system at the denotative level. Each statement introduces a literal claim about the product's quality (dryness, elasticity, comfort, duration), which is reinforced by corresponding visuals—such as active motion, smooth skin, and smiling expressions. Together, these signs build a coherent message that portrays *Mamypoko Pants* as both technologically superior and emotionally satisfying.

At the connotative level, the advertisement transfers cultural associations of strength, happiness, and maternal care to the product. This transference results in the construction of several dominant myths:

1. Freedom and vitality, achieved through physical movement.
2. Comfort and protection, reflecting ideal parental love.
3. Progress and excellence, tied to modern, innovative parenting.
4. Reliability symbolizes trust in product technology.
5. Happiness represents emotional fulfillment through consumer choice.

These layers of meaning transform a commercial object into a cultural symbol of ideal motherhood and family happiness. In Barthes' (1957) terms, such transformation reflects the ideological function of advertising—to naturalize consumerist values as moral or emotional truths. At the first level of signification (denotation), *Mamypoko Pants* is identified as a baby diaper brand that promises dryness, elasticity, and skin protection. The product's tagline, "X-tra kering," becomes the key marker of its functional superiority.

Denotative and Connotative Meaning

At the first level of signification (denotation), *Mamypoko Pants* is identified as a baby diaper brand that promises dryness, elasticity, and skin protection. The product's tagline, "X-tra kering," functions as a key marker of its functional superiority. Each verbal expression and corresponding visual image explicitly describe the diaper's physical qualities: 12-hour absorption, extra elasticity, and comfortable fit. These features create a surface meaning—what Barthes (1957) refers to as the "obvious" or "literal" message—aimed at establishing the product's practical reliability.

However, meaning does not stop at this literal level. According to Barthes, once a sign achieves denotative stability, it becomes the material for a second-order signification—the connotative level—where social and cultural meanings are attached. In the *Mamypoko Pants* advertisement, connotation arises when functional attributes are transformed into emotional and ideological values. For instance, "extra elasticity" is not only a technical description but also connotes adaptability, gentleness, and parental care. Likewise, "12-hour dryness" evokes a sense of safety and trust, while "smiling baby" and "mother's kiss" connote emotional satisfaction and affection.

At this connotative level, language and image cooperate to produce symbolic associations that go beyond the product's utility. The diaper becomes a sign of responsible motherhood, while comfort and dryness are reinterpreted as symbols of love and protection. Through repetition and emphasis, these associations are normalized—creating what Barthes calls myth, a form of cultural narrative that disguises ideology as natural truth. In this advertisement, three dominant connotative threads emerge:

1. Technological Modernity – the idea that good parenting is aligned with innovation and product advancement.
2. Maternal Devotion – the notion that using this product expresses love and responsible care.
3. Happiness through Consumption – the implication that family joy and comfort can be achieved through purchasing decisions.

Thus, at the denotative level, Mamypoko Pants signifies a functional product. At the connotative and mythical levels, it signifies a lifestyle and emotional identity—transforming the act of buying into a symbolic gesture of love, responsibility, and happiness.

At the first level of signification, also known as the denotative or object level, meaning is produced by the advertiser through linguistic and visual signs. When a product becomes a sign (that is, when it is branded), it carries two main types of value: a functional or denotative value and a social or cultural value, which Barthes refers to as myth (Hasyim, 2016, p. 74). A brand name and product type form the product's identity—just as people are identified by their names, consumers recognize products through their brands.

At the denotative level, a product's name serves as its identity, allowing consumers to easily recognize and differentiate it in the marketplace. However, at the connotative or mythical level, a brand acquires meanings that go beyond its literal or functional definition. Based on the verbal and nonverbal elements found in the advertisement, the product under study is Mamypoko Pants. The brand name Mamypoko Pants derives from the English word mommy, meaning a woman who has given birth and nurtures her child. Denotatively, the word refers to a mother—someone associated with love, care, and protection. Symbolically, this term evokes the image of a nurturing mother who always seeks the best for her child.

The second part of the name, Poko, is derived from the Japanese language, where it signifies a diaper. Literally, it refers to a piece of baby clothing used to absorb waste. In this context, Poko connotes a Japanese-made product associated with high quality and advanced technology. The word pants emphasize the diaper's form—practical, easy to wear, and designed for active babies.

At the first level of signification (denotation), Mamypoko Pants is identified as a baby diaper brand that promises dryness, elasticity, and skin protection. The product's tagline, "X-tra kering," becomes the key marker of its functional superiority.

Thus, the product's material functions—such as being extra dry, elastic, and long-lasting—constitute its denotative meaning, while the name and imagery add layers of cultural and emotional significance. Consumers interpret the product as a sign that represents both identity and quality. In this advertisement, Mamypoko Pants is denotatively characterized by its features: extra dryness, itch-free comfort, 12-hour absorbency, double elasticity, and its presentation as a "new-era" innovation.

Signifier	<i>Mamypoko Pants</i>	<i>Mamypoko Pants</i>	<i>Mamypoko Pants</i>	<i>Mamypoko Pants</i>	<i>Mamypoko Pants</i>	<i>Mamypoko Pants</i>	
Signified	Diaper brands	Extra dry	free itching	of and	12 - hour absorbency	Twice as elastic	New - era products

At this first level of meaning (denotation) the advertiser constructs the product's identity by emphasizing its functional advantages and distinctive branding. At the second level (connotation), the diaper symbolizes modern parenting—practical, hygienic, and emotionally rewarding. The advertisement connects the act of diapering with care and affection, implying that mothers who choose Mamypoko Pants are responsible, loving, and modern. This connotative link turns a mundane object into a symbol of parental success and satisfaction.

Myth Construction

Advertising produces meaning through the various signs it has. If the denotation meaning provides information about the identity of the product with its various advantages, the mythical meaning emphasizes socio-cultural values. Products are interpreted as human and seen as human (Hasyim, 2014: 75). To distinguish traditional myths from modern versions of myths, Barthes calls modern myths mythology (Barthes, 1957). Mythology is a modern version of the myth that includes aspects of 'logos' (rational or scientific thinking) so that the myth is considered a natural or true thing. In mythology, all things or stories are rationalized as true. Based on Barthes' model, the advertisement transforms a diaper into a symbol of ideal motherhood, modern lifestyle, and emotional fulfillment. Following Barthes (1957), such myths function ideologically to naturalize consumer culture, presenting consumption as an expression of care and love.

The final stage of Barthes' semiotic analysis involves identifying how denotative and connotative meanings evolve into myth—an ideological system that presents social values as natural and self-evident. In the Mamypoko Pants X-tra Dry advertisement, the combination of verbal and visual signs constructs a series of cultural myths that idealize motherhood, modernity, and consumption. Through the interaction of language, imagery, and symbolic association, the advertisement

redefines parental care as a function of product choice.

The Myth of Comfort and Protection

At the surface level, the advertisement emphasizes physical comfort—dryness, softness, and protection from irritation. However, this comfort extends beyond the baby's body to signify emotional security and maternal affection. The mother's gentle gestures and the baby's calm expression create a symbolic equation: comfort equals love. This myth naturalizes the idea that purchasing Mamypoko Pants is not merely a practical choice but an act of nurturing and responsible motherhood.

The Myth of Freedom and Vitality

The image of the baby moving freely during sleep, described as "like an athlete," carries deeper cultural implications. Activity and freedom of movement are equated with health, growth, and vitality—qualities that modern parents aspire to. The diaper becomes a metaphor for liberation rather than restriction, implying that the right product enables a child's natural development. This myth promotes the notion that technological products can grant physical freedom, aligning parental care with modern convenience.

The Myth of Progress and Modernity

Repeated references to novelty—"X-tra kering baru," "2x lebih elastis," and "era baru"—situate the product within the discourse of technological advancement. The advertisement frames innovation as synonymous with good parenting, suggesting that caring for a child in the modern era requires adopting the latest products. This myth transforms modern consumption into a moral virtue: being an "updated" parent equals being a better parent.

The Myth of Happiness and Emotional Fulfillment

The closing scene—featuring a smiling baby embraced by a joyful mother—represents the emotional reward that follows product use. The tagline "Bangun dengan senyum juara" (Wake up with a champion's smile) fuses physical satisfaction with emotional success. This myth implies that happiness and familial harmony are achievable through the product's promise of comfort and reliability. Consumption, therefore, becomes a source of emotional validation and domestic happiness.

Through these mythic constructions, the Mamypoko Pants advertisement transforms an everyday commodity into a sign of ideal motherhood, technological progress, and emotional fulfillment. In Barthes' terms, myth serves to depoliticize cultural values by making them appear natural and inevitable. The advertisement disguises the commercial motive of selling a product behind the ideological message that love, care, and happiness can be attained through consumption.

In essence, the myth of Mamypoko Pants aligns modern parental identity with consumer culture. Mothers are subtly encouraged to express affection through the act of choosing the “right” brand—equating consumption with devotion. Thus, Barthes’ semiotic framework reveals how linguistic and visual codes collaborate to reproduce dominant cultural narratives about family, gender, and modernity within everyday advertising discourse.

Conclusion

This study examined the Mamypoko Pants X-tra Dry advertisement through Roland Barthes’ two-level semiotic framework, focusing on verbal and nonverbal signs. The analysis revealed that meaning operates on multiple levels: the denotative level conveys the product’s literal qualities—such as dryness, elasticity, and comfort—while the connotative and mythical levels transform these practical attributes into cultural symbols of love, care, modernity, and happiness.

The verbal and visual signs in the advertisement work together to construct an image of the “ideal mother” who expresses affection and responsibility through the act of consumption. The brand name Mamypoko Pants, the tagline “X-tra kering,” and the imagery of the smiling baby and nurturing mother form a coherent narrative that equates consumer choice with good parenting. The product’s material features thus serve as the foundation for broader ideological meanings that link technological advancement with emotional fulfillment.

At the mythic level, the advertisement naturalizes a set of cultural beliefs—namely, that modern motherhood requires technological support, that comfort equals love, and that happiness can be purchased. These myths transform a commercial message into a moral discourse, encouraging audiences to perceive consumption as a form of care and devotion. In doing so, the advertisement illustrates how everyday media texts reproduce social ideologies and normalize consumerism in family life.

In conclusion, Barthes’ semiotic approach effectively reveals how linguistic and visual codes in advertising function beyond persuasion; they operate as cultural mechanisms that define identity, emotion, and value within modern society. Future research may extend this study by examining comparative advertisements across different brands or media to explore how similar myths are localized and reproduced in diverse cultural contexts.

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