

**SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF TEXTUAL AND VISUAL SIGNS IN
@VANS INSTAGRAM ADVERTISEMENTS**

THESIS

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK
IBRAHIM MALANG**

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THESIS

Presented to:

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirement for the degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S)

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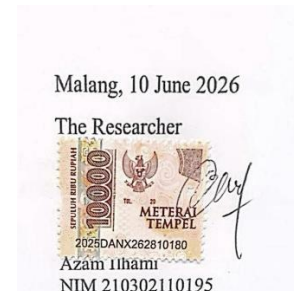


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IBRAHIM MALANG**

2026

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis I wrote to fulfil the requirement for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S.) entitled **“Semiotic Analysis Textual and Visual Signs in @Vans Instagram Advertisement”** is truly my original work. It does not incorporate any materials previously written or published by other persons, except those indicated in quotation and bibliography. As the sole author of this thesis, I will address any objections or claims from others.



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This is to certify that Azam ilhami thesis entitled “**Semiotic Analysis Textual and Visual Signs in @Vans Instagram Advertisement**” has been approved for thesis examination at the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, as one of the requirements for the degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S.)

Malang,, 2026

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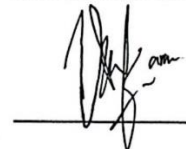
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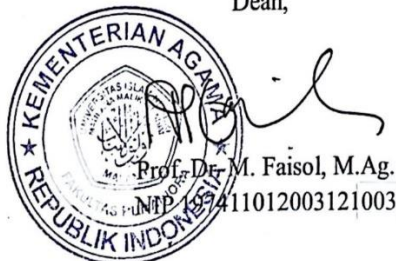
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MOTTO

"Be good. Indeed, Allah loves those who do good."

(Q.S Al Baqarah: 195)

*Ternyata ku di antara asuhan- Nya
Yang tak membiarkanku dalam gelap
Kunikmati, ku ekstraksi segala ujian itu
Tuk ku lanngitkan.*

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents, Luluk Mu'alifah and alm Zubairi, whose endless love, sacrifices, prayers, and unwavering support have been my greatest source of strength throughout my academic journey, and also to my beloved brothers and sisters, who have always supported me with their love, prayers, motivation, and encouragement.

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Alhamdulillahirabbil'alamin. All praise is due to Allah SWT, the Lord of the universe, who always gives His grace, love, health and guidance to His servants at every step of life so that they can complete this thesis entitled "Semiotic Analysis Textual and Visual Signs in @Vans Instagram Advertisement" as part of the fulfilment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Literature (S. S) degree.

Shalawat and greetings I send to the lord of nature, the Prophet Muhammad SAW, a figure who is a perfect example in all aspects of life. The preparation of this thesis is a long journey full of challenges, learning and reflection. Therefore, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to those who have encouraged and motivated me throughout the writing process.

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I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to all lecturers of the English Literature Study program for their valuable knowledge, guidance, and dedication throughout my academic journey. Their commitment to teaching has greatly enhanced my understanding and enriched my academic experience.

My deepest appreciation is dedicated to my beloved parents, Luluk Mu'alifah and Zubairi, whose unconditional love, financial support, and constant prayers have been the foundation of my success. I am also thankful to my brother and sister, Zulham Wildany and Wilda Nurrahmah, for their unwavering encouragement and support during challenging times.

Special tribute to my father, Zubairi who has passed away. Although he is no longer physically present, his love, sacrifices, values, and prayers continue to guide and inspire me every day. I will always cherish his memory and carry his teachings with me throughout my life.

My deep gratitude goes to my very meaningful friends, Nayla, Nadia, Dea, Dina, Kaye, Jazael, Amasta, Acel, Hafidh, whose unwavering support, encouragement, and companionship helped me overcome difficult moments and stay motivated throughout the process of completing this thesis. Their presence and kindness have been invaluable during this academic journey.

Finally, I am fully aware that this thesis is not without limitations and still has room for improvement. Nevertheless, I sincerely hope that this study will contribute valuable insights to readers and serve as a useful reference for future

researchers, particularly those interested in conducting studies within a similar field of research.

Malang, June 10, 2026
The Researcher

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ABSTRACT

Ilhami, Azam 2026 *Semiotic Analysis Textual and Visual Signs in @Vans Instagram Advertisement*
Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities,
Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor Mira Shartika, M.A.

Key words: *semiotics, @vans, Instagram advertisement, roland barthes, freedom.*

This study aims to analyze how textual and visual signs in @Vans Instagram advertisements

Construct the meaning of freedom and reveal the cultural myths associated with it. The research is driven by two research questions: (1) how textual and visual elements in @vans advertisements represent freedom, and (2) what cultural ideologies or myths about freedom are constructed through these advertisements. This study employs Roland Barthes' (1967) semiotic theory, focusing on the concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the researcher analyzes 25 advertisement posts selected from the official @Vans Instagram account published between 2019 and 2025. The data consist of textual elements, including words, phrases, captions, and slogans, as well as visual elements such as images, colors, settings, gestures, and objects that represent freedom. The findings reveal that @Vans advertisements construct freedom through both textual and visual signs that emphasize self-expression, individuality, creativity, exploration, and the courage to challenge conventional boundaries. At the denotative level, the advertisements present individual engaging in creative activities, skateboarding, music, fashion, and exploration. At the connotation level, these signs communicate deeper meanings related to personal identity, authenticity, independence, and unrestricted self-expression. Furthermore, at the mythical level, the advertisements construct the ideology that freedom is a natural and attainable lifestyle for everyone. The study also shows that Vans strategically associates its products with cultural narratives of freedom, creativity, and youth identity, making freedom appear as an inherent value that can be achieved through the lifestyle represented by the brand. Therefore, @Vans advertisements function not only as promotional media but also as cultural texts that shape and reinforce contemporary understandings of freedom among young audiences.

ABSTRAK

Ilhami, Azam 2026 Analisis Semiotik Tanda-Tanda Tekstual dan Visual dalam Iklan Instagram @Vans. Skripsi Sarjana. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing: Mira Shartika, M.A.

Kata kunci: *semiotika, @vans, iklan Instagram, roland barthes, kebebasan.*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana tanda-tanda tekstual dan visual dalam iklan Instagram @Vans membangun makna kebebasan dan mengungkap mitos-mitos budaya yang terkait dengannya. Penelitian ini didorong oleh dua pertanyaan penelitian: (1) bagaimana elemen tekstual dan visual dalam iklan @Vans merepresentasikan kebebasan, dan (2) ideologi atau mitos budaya apa saja tentang kebebasan yang dibangun melalui iklan-iklan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori semiotik Roland Barthes (1967), dengan fokus pada konsep denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, peneliti menganalisis 25 postingan iklan yang dipilih dari akun Instagram resmi @Vans yang dipublikasikan antara tahun 2019 dan 2025. Data terdiri dari elemen teks, termasuk kata-kata, frasa, keterangan, dan slogan, serta elemen visual seperti gambar, warna, latar belakang, gestur, dan objek yang mewakili kebebasan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa iklan @Vans membangun konsep kebebasan melalui tanda-tanda teks dan visual yang menekankan ekspresi diri, individualitas, kreativitas, eksplorasi, dan keberanian untuk menantang batas-batas konvensional. Pada tingkat denotatif, iklan-iklan tersebut menampilkan individu yang terlibat dalam aktivitas kreatif, seperti skateboarding, musik, mode, dan penjelajahan. Pada tingkat konotatif, tanda-tanda ini menyampaikan makna yang lebih dalam terkait identitas pribadi, keaslian, kemandirian, dan ekspresi diri tanpa batas. Selain itu, pada tingkat mitologis, iklan-iklan tersebut membangun ideologi bahwa kebebasan adalah gaya hidup yang alami dan dapat diraih oleh semua orang. Studi ini juga menunjukkan bahwa Vans secara strategis mengaitkan produknya dengan narasi budaya tentang kebebasan, kreativitas, dan identitas kaum muda, sehingga kebebasan tampak sebagai nilai inheren yang dapat dicapai melalui gaya hidup yang diwakili oleh merek tersebut. Oleh karena itu, iklan @Vans berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai media promosi, tetapi juga sebagai teks budaya yang membentuk dan memperkuat pemahaman kontemporer tentang kebebasan di kalangan audiens muda.

خلاصة

مارغيتسنا تانلاعا في فير صيلاو تيموكل تاملعلا في ناي ميسلا ليحتلا 2026 مازاً ،ي ماهلا @Vans

فرشما جـلام مـهاربا لـلام انلاوم تيموكل تاملعلا تـمـاجلا ،تـفـاقـتـلا مـولـعـلا تـيـلك ،يـزـلـجـنـلا بـدلاً مـسـقـ .سـويـر وـلـاكـب تـلـاسـر
ريـتـسـجـام ،اـكـيـتـراشـد اـريـم

الكلمات المفتاحية: السيميائيات، إعلانات إنستغرام، @Vans، رولان بارت، الحرية.

على منصة @Vans يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل كيفية بناء العلامات النصية والبصرية لمعنى الحرية في إعلانات حساب إنستغرام، والكشف عن الأساطير الثقافية المرتبطة بها. وينطلق هذا البحث من سؤالين رئيسيين: (1) كيف تمثل العناصر النصية مفهوم الحرية؟ و(2) ما الأيديولوجيات أو الأساطير الثقافية المتعلقة بالحرية التي تُبنى من خلال @Vans والبصرية في إعلانات هذه الإعلانات؟ يعتمد هذا البحث على النظرية السيميائية لـرولان بارت (1967)، مع التركيز على مفاهيم الدلالة المباشرة وباستخدام المنهج الوصفي النوعي، قام الباحث بتحليل 25 منشورًا إعلانيًا مختارًا من الحساب ، والأسطورة والدلالة الإيحائية على إنستغرام، والمنشورة خلال الفترة الممتدة من عام 2019 إلى عام 2025. وتتكون البيانات من العناصر @Vans الرسمي لـ النصية، بما في ذلك الكلمات والعبارات والتعليقات التوضيحية والشعارات، بالإضافة إلى العناصر البصرية مثل الصور والألوان والخلفيات والإيماءات والأشياء التي تمثل مفهوم الحرية.

تبني مفهوم الحرية من خلال علامات نصية وبصرية تؤكد على التعبير عن الذات، @Vans وأظهرت نتائج البحث أن إعلانات والفردية، والإبداع، والاستكشاف، والشجاعة في تحدي الحدود التقليدية. فعلى المستوى الدلالي المباشر، تعرض الإعلانات أفرادًا يشاركون في أنشطة إبداعية مثل التزلج على الألواح والموسيقى والأزياء والاستكشاف. أما على المستوى الإيحائي، فإن هذه العلامات تنقل معاني أعمق تتعلق بالهوية الشخصية والأصالة والاستقلالية والتعبير الحر عن الذات دون قيود. وإضافة إلى ذلك، على المستوى الأسطوري، تبني هذه الإعلانات أيديولوجية مفادها أن الحرية أسلوب حياة طبيعي ويمكن لجميع الناس تحقيقه.

تربط منتجاتها بصورة استراتيجية بالسرديات الثقافية المتعلقة بالحرية والإبداع وهوية الشباب، Vans كما توضح الدراسة أن شركة @Vans بحيث تبدو الحرية قيمة متأصلة يمكن الوصول إليها من خلال نمط الحياة الذي تمثله العلامة التجارية. ولذلك، فإن إعلانات لا تؤدي وظيفة ترويجية فحسب، بل تعمل أيضًا كنصوص ثقافية تسهم في تشكيل وتعزيز الفهم المعاصر للحرية لدى فئة الشباب.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the background of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and limitations, key terms,

A. Background of the Study

In the modern era, hyper capitalism has deeply infiltrated every aspect of human life, shaping consumption patterns, social behaviors, and cultural values, within this context, young consumers increasingly rely on lifestyle brands as symbolic resources for constructing their identity (Waqas et al., 2025). In the midst of social pressures, academic demands, and many economic uncertainties, many young people found escape in street culture, music, or sports. In addition, the young generation also likes to try new experiences because they are looking for their identity, especially in this era where fashion can represent the lifestyle of an individual. As the young generation that is looking for their identity by using the symbol of freedom, many big brands use brand marketing strategies that offer the concept of freedom so that they feel closer and more attached to today's young generation. In this modern era, lifestyle reflects an individual's values, which is very important for most people. Besides being needed for activities, shoes are also used for everyone's lifestyle. (Sitanggang et al., 2024). Shoes have now become one of the fashion elements most attended to by the younger generation, as the choice of shoe style and brand is often seen as representing the wearer's personality and identity. One of the iconic American streetwear brands that is widely used by the younger generation is Vans. Vans is a brand that is spread throughout the world and

has its own target market, because this brand is iconic and unique, especially around sneakers (Yusup, 2023). Vans shoes are not just footwear, but also a representation of a flexible, relaxed, and nonconformist lifestyle. By wearing Vans, one feels closer to the values of freedom, creativity. As a brand that is closely associated with youth culture and has long used the concept of freedom as the core of its brand identity, individual lifestyles and identities are increasingly influenced by the advertising and marketing strategies of major brands.

The way Vans markets its products through social media. An effective way to market products is through social media. (Suryawanshi, 2020). Because in this digital era, social media is expected by everyone. The main problem is how Vans, as a shoe brand, can present the freedom conveyed through its advertisements. The representation of freedom in this Vans advertisement is conveyed through signs, symbols, and captions that convey many meanings. This issue still exists because advertising is an instrument that can bring up cultural narratives and an identity. Even with the many technological advances, there are still many messages in advertisements that are less effective, so that there is a mismatch, or the message that the brand wants to convey is not understood optimally.

This research focuses on how Vans advertisements can represent freedom through symbols, signs, and captions in their advertisements to convey messages about freedom. Signs can appear through images, colors, and text displayed on advertisements. (Toti et al., 2024). This research is important because it can find out the meaning in an advertisement that represents freedom through symbols, signs, and captions so that it can attract consumers from all walks of life. The

representation of freedom contained in this Vans advertisement can influence how a person knows about the concept of freedom.

To provide an in-depth foundation for this research, previous studies are grouped into three main categories based on their relevance and focus to provide a clearer and more systemic understanding of the existing literature, allowing the researcher to identify patterns, and gaps across different research focuses. The first group is previous studies on visual poster advertising (Muazzomah, 2023; Wayan, 2021; Be, 2023; Udyani, 2024). The second group is video-based advertisements on social media (Sjaerodji & Indrawati, 2022; Tubagus & Gunawan, 2024; Rahmat, 2025; Agastya & Suastini, 2024). The third group is semiotic research by focusing on identity and cultural narratives (Zhykharieva, 2024; Rais & Fadilah, 2025; Rahman, 2025).

The first group for instance is previous studies, Muazzomah (2023) examined the semiotic on Joker posters using Pierce's theory, with a qualitative descriptive method using document analysis techniques, then the results of this study found that in poster advertisements, there are 14 icons, 12 indexes, and 42 symbols, and text often functions as a symbol, and the poster plays an important role in expressing meaning, and then reinforced by language (Muazzomah, 2023).

Then, the next research also analyzes semiotics in fast food advertisements using semiotic theory from Ferdinand de Saussure, with a qualitative descriptive approach method. Then the results of this study found that in fast food advertisements, many verbal signs are found to attract the attention of consumers,

declarative sentences are used to market products, and attract consumers to make purchases of their products (Be, 2023).

Another study also analyzes the semiotics in J&T Express expedition advertisements using a qualitative descriptive method. Researchers analyze the denotative and connotative meanings of signs using the theory of Roland Barthes and identify the signifier and signified using the theory of Ferdinand de Saussure. The results of this study show that there are verbal signs that have denotative and connotative meanings. This study identifies J&T Express advertisements using various signs, color that convey messages to consumers effectively (Udyani et al., 2024).

The next study is to find out the verbal and non-verbal signs found in football shoe brand advertisements, and also analyze the meaning of the verbal and non-verbal signs found in football shoe advertisements. The data from this study was taken from Nike, Puma, and Adidas Official accounts. This study used the descriptive qualitative method, and the data were analyzed based on Saussure's Semiotic Theory about sign elements, and about the meaning of signs using theory from Barthes, and supporting theory from Cerrato. The result of this study found that signs inside the advertisements contain denotative and connotative meanings (Wayan et al., 2021).

The next research examines verbal and visual signs in iPhone 14 advertisements, by focusing on qualitative descriptive analysis, using Saussure's theory and Barthes' theory, the researchers found and revealed 12 verbal signs, 8

visual signs, 20 denotative meanings, and 16 connotative meanings (Agastya & Suastini, 2024).

The next study explores the interplay of visual and verbal meta function in cosmetic advertisements, particularly focusing on two examples: “Thunder Lash Mascara” and “Don’t Forget Sunscreen.” It employs a Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis approach to decode how imagery and text can work together to engage consumers and promote the products. This study emphasizes the significance of visual communication in digital marketing by revealing how the effective use of semiotics can enhance brand narratives and foster consumer loyalty (Tubagus & Gunawan, 2024).

The next research aims to analyze the semiotic typography components of Apple advertisements on YouTube and find out about the meanings that are constructed in Apple's virtual advertisements. Using a qualitative method to analyze the semiotic typography elements and the meanings that were constructed in Apple's virtual advertisement on Apple's Official YouTube channel, and the data from this research using semiotic analysis of typography from Van Leeuwen. The results of this research show that it consists of two elements they were verbal and non-verbal signs, such as music, sound effects, typeface, anatomy of letters, font size, shape, colour, motion, model, and situation. Those components inside were proven to have a certain meaning (Sjaerodji & Indrawati, 2022).

Other studies have used Roland Barthes' semiotic approach to analyze the hidden meanings and messages conveyed through visual and textual media. One

study specifically analyzed the song “HOPE” by XXXTENTACION, using qualitative methods and Barthes' theory to identify the denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings of the lyrics, which revealed that the song commemorates the Parkland school shooting tragedy and urges listeners to remain hopeful and resilient. The results show that semiotics helps to understand the meaning and messages contained in the piece (Rais & Fadillah, 2025).

The next research examines the semiotic construction of consumer identity in Harley-Davidson advertising, particularly through the lens of stylistics and pragmatics. The central theme of the analysis is the concept of “Freedom”, which is portrayed as a core value of the Harley-Davidson brand. This study utilizes several theoretical frameworks, a semiotic framework based on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, and speech act to help explain how advertising slogans function as both a direct call to action and implicit promises to fulfil consumer needs (Zhykharieva et al., 2024).

The next study applies Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to analyze the meaning of signs in the GOJEK advertisement “Jangan Sepelekan Kekuatan Jempol”. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the researchers examine the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings of the thumb symbol in the advertisement. The advertisement constructs a cultural narrative of strength and empowerment, encouraging viewers to see themselves as active participants in modern digital society. The findings reveal that the thumb serves as a central symbol, representing various meanings. GOJEK strategically uses semiotic

elements to make its marketing message persuasive and socially relevant (Rahman et al., 2025).

From several previous studies, researcher found gaps between previous research studies and this study. Some previous studies have analyzed advertisements, but with different focuses and objectives. Previous studies have examined advertising signs and meanings, yet little attention has been paid to how freedom is ideologically naturalized through digital fashion branding on social media. Based on the literature reviewed, it appears that limited research has combined the analysis of visual signs with the interpretation in captions or slogans, particularly within the context of Instagram advertisements.

This research is important for both academics and practitioners, because there is still a need for in-depth exploration of how meanings and myths appear in Vans advertisements on Instagram through signs and symbols, especially within semiotic theory. By understanding more about this, it will have implications in several aspects. First, there will be a deeper understanding of how advertisements convey their messages to the audience, especially in Vans advertisements on Instagram. The Instagram platform was chosen for its characteristics that support semiotic analysis, particularly in visual and textual contexts.

This allows this study to examine both visual and textual signs in depth compared to other platforms. Instagram is a social media platform with an active global audience, making it one of the main media for Vans to promote and build its brand image. Therefore, this research will fill the gap by using semiotic theory to

determine how textual and visual signs create meaning in Vans advertisements. This research can provide an effective exploration of how semiotic elements are revealed in Vans advertisements to attract the attention of the young generation who are looking for freedom and identity, especially on the social media Instagram account @Vans. Furthermore, by exploring semiotic analysis and by applying Barthes' semiotic theory (1967), this research offers a novelty by investigating how the concept of freedom is commodified and transformed into marketable identity within digital streetwear branding, particularly through the construction of meanings and myths in Vans advertisements on Instagram targeting young consumers.

This analysis will be examined to reveal the meaning of symbols, signs, and captions that represent freedom through textual and visual elements. In interpreting signs, a science is needed that can dissect how signs or symbols can be interpreted; this science is called semiotics (Behera, 2024). Semiotics in advertising helps to interpret messages in advertisements that appear through verbal or non-verbal signs in an advertisement (Velda et al., 2020).

In this semiotic analysis of the Vans advertisement, the research is aimed at revealing the meaning of a sign and symbol. Semiotics does not just look at words as the object of study but various signs, images, symbols, gestures, and objects (Fauziyah & Hermoyo, 2021). Roland Barthes' theory is relevant to this research because Barthes' theory analyzes the meaning in an object that can be studied through symbols, signs, and uses connotative and denotative elements. Prasety & Wijaya (2023) in their writing state that the elements used in the analysis are visual, verbal, and audio, which will then draw denotative and connotative meanings,

which will later produce myths in it. Each element of this theory can help this research to reveal that the Vans advertisement can bring up messages or meanings that shape the perception of freedom shown in the advertisement.

Using Roland Barthes' theory, this research seeks to reveal how the Vans advertisement not only displays its product denotatively, but also creates connotative messages about the freedom and lifestyle desired by consumers. Barthes argues that signs or symbols can form a myth in the environment. Thus, this theory builds a framework to provide an understanding how signs can create meaning behind advertising elements and how Vans advertisements shape perceptions among consumers or audiences.

B. Research Questions

More specifically, this research will answer two questions.

1. What cultural ideology or myths about freedom are built into the @Vans Instagram account?
2. How does @Vans' Instagram account textually & visually construct freedom in Vans advertisements?

C. Significance of the Study

This research carries significance across three dimensions. Theoretically, it contributes to the study of semiotics by applying Barthes framework of denotation, connotation, and myth to demonstrate how abstract values such as freedom are constructed and conveyed through visual and textual signs in digital advertising an area where empirical application of Barthesian semiotics to Instagram based

streetwear branding remain limited. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference for digital marketing practitioners and strategists in designing more effective and meaningful campaign messages. Specifically, by identifying which visual elements and textual elements, operate at the connotation level to construct the myth of freedom, practitioners can apply similar sign based strategies to strengthen brand identity and emotional resonance with young consumers in their own campaigns. Pedagogically, this research can serve as reference for students and future researchers studying semiotics, advertising, and digital marketing, particularly in providing a concrete case example of how Barthes theory of myth can be applied to social media advertising.

D. Scope and Limitation

This research aims to analyze Vans advertisements on Instagram using a semiotic approach. The scope of this research includes semiotic analysis of several Vans advertisements on the Instagram platform released in the period 2019 to 2025, a timeframe selected because it marks Vans' intensified use of Instagram as a primary platform for brand storytelling and youth targeted campaigns, and it must represent the impression of freedom, including photo and video advertisements. The selection criteria combine purposive sampling, selecting advertisements that explicitly represent the theme of freedom in their visual or textual content, with engagement level (likes and comments), used as a secondary indicator of audience resonance and visibility of the advertisement. This research is limited by using Barthes' theory (1967) and is also limited to visual and textual without analyzing in

terms of sound and the comment section, nor does it analyze the impact or effectiveness of these advertisements on consumers, but rather focuses on the representation of the meaning of freedom in Vans advertisements.

E. Definition of the Key & Term

The researcher briefly explained key terms to ensure a clear understanding of the concepts.

Freedom: The core concept to be analyzed is generally understood as the ability of individuals to think, act, and express themselves without unnecessary restrictions or coercion. It refers to the ability to make choices, pursue personal goals, and take responsibility for one's own actions, while also determining the consequences of those actions.

Advertisement: Form of communication used to promote a product, service, idea, or brand to a target audience. It is designed to attract attention, convey information, and persuade consumers to develop a positive attitude or take specific actions. Advertisements can appear in various forms and media, including print, television, radio, websites, and social media platforms.

Semiotics: Refers to the study of signs, symbols, and the processes through which meaning is created and communicated. It examines how people interpret various forms of communication, including language, image, gestures, sounds, and other visual or textual elements. Semiotics assumes that meaning is not inherent in objects or messages but is produced through social and cultural conventions shared by members of a society.

Myth: Refers to a system of meanings, beliefs, or cultural values that are widely accepted and perceived as natural or common sense within a society.

Symbol: Signs that represent ideas, concepts, or meanings through socially and culturally accepted conventions to what they represent. Symbols can appear as words, images, colors, objects, or gestures, usually used to communicate meanings beyond their literal form.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter outlines the researcher ideas to strengthen the data analysis by exploring relevant concepts, including an explanation of semiotic theory, advertisement, and the @Vans Instagram account.

A. Semiotics

The word semiotic comes from the Greek word semeion, which means sign, so the science of semiotics means the science of signs. Semiotics usually focuses on signs or symbols and their meanings. As a field of study, this discipline examines and helps understand how meaning is created, constructed, and interpreted, encompassing various forms of communication beyond just language, including gestures, images, sounds, and textures (Behera, 2024). That understanding can be created through various signs and systems of signs, which are expanded to include all forms of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, and in social and cultural contexts (Eco, 1976 p3-9), Eco emphasizes that semiotics is not just a semiotic analysis, but also involves connotative meanings that arise from socio-cultural interactions. Ferdinand de Saussure, one of the key figures and pioneers in the development of semiotics, made significant contributions and proposed that signs are divided into two main elements it called signifier and signified. The signifier refers to the image displayed, while the signified refers to the concept or idea associated with that image.

According to Saussure (1916), the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, which means there is no connection between the two elements. This arbitrary concept allows for a sign to have multiple variations of meaning, especially when it is applied in broad and different contexts or by a diversity of social groups. This concept explains that a sign functions based on a socially agreed-upon interpretation. The existence of these arbitrary relations also opens up space for both meaning and signs to develop along with social and cultural change, as well as perspectives and thoughts. In an era that is rapidly changing and highly dynamic, the meaning of a sign can shift and evolve in accordance with the development of norms, thoughts, and perspectives. The evolution of time and numerous changes in meaning that occur indicate that a sign or symbol can develop and be flexible and dynamic, rather than static. The pioneer of semiotics also emphasized that a sign does not operate alone or independently, but always has a relationship with other signs. Thus, a sign is useful as a bridge or as a communication tool that relies on interpretation or a socially agreed upon perspective. By using this approach, semiotics plays a role not only in linguistic analysis but can also become an important tool for understanding various forms of modern communication, including advertisements, films, videos, and other digital media. (Rudy, 2024).

B. Signs

A sign is fundamentally something perceptible, visual or auditory, that functions to convey meaning and enable understanding between communicators. As social beings, humans rely on signs as the foundation of communication, with

language standing as the most complex and developed sign system for expressing thought and emotion. However, what makes semiotics theoretically significant is not simply that signs exist, but that they operate through a layered, often invisible process of meaning making rather than direct transmission. This becomes clearer when comparing the perspectives of Chandler and Barthes.

Chandler (2022) emphasizes that signs can take virtually unlimited forms, gestures, images, sounds, or symbols, suggesting that meaning making is not confined to language alone but pervades nearly every aspect of human expression, including, notably, commercial and visual media such as advertising. Safavi (2024) adds a crucial point often overlooked in basic definitions: meaning is never inherent in the sign itself but is actively constructed through audience interpretation. This shifts the analytical focus away from “what does this sign mean” toward “how does this sign produce meaning for a particular audience in a particular context” a distinction directly relevant to advertising analysis, where brands deliberately design signs anticipating specific audience interpretations.

Barthes (1964, p-9) suggests how various things, such as images, gestures, sounds, or other objects, can function as signs. This is not limited to certain types or forms. In addition, Barthes suggests that signs have two levels of meaning: the first is denotation, which is literal meaning or direct meaning that can be understood objectively, while connotation refers to a deeper meaning and is cultural or often influenced by cultural values.

Some of the ideas from the semiotic figures above help to identify or analyze various objects by making semiotic science the key to uncovering the complexity of meaning contained in the signs or symbols encountered. In other words, everything that has meaning or meaning can be interpreted by humans and can be studied using semiotics in depth, regardless of substance or form.

C. Roland Barthes Semiotics Theory

The field of semiotics, which studies signs, has undergone significant changes and developments since the early 20th century. In this context, we discuss the aspects that contribute to the development of semiotics. The study of signs and symbols as components of communication has advanced significantly from the early concept to its advanced applications. This review follows the development of semiotic theory, drawing on academic books and journal articles to provide a comprehensive understanding of its advances and interdisciplinary significance. The roots of semiotics are Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. Saussure conceptualized the sign as the relation between the signifier and the signified, and formed the foundation from a structuralist perspective. (Saussure, 1916).

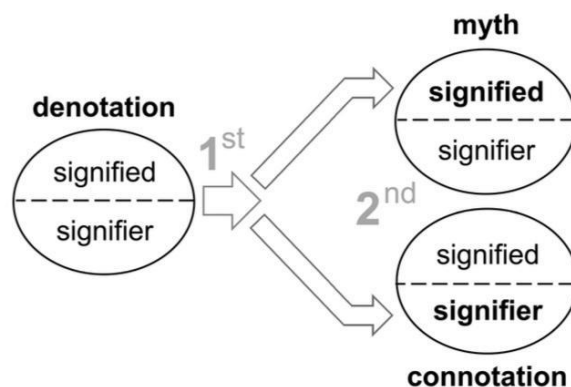
On the other hand, Charles Sanders Peirce introduced semiotics, which consists of representamen (form of the signs), or an object that refers to something, and the interpretant that emphasizes the dynamic process of sign interpretation. The mid-20th century witnessed the expansion of semiotic theory beyond linguistics into wider media and cultural studies. Roland Barthes expanded Saussure theory and ideas by utilizing semiotic analysis of cultural phenomena, by introducing the

concept of denotation and connotation as part of meaning in signs (Barthes, 1964). In his book “Mythology,” he explains how cultural myths are built and perpetuated through signs. The contribution established semiotics as a tool that conveys language through signs.

Barthes (1967) is known as a structuralist thinker who persistently shared and spread Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic and semiotic practices. According to Barthes himself, language is a sign system that plays a role in processing and playing the thoughts, ideas and assumptions of a certain group of people (Yulia et al., 2024). In addition, Barthes argues that semiotics studies how humans interpret certain things, meaning can be interpreted that an object that appears not only carries information, but also organizes or organizes a structured system of signs. Barthes' semiotics examines connotative, denotative, and mythical meanings in various media sources (Syamsurrijal et al., 2024), which is placed with two levels of signs. At the first level, the system has a role in analyzing a language that will bring up the denotative meaning. Then the next level also raises a meaning called connotative meaning. The two levels are interconnected with each other. At the first level, the sign is useful as a reference base to deepen the meaning at the next level, where the connotation is determined as a reference to a broader scheme, so that the idea contained in the connotative sign is found.

Differences exist between denotation and connotation in a general perspective and between denotation and connotation as understood by Roland Barthes. In general, denotation is understood as the literal meaning, or the actual meaning. Roland Barthes argues that the concept of denotation and connotation is

very important and even key in every analysis. Barthes also argues that the reader of signs has a crucial role and needs to be active in order to run optimally (Sobur, 2004 p-64). Barthes introduced three ideas in semiotics: denotation, connotation, and myth. He stated that denotation represents the primary level of meaning, while connotation and myth represent the secondary level. The sign of denotation acts as the signifier for the sign associated with connotation (Chandler, 2022b, p. 213).



2.1 Barthes concept

Source: Chandler p.214 (2022)

2.1 Denotation

Denotation is the first level in the meaning system of a sign, which connects the signifier, which is the expression or form of the sign, with the signified, which is the content of the sign or the concept (Septiana, 2019). This relationship refers to external reality and produces a clear, objective, and recognizable meaning. Denotative meaning tends to be literal, directly conveying meaning without being contaminated by emotional or cultural interpretations. For example, a picture of fried chicken in a food advertisement refers directly to the fried chicken itself,

without involving additional meanings as is usually found in the realm of connotation. Therefore, denotation is often interpreted as the basic meaning that underlies the structure of the sign before it is deepened and becomes more complex in its meaning. This concept is relevant to this study because this stage allows researcher to identify the basic meanings that emerge from visual and textual elements before entering into ideological or cultural analysis. In Vans advertisements, both visual elements, such as shoes, ornaments, models, colors, or setting, and textual elements, such as captions, must first be understood at the denotative level to ensure that mapping is carried out accurately.

2.2 Connotation

Connotation refers to a deeper and more complex level of meaning than denotation. The meaning of connotation is usually open-ended, depending on the cultural context or subjective experience that binds the use of a sign. (Yulia et al., 2024). Connotation exists because there is a process where the denotative sign serves as a reference for the second, more subjective level. Connotative signs tend to carry certain cultural, social, or ideological values. For example, red roses can symbolize love, romance, and affection. In this context, culture becomes a container for emerging values to be manifested, and ideas emerge through various codes and signs that infiltrate it. Barthes' framework is used to parse the meaning in the signs or symbols that exist in visual images, emphasizing the interaction between literal and implied interpretations, with culture being important for understanding a connotative meaning (Mazeree et al., 2023). In this case, the connotative sign is in one place with a certain ideology and is related to culture, cultural values that appear

in denotation, while ideology or thought appears or manifests in the form of codes. The concept of connotation is relevant to analyzing the textual and visual elements in Vans advertisements because the product is not only presented literally, but also imbued with cultural meanings that shape the brand image.

2.3 Myth

Myths are created because of certain ideologies, semiotic views myths as a process of expressing meaning that is not deep, in other words, myths only represent and represent something that is seen, not representing something real. In Barthes' view, myth does not mean unreasonable or unspeakable, but a messaging system or communication system that is useful for explaining or expressing prevailing values, then myth cannot be an idea, concept, or an idea, because myth exists as a mode of signaling (Barthes, 2004). Myth becomes one of the characteristics of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory and makes his theory different from other theories. This development is the basis of the structure to deepen the meaning of culture in myth in semiotics. Myth represents the process of encoding cultural meanings and social values into symbols or narratives that are perceived as natural truths.

Myth functions as a cultural stories that explain or interpret various aspects of life, offering an ideological perspective masked as universal or inherent. This change conceals the developed nature of meaning, permitting societal ideologies to appear self-evident, by analyzing myths, Barthes uncovers how they serve as instruments to naturalize specific social beliefs and power structures within a society (Erste et al., 2023). The concept of myth is relevant to analyzing the textual

and visual in Vans advertisements because the brand also cultivates cultural values that are positioned as natural “truths” about identity and lifestyle.

D. @Vans advertisement

Advertising is a form of communication that aims to influence audiences in the context of consuming certain goods, services, or ideas. Advertising is considered not only a tool for marketing something, but also a tool for shaping meaning, ideology, and certain cultural representations (Chandler, 2022a). Especially in the modern era, many advertisers are turning to social media to promote their products. Advertising on social media has also become an important tool for businesses to reach and engage a wider audience in today's digital age. Advertising on social media offers advantages such as wide reach, flexibility, and improved product image. (Shanthi & Yasodha, 2024). Advertisements no longer appear only in print media or on television; they have also expanded to digital media, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where visual content is increasingly interactive. Social media platforms enable businesses to expand their reach (Novianti & Erdiana, 2020).

Instagram is one of the most dominant social media platforms used by global brands to build brand identity and connect emotionally with their audience. According to statistics from Datareportal.com, Instagram ads reached 1.74 billion users in January 2025. One of the reasons companies utilize social media to market their products is not only because of its wide audience, by using Instagram, advertisers can interact directly with their audience through comments or direct messages. Instagram ads are also more interactive because they can use audio,

visual, and textual elements simultaneously, allowing advertisers to market their products effectively. By using visuals and text, ads can create their own product image, as demonstrated by @Vans, which actively leverages this potential. @Vans is the official account of an American shoe and streetwear company. This account is not only a tool for promoting its products but also a visual narrative medium that communicates the brand's values, such as freedom, creativity, individuality, and youth culture.

Content on the @Vans account often features collaborations with artists, musicians, athletes, skateboarders, and other creative communities. Through this strategy, Vans builds an image as a brand that not only offers its products but also represents an alternative lifestyle and free self-expression. In addition to explicitly showcasing its products, the @Vans account also features lifestyle documentary photos, skateboarding and extreme sports videos, and inspirational quotes that embody the anti-mainstream, non-conformist spirit of freedom.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

In this chapter, the researcher explains the research design, the research instrument, the data and data source, the data collection, and the data analysis.

A. Research Design

The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis approach. The selection of this method aims to understand the meaning in depth that emerges through the textual and visual elements in the advertisement (Dewayani & Azwar, 2024) especially those related to the concept of freedom. By using semiotic analysis, researcher can explore the messages that appear either explicitly or implicitly and how these messages affect the audience regarding the meaning of freedom.

Roland Barthes' theory is used to interpret and identify how symbols and signs exist in the @Vans Instagram post, by focusing on denotation, connotation, and myth. This approach helps the researcher to reveal how the advertisement builds an image of freedom, and also helps the researcher to explore the relation between visual and textual elements to build the image of the advertised product.

B. Research Instrument

The primary instrument for this research is the researcher itself, who plays a pivotal role in all aspects of the research, from the data collection to interpretation. As the main analytical tool, the researcher employs Barthes' semiotic theory to dissect the advertisements into several layers of meaning, focusing on the

denotative (literal), connotative (associative), and mythical (cultural and ideological) levels. This approach ensures a structured and nuanced analysis of how signs, text, and symbols function to explain the concept of freedom. Additionally, the researcher reflexivity and critical thinking skills are crucial for maintaining the interpretation process.

C. Data & Data Source

The data sources of this research are words, sentences, phrases, and visuals contained in the @Vans Instagram account, which displays the concept of freedom, 25 data points selected from @Vans (2019-2025), the researcher determined that no new significant signs, themes, or variations in the representation of freedom emerged beyond this number. The period 2019-2025 was selected because this period represents the brand most active and consistent use of Instagram for youth oriented marketing. The consideration of likes and comments as selection criteria is important because they reflect the level of audience engagement. Posts that receive a higher number of likes and comments are assumed to be more attractive, relevant, and impactful to the viewers. Therefore, using engagement metrics helps the researcher select data that not only represent the theme of freedom but also show stronger interaction between the advertisement and its audience.

Focusing on video or photo content that conveys freedom helps researcher analyze how the elements in the advertisement are presented textually and visually. Content that displays semiotic elements such as sentences, phrases, words, and visuals in advertisements enables researcher to identify how meaning is constructed

through both textual and visual. By selecting video or photo content from the @Vans Instagram account, researcher can observe how effective advertising strategies are used to attract young consumers seeking self-identity and the meaning of freedom. Instagram is chosen as the primary data source because it serves as Vans main platform for visual brand storytelling, combining static imagery, short videos, and captions in a single feed based format that allows for rich integration of visual and textual signs. This format is particularly suitable for Barthesian semiotic analysis, which requires close examination of both visual composition and accompanying text to identify denotative and connotative meaning.

D. Data Collection

The data collection in this study follows several structured stages. First, the researcher selects content from the @Vans Instagram account based on two criteria: the number of likes and comments, and explicit reference to freedom, individuality, or self-expression. Second, the researcher takes screenshots of all posts meeting these criteria, capturing both visual content (photos or videos) and accompanying textual content (captions), to ensure every advertisement element is fully recorded. Third, the collected data are organized by grouping and labeling each post according to its content type. Fourth, each selected post is identified and separated into two components: textual elements (words, phrases, sentences, and captions) and visual elements (images, colors, objects, settings, and other visual components). Fifth, the identified textual and visual signs are analyzed using Roland Barthes' (1967) semiotic theory, applying its three stages of meaning denotation, connotation, and myth, to each data point. Through this stage-by-stage analysis, the

researcher examines how Vans advertisements construct an image of freedom to attract young audiences who are in the process of seeking their identity.

E. Data Analysis

The researcher analyzes the data using Roland Barthes' (1967) semiotic theory, which centers on three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. This framework serves as the main analytical lens to understand how meaning is constructed and communicated in advertising, particularly in representing the concept of freedom. The analytical process follows a structured progression, moving from the identification of signs to the interpretation of meaning, and finally to the construction of ideology.

The first step is identifying textual signs, namely the captions, slogans, and narratives presented in each selected @Vans Instagram post. The second step is identifying visual signs, including objects, colors, settings, composition, and gestures depicted in the advertisement's imagery. Together, these textual and visual signs form the basic units of analysis from which meaning is subsequently derived.

Once both sign types are identified, the analysis proceeds to the denotative level, where the researcher describes the literal, objective meaning of the textual signs (the direct meaning of words used in captions) and the visual signs (what is literally shown in the image, the objects, colors, and settings as they physically appear). This stage establishes a factual baseline before any interpretation occurs.

The analysis then moves to the connotative level, where the researcher interprets the deeper, culturally embedded meanings carried by both the textual and

visual signs, particularly meanings associated with freedom, individuality, and self-expression. At this stage, words, symbols, and visual elements are no longer read literally but are examined for the associative and symbolic meanings they evoke for the audience.

Finally, the analysis reaches the level of myth, where the researcher examines how the denotative and connotative meanings identified in the previous stages combine to construct and naturalize a broader cultural narrative, specifically, how Vans constructs and reinforces particular myths of freedom, such as freedom as lifestyle, freedom as identity, or freedom as personal expression among young people. This final stage reveals how the advertisement does not merely communicate a message, but actively shapes a freedom ideology, a naturalized cultural value that audiences come to accept as common sense, ultimately reinforcing the appeal of the Vans brand among its young audience.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings and discussion. The findings section explains the data analysis, which employs Roland Barthes's (1967) semiotic theory to explore the textual and visual elements in Vans advertisements on Instagram. This study utilizes Barthes's concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth to reveal how the concept of freedom in Vans advertisements attracts consumers through the textual and visual elements used in those advertisements. The discussion section then explains the analysis of the research findings.

A. Findings

This section presents the research findings based on Roland Barthes's (1967) theory of semiotics. This analysis focuses on the textual and visual elements found in 25 selected advertisements posted on the @Vans Instagram account. The findings are organized according to the research questions in this study. The first section explains how freedom is constructed textually and visually in Vans advertisements through denotative and connotative meanings. This analysis examines words, phrases, sentences, images, colors, objects, background, and other visual elements that represent freedom. The second section explores the cultural ideology or myth of freedom constructed in Vans advertisements. At this level, the analysis focuses on how freedom is represented as a cultural value, lifestyle, and identity through these advertisements. All data were analyzed using Barthes's three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. Through these stages, the

researcher identified how Vans advertisements construct and communicate the concept of freedom to their audience.

4.1 Cultural ideologies and myths of freedom constructed in Vans advertisements on the @Vans Instagram account

Visuals, whether in the form of photos or videos, play a crucial role in advertising because they do more than simply introduce a product; they also help construct meaning. In the context of Vans Instagram advertisements, the posts are strategically crafted to embody the sense of freedom that has become a defining characteristic of the brand's identity. From the perspective of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, the visuals can be analyzed through three interconnected layers of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. These elements collectively construct a representation of freedom that appears genuine and relatable to urban youth culture. By examining the denotative, connotative, and mythical dimensions in depth, it becomes evident that Vans promotes not only its footwear products, but also the concept of freedom as a fundamental aspect of its consumer's lifestyle and self-expression.

Datum 1.1

textual: "Style comes easy too Little Simz, both on and off stage"

visual:



Based on Roland Barthes (1967), myth is a cultural meaning that is presented as if it were natural or commonplace. In the context of this advertisement, the myth being created is that being yourself and having an authentic style is something easy and natural. The phrase “style comes easy to Little Simz” seems to suggest that freedom comes effortlessly, without pressure or effort, when in reality, developing a personal style is often influenced by many factors such as social, cultural, and even economic factors. Similarly, the visuals showing Little Simz walking casually down the street and styling herself with confidence create the impression that self-expression is a spontaneity possessed by everyone and comes naturally. In reality, however, this representation has been planned and designed to look free and authentic as part of a branding strategy. In other words, the myth of freedom in this advertisement obscures the fact that personal freedom in dressing is something that is also produced by popular culture, and does not arise entirely naturally.

Datum 1.2

Textual: “Little Simz finds inspiration everywhere, resulting in a style that is completely her own”

In the mythical stage, Barthes (1967) states that certain cultural meanings are presented as if they were natural and normal. In this advertisement, a myth is created that everyone can have a unique and free style as long as they dare to be themselves. The phrase “finds inspiration everywhere” seems to suggest that inspiration is always naturally available to anyone, and “completely her own” gives the impression that uniqueness is something easily achieved. In reality, however, style and identity are also influenced by the media, culture, and the fashion industry. This ad makes freedom look simple and natural, while linking it to Vans products, as if wearing Vans is part of the way to achieve that freedom and authenticity itself.

Datum 1.3

Textual: “I can dip into so many different styles”

Visual:



At the mythical stage, the meaning created appears to be natural. This ad creates the myth that everyone is free to try different styles while remaining true to themselves. The phrase “I can dip into many different styles” makes freedom seem

effortless and unhindered, as if everyone has equal access to self-expression. In reality, style choices are also influenced by social, cultural, and fashion industry trends. Here, Vans builds an image that its products support that freedom as if by wearing Vans, one can easily become flexible, creative, and free in expressing their identity.

Datum 1.4

Textual: “Beatrice Domond is redefining what it means to be a pro skater by embracing a unique path that highlights her bold, original style”

In the mythical stage, Barthes (1967) notes that cultural meanings are constructed to appear as if they occur naturally. This advertisement creates the myth that being different and forging one’s own path is something natural and easy to achieve. Beatrice Domond is portrayed as if she can naturally be unique, when in reality, being unique and different often requires a struggle against social norms. This advertisement also reinforces the notion that freedom and authenticity can be achieved through the lifestyle depicted, including by using Vans products. Thus, freedom is represented as something that appears natural, when in fact it is the result of cultural construction and marketing strategies.

Datum 1.5

Textual: “From the way we skate to the way we dress, our individual style is an essential element of who we are. It’s the unique way we express ourselves in anything we do”

The myth that emerges from this statement is that Vans advertisements symbolize freedom and authenticity. Another myth conveyed is that wearing Vans means you are free, bold, unique, and true to yourself. Although it appears to be a call to freedom, it carries a hidden message that freedom can be attained by purchasing Vans products.

Datum 1.6

Textual: “His goals is to encourage future generations to be bold with their creative endeavor, and to be first at something.”

At the mythical stage, Barthes (1967) states that connotative meaning can evolve into an ideology that appears natural. This statement constructs the myth that every individual has an equal opportunity to be creative, bold, and a pioneer, as if these conditions could be achieved easily and universally. In reality, however, access to creative freedom is often influenced by factors such as environment, economics, and culture. This advertisement also implicitly links that value of freedom to the Vans brand image, so that freedom is understood not only as a personal value but also as part of a lifestyle accessible through the consumption of the product.

Datum 1.7

Textual: “There’s still so much to create and explore. I want to keep creating until I’ve explore everything that I can”

Visual:



At the mythical level, Barthes (1967) states that certain meanings are constructed in such a way that they appear natural and universal. In this context, the sentence “There’s still so much to create and explore. I want to keep creating until I’ve explored everything I can” constructs the myth that freedom of expression and self-exploration are unlimited and always attainable by anyone. This narrative creates the impression that every individual has equal, unimpeded access to the realm of creativity. However, implicitly, this myth oversimplifies reality, as in reality that freedom is often influenced by social, economic, and cultural factors. In the Vans ad, this myth also serves to associate the brand with the values of freedom and creativity, so that freedom appears as something natural and can be represented through the products offered.

Datum 1.8

Textual: “Brings the energy to any stage”

In the mythical level, Barthes (1967) states that certain meanings are constructed to appear natural and unquestioned. In this context, the phrases “any stage” and “brings the energy” illustrates a freedom that seems universal and easily attainable by anyone. The myth constructed through the advertisement suggests that every individual inherently has the ability to express themselves freely and energetically in any environment. This representation simplifies the complex reality

that self expression is frequently shaped and limited by social and cultural influences. Moreover, the advertisement subtly associates this sense of freedom with Vans products, creating the perception that personal freedom and self expression can be attained through consumerism, whereas in reality, such an idea functions as an ideological narrative embedded within the brands marketing strategy.

Datum 1.9

Textual: “Future make is here”

In the statement “The future is here,” conveys the idea that the ability to mold the future is an opportunity available to all people equally and inherently. Expression such as “future” and “is here” subtly imply freedom by conveying the notion that each person can influence their future whenever they wish. Nonetheless, this story simplifies a reality that is genuinely intricate, where not everyone has the same chances. Therefore, the freedom depicted in this ad is an fabrication that also helps to strengthen the brands identity as an emblem of innovation and limitless freedom.

Datum 1.10

Textual: “From the streets to the stage”

At the mythical stage, according to Barthes (1967), meanings that were previously cultural in nature are made to appear natural and unquestionable. In this context, the phrase “from the streets to the stage” reflects freedom through the idea

that any individual can move from the streets to the stage without hindrance. The myth presented in this advertisement is that Vans serves as a bridge between the freedom of street expression and the stage, thereby creating a narrative that this journey is natural and accessible to anyone. Additionally, the advertisement conveys the idea of self-expression while simultaneously gaining social recognition. However, as Barthes explains, this myth actually simplifies a complex social reality and obscures the fact that such freedom and mobility are not always equally accessible to everyone, but have been framed as part of a product's ideological strategy.

Datum 1.11

Textual: “Embrace the freedom of expression your inner child craves”

Visual:



At the mythical level, Barthes's (1967) idea that certain cultural meanings are constructed to appear natural in this context, phrases like “freedom of expression” and the concept of the “inner child” establish the notion that freedom of expression is something natural and already inherent in every individual. From this, a myth is created that by wearing Vans, one can return to a natural state of freedom, like children who are honest, creative, and free to express themselves without

pressure. This advertisement fosters the perception that Vans are not merely shoes, but symbols of personal freedom and an outpouring of expression that appears natural. However, as Barthes explains, myths operate by obscuring cultural constructions; in this case, the freedom depicted has actually been packaged and shaped by Vans' imagery, making it appear as though this freedom arises naturally, when in fact it is the result of representational strategies within the advertisement.

Datum 1.12

Textual: "Endless possibilities"

At the level of mythology, both denotative and connotative interpretations transform into a worldview that seems instinctive, the phrase "Endless possibilities" serves as a representation of limitless freedom, influencing the notion that every person is without restrictions. This message subtly suggests that by donning Vans people can achieve their desired identity, consequently establishing freedom as an inherent aspect. Nonetheless, within Barthes perspective, this represents an ideological fabrication, since the freedom illustrated has been intentionally crafted by Vans to associate the brand with the essence of freedom.

Datum 1.13

Textual: "Making waves and finding sisterhood along the way"

Visual:

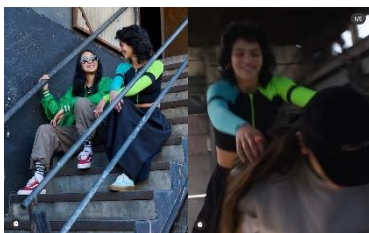


The narrative that has come to portrays Vans as a brand that encourages women to be courages, independent, and mutually supportive agents of change. The imagery in @Vans' posts reinforce the notion that women are naturally capable of "making waves" while "finding sisterhood," as if such freedom and solidarity exist without barriers. Furthermore, Vans' advertisements convey that wearing Vans is not merely about "style," but also about being part of a social movement that creates space for women to shine and remain united within their communities. However, in line with Barthes's (1967) perspective, myths operate by disguising cultural constructions as something that appears natural. In this context, the freedom depicted is not a completely natural Movement, but has been framed as part of the Vans brand identity, so that the values of women's freedom and solidarity simultaneously function as a representational strategy in the advertisement.

Datum 1.14

Textual: "Make a statement wherever you move"

Visual:



According to Barthes (1967), the myth in “Make a statement wherever you move” originates from a combination of denotation and connotation that subsequently appear to be natural. The phrase “wherever you move” reflects freedom without spatial boundaries, while “make a statement” signifies the freedom to express one’s true self from this emerges the myth that freedom of expression is something easy, available anywhere, and accessible to anyone, this myth evolves into the notion that Vans is more than just a pair of shoes, Vans is linked to the bravery to stand out and be oneself. The term “make a statement” denotes the freedom to express one’s true self, while “wherever you move” represents freedom without regard to physical bounds. This gives rise to the idea that freedom of expression is simple, accessible, and open to everyone. This myth develops into the idea that Vans is a tool for expressing freedom and self-identity whenever and wherever, rather than just a pair of shoes, in the context of advertising. Vans is linked to having the guts to be unique and authentic. However, this myth also obscures the reality that this “statement” has actually been framed by the image constructed by Vans. Thus, the freedom offered remains within the boundaries of values and styles constructed by Vans as a commercial product, making it appear natural when it is actually the result of a representation strategy.

Datum 1.15

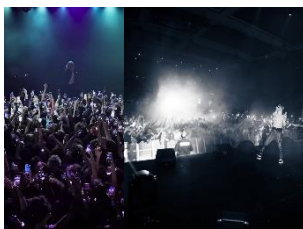
Textual: “Kicking back and gearing up. The new brown gum sole Premium Old Skools are ready for all the dancing and walking that festival life comes with”

Barthes (1967) assert that cultural meanings are constructed in a way that makes them seem natural and unquestionable, the phrase like “ready for all the dancing and walking” and “festival life” reflect a freedom that seems effortless, enjoyable, and always ready. This gives rise to the myth that shoes are not just positioned as accessories but rather as the key to a flexible, free, and joyful life; consumers seem to feel the freedom to move, relax, and express themselves just by wearing the product. This gives rise that shoes are more than just accessories, they are the “secret” to living a flexible, freedom, and happy existence. Wearing the product seems to provide users the freedom to move, relax, and express themselves. But in actually, this view obscures the fact that marketing tactics have formed this idea of freedom. In other words, the freedom offered remains within the boundaries of the image and lifestyle designed by the Vans brand, so it appears natural when in fact, it is the result of cultural and commercial construction.

Datum 1.16

Textual: “Energy unmatched. @nettspend_ just turned 18 and already lighting up the stage for invert tour”

Visual:



Phrases like “energy unmatched,” “just turned 18,” and “lighting up the stage” in this statement reflect a sense of freedom that seems to come naturally to the younger generation. The underlying myth is that young people who wear Vans can achieve freedom, stand out, and be creative from an early age. Freedom is positioned as something that can be attained through an active, energetic, and confident lifestyle. Furthermore, being young, stylish, and bold is presented as part of the “package” of identity offered by Vans in its advertisements. Thus, freedom appears to be a natural and easily attainable thing, when in reality it is the result of cultural construction and representational strategies crafted by the brand.

Datum 1.17

Sentence: “Playing with contrast in the two-tone Old Skools from the Premium Music Collections”

Visual:



In the mythical stage, Barthes (1967) explains that cultural meaning is constructed to appear natural. In this advertisement, the phrase “playing with contrast” and the two-tone concept reflect a sense of freedom that seems to come naturally to the youth lifestyle. The myth constructed is that by wearing Vans, one can easily appear free, creative, and boldly different. Freedom is positioned as

something that can be obtained through simple fashion choices. Thus, Vans is not only selling a product but also selling the idea that freedom of expression is something natural and easily attainable; in reality, this is a culture that the brand is attempting to construct.

Datum 1.18

Textual:” Meet the new crosspath XC. Ready to explore any path, anytime”

Visual:



At the mythical stage, in this text the phrases “any path” and “anytime” reflect a freedom that seems to know no bounds. This combination of meanings gives rise to the myth that Vans products are the ultimate key products that enable their wearers to go anywhere, anytime. Shoes are portrayed as a way to access a variety of options and possibilities in life, rather than merely as tools or footwear. Thus, freedom is represented as something easily achieved through the product, when in reality it is the result of an ideological construct packaged through marketing strategies to appear natural and universal.

Datum 1.19

Textual:” Fearless energy on every stage”

Visual:



The phrases “fearless” and “every stage” reflect a sense of freedom that seems to be an innate trait of every individual. The myth being constructed is that anyone can easily become brave, free, and full of energy when expressing themselves in various situations. Furthermore, there is the notion that by wearing Vans, one can gain the courage and freedom to appear confident and express their true self anywhere. Vans products are portrayed as if they grant the power to master or conquer the “stages” of life. Thus, freedom is positioned as something universal, easily attainable, and inherent to the lifestyle offered by the Vans brand. However, this myth also hides the fact that the meaning of this freedom has actually been constructed by Vans, so that courage and freedom become part of the image sold through their products and representations.

Datum 1.20

Textual: “Takes slams, get clips, and keep pushing forward for womens snowboarding”

Visual:



In this sentence, phrases like “keep pushing forward,” “takes slams,” and “get clips” reflect a sense of freedom that seems to emerge naturally through the process of striving in sports. The myth that emerges is that women can be free and strong in conquering extreme sports like snowboarding, as long as they have the will and spirit to keep fighting. Vans is portrayed as a champion of freedom and equality in sports, as if its products help women be bolder in breaking through boundaries. Freedom is then positioned as something that can be attained through courage, perseverance, and an active lifestyle. However, behind this, the narrative is also part of a branding strategy that sells the idea of freedom as an identity that can be acquired through their products. Thus, freedom appears as something natural and easily attainable, when in reality it is a cultural construct shaped through representations in advertising.

Datum 1.21

Textual: “Transcending cultures and pushing boundaries with @littlesimz”

At the mythical or ideological level, according to Barthes (1967), cultural meaning is constructed to appear natural. The phrases “transcending cultures” and “pushing boundaries” reflect a freedom that seems natural and easily attainable. The myth created is that one can be free, bold, and break through cultural boundaries by wearing or associating with the Vans brand. This brand not only markets products

but also sells the idea that wearing Vans means being part of a progressive, creative, and free movement. Thus, freedom is positioned as an identity that appears natural, when in fact it is the result of cultural construction in advertising.

Datum 1.22

Textual: “Speed, strength, and a heart of gold”

In this 1.22 datum, words like “speed” and “strength” represent unlimited freedom of movement, while “a heart of gold” adds a moral dimension to that freedom. This gives rise to the myth that a person will become flexible, strong, and kind-hearted if they live the lifestyle represented in Vans’ advertisements. Vans is positioned not only as a fashion product but also as a symbol of identity, signifying that its wearers are free, resilient individuals with positive values. In this way, freedom is portrayed as if it were naturally inherent in that lifestyle, when in reality it is the result of an idealized image constructed through symbols in advertisements to attract and influence the audience.

Datum 1.23

Textual: “Style, power, and positivity”

Visual:



In the phrase “style, power, and positivity,” these three words evoke an image of freedom that seems to be naturally inherent in individuals. The resulting myth is that free individuals are those who possess a distinctive, unique style, are self-confident, and are able to maintain a positive attitude in various situations. Furthermore, this advertisement reinforces the notion that using Vans products can help shape and realize this ideal character. Freedom is then represented not merely as a personal state, but as something achievable through specific fashion choices and a particular lifestyle. Thus, freedom appears simple and easily attainable, when in reality it is the result of a constructed meaning.

Datum 1.24

Textual: “Powerful stylish turns and her strong connection with her community”

In the mythical stage, Barthes (1967) states that culture can be shaped to appear natural and authentic. The phrases “powerful stylish turns” and “strong connection with her community” suggest that a sense of freedom seems to arise naturally in the lives of both individuals and communities. The resulting myth is that freedom of expression and a sense of belonging to a community can be easily attained simultaneously, and that one can appear strong and stylish while still being accepted within their environment. In the context of Vans advertisements, this also implies that such freedom aligns with the lifestyle offered by Vans as if, by wearing Vans products, individuals can naturally attain both freedom and social connection.

Datum 1.25

Textual: “Style is freedom of expression”

Visual:



Connotative meaning becomes naturalized and manifests as a universal reality, according to Barthes (1967). The advertising promotes the idea that style is inherently connected with freedom, as if everyone could readily express themselves through fashion choices. In this sentence, the word “freedom of expression” becomes fundamental to the development of the myth of freedom. The resulting myth is that personal freedom can be achieved and directly expressed through “style,” without considering the social or structural constraints that actually exist. Thus, freedom is reduced to something that appears simple and easily accessible, while simultaneously being directed toward consumption as the primary means of achieving it.

Datum 1.26

Textual: “Expressing yourself is what becomes your style”

Visual:



In the mythical stage, Barthes (1967) states that certain meanings are presented as if they were natural and not contrived. The phrases “expressing yourself” and “your style” convey the idea that freedom of style is something that comes naturally. The myth constructed is that every individual can easily possess a distinctive and free style simply by being themselves. This makes freedom appear simple and unhindered, when in reality it is influenced by many socio-cultural factors. In the context of Vans advertisements, this idea also leads to the understanding that freedom of expression can be achieved through the style offered by the brand.

4.2 Textual and visual construction of freedom in Vans advertisements on the @Vans Instagram account

In today’s world, language plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of freedom, particularly in Vans advertisements targeting young people. These ads do not merely promote products but also cultivate a sense of freedom among young people who are searching for their identity. The representation of freedom in these ads takes the form of words, phrases, and sentences that will be analyzed using Roland Barthes’s elements: denotation, connotation, and myth. Thus, this analysis demonstrates how the choice of words, phrases, and sentences used in the advertisement not only describes the product but also shapes perceptions of how freedom is portrayed in the advertisement, thereby appealing to young people.

Datum 2.1

textual: “Style comes easy too Little Simz, both on and of stage”

visual:



According to Roland Barthes (1967), denotation is the direct meaning of a sign that is, its literal meaning. The phrase “comes easy” implies the absence of obstacles; he does not need to try very hard to look stylish. Furthermore, the phrase “both on and off stage” signifies spatial freedom or the absence of boundaries that constrain one’s expression. In the context of “comes easy,” “both on and off stage” at the denotative level conveys the idea of freedom by signifying liberty and the absence of limits. Visually, by wearing casual clothing such as Vans, loose pants, and colorful shirts along with an active, freely moving body posture, she conveys physical and visual freedom. Both of visual and textual, this demonstrates that Little Simz is not bound by dress codes, and this is a form of free expression. This aligns with Roland Barthes’s (1967) theory, in which literal meaning is what is immediately apparent and does not contain cultural meaning. The denotation in datum 1.1 conveys a direct meaning and signifies freedom without containing cultural or social meaning within it; or, in Barthes’s (1967) terms, there is no further interpretation beyond the meaning conveyed directly.

According to Barthes (1967), at the level of connotation, signs such as words and images no longer carry literal meaning but instead convey specific values. The connotation in datum 1.1 implies that Little Simz is an authentic figure; she can freely express her identity anytime and anywhere without the pressure of stage norms or the pressures of daily life. “Style comes easy” interprets freedom as the breadth of expression; style is not merely about the clothes one wears, but a natural statement. Furthermore, the phrase “on and off stage” emphasizes that true freedom transcends physical space. This connotation conveys a profound message about freedom as a personal right to perform free from social pressure and to be one’s true self. In the visual above, Little Simz does not strive to appear luxurious or conform to existing beauty standards. Instead, she emphasizes that style comes from within herself; the blurred image on the street and the active pose in the studio convey that freedom can be taken anywhere, whether in a crowded place or a quiet one. This aligns with Barthes’s theory (1967), where connotation represents a deep meaning and carries cultural values.

Datum 2.2

Textual: “Little Simz finds inspiration everywhere, resulting in a style that is completely her own”

Visual:



The statement in Datum 2.2 represents a Vans promotional campaign that communicates a sense of freedom. This sentence illustrates a journey of finding inspiration that is confined by either time or location. The expression “inspiration everywhere” suggests the idea that Little Simz gathers ideas from everything surrounding her; this demonstrates that freedom in thinking, creating, and dressing is not constrained by any specific limits or rules. Furthermore, the phrase “completely her own” illustrates that the style she creates comes entirely from within her naturally and is not influenced by external factors. In this context, freedom is present in an individual’s ability to explore various sources of inspiration and express them without limitations.

The connotation in this sentence portray freedom as a form of natural or authentic self-expression. The phrase “inspiration everywhere” implies not only drawing ideas from everything but also the freedom to incorporate diverse cultural elements without having to follow prevailing trends or norms. Then, the phrase “A

style that is completely her own” signifies that freedom in expressing identity is not bound by cultural or social norms. This conveys that the style is entirely her own; it serves as a symbol of individual freedom in choosing how one wishes to be perceived, without fear of deviating from standards or being widely accepted.

Datum 2.3

Textual: “Beatrice Domond is redefining what it means to be a pro skater by embracing a unique path that highlights her bold, original style”

The sentence in Datum 2.3 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys freedom. This sentence literally describes concrete actions associated with freedom. Each phrase explicitly illustrates freedom as stepping beyond conventional boundaries. Here, freedom lies in Domond’s decision to choose an unconventional path, embrace her uniqueness, and highlight her self-expression and personal style.

On a connotative level, freedom is not merely the act of choosing a unique path, but a symbol of identity. The phrase “redefining” implies a process of negotiating social meaning, given that Domond is a black female skater. The phrase “bold and original style” signifies the courage to express oneself without fear of other judgment. Here, freedom is understood as the ability to transcend the boundaries of gender, race, and mainstream style.

Datum 2.4

Textual: “From the way we skate to the way we dress, our individual style is an essential element of who we are. It’s the unique way we express ourselves in anything we do”

The sentence in Datum 2.4 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys freedom. This sentence conveys a sense of personal freedom. The concept of freedom in this sentence is “From the way we skate to the way we dress,” which refers to the freedom to choose one’s movements and the clothing one wears. The phrase “our individual style” refers to a person’s personal style. And the phrase “the unique way we express ourselves” refers to a unique way of self-expression. Each phrase in this sentence affirms an individual’s right to determine their behavior (skating), appearance, and expression without limits.

The connotation of this sentence carries a deeper meaning: freedom is not merely about how one dresses or rides a skateboard, but about the freedom to be oneself. This sentence conveys that an individual’s personal style is an important part of their identity. Consequently, by freely choosing a lifestyle and expressing oneself, a person is also free to define who they are in the eyes of society. This also conveys that freedom is not merely an action but also about one’s true self and self-confidence.

Datum 2.5

Textual: “His goals is to encourage future generations to be bold with their creative endeavor, and to be first at something.”

The sentence in Datum 2.5 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys a sense of freedom. This sentence directly conveys encouragement and inspiration to be bold and stand out. The phrases that convey this sense of freedom are “to be bold with their creative endeavors” and “to be first at something.” This sentence illustrates that a person is free to try new things, create in their own way, and be the first at whatever they love.

The connotation of this sentence is to convey a profound meaning: that freedom lies in being bold and dreaming of creating something new or becoming a pioneer. Furthermore, freedom is about not being afraid to stand out and be different from others, as well as going against the grain. This conveys that everyone especially the younger generation has the power to forge their own path without having to follow others’ ways. And freedom is not just about making choices, but also about having the inner confidence to bring great new ideas to life.

Datum 2.6

Textual: “There’s still so much to create and explore. I want to keep creating until I’ve explore everything that I can”

Visual:



The sentence in Datum 2.6 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys a sense of freedom. The sentence “There’s still so much to create and explore. I want to keep creating until I’ve explored everything that I can” directly expresses a passion for continued creativity; the phrases that convey this sense of freedom are “so much to create and explore” and “keep creating until I’ve explored everything that I can.” This sentence portrays someone who is free to try new things, create, and explore the world without limitations; nothing can restrict their freedom of movement or their desire to express themselves.

Connotatively, this sentence depicts freedom as an inner drive to keep growing and exploring new things; freedom is not merely the ability to move freely, but also the freedom to think, act, and create without fear of failure—the freedom to grow as an individual, continuously learning and exploring according to one’s own desires, rather than following external rules or limitations.

Datum 2.7

Textual: “Brings the energy to any stage”

The sentence in datum 2.7 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys a sense of freedom. Denotatively, the phrase “Brings the energy to any stage” refers to something or someone that brings energy to various stages or situations. The phrase “any stage” conveys a sense of freedom and the idea that energy and expression can be brought anywhere without limits. This implies that any place can become a “stage” for self-expression.

The connotation of this sentence is that it has a deep meaning, conveying the ability to express one's true self regardless of place or rules. And the word "stage" is not just a literal stage, but conveys that any space in life such as the street, school, social media, or other creative spaces can serve as a stage. Furthermore, freedom can be interpreted as the energy to express oneself freely in various ways.

Datum 2.8

Textual: "Future make is here"

The sentence in datum 2.8 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys freedom. Denotatively, this sentence implies that the future or the creator of the future is already here. The phrase "future make" conveys freedom by referring to a person's ability to create their own future. This suggests that everyone is free to determine their own path in life to create something new without having to follow the old ways.

The connotation of this sentence conveys the message that freedom is the power to create one's own future. This implies that people do not have to wait or follow the system or old ways to achieve the future. A person is free to shape the future they desire in their own way. Furthermore, freedom here means having the courage to be creative and not being afraid of change. This conveys that the future is not something far off to be achieved but can begin right now,

Datum 2.9

Textual: "From the streets to the stage"

The sentence in datum 2.9 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys freedom; denotatively, this sentence conveys freedom. It depicts someone who is free to express themselves and create anywhere, whether in public spaces such as the street or in formal settings such as a performance stage.

Connotatively, this sentence has a deeper meaning. It conveys that freedom is the ability to express oneself from any place, thereby achieving unlimited progress or success. The word “streets” is often associated with free, unregulated, and spontaneous expression. The word “stage” implies the spotlight or social recognition. Thus, this phrase conveys that a person is free to start from anywhere to achieve success. It symbolizes the freedom to express oneself and grow, even if one comes from a humble place or begins in a simple way.

Datum 2.10

Textual: ” Embrace the freedom of expression your inner child craves”

Visual:



The sentence in datum 2.10 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys freedom; denotatively, the sentence in datum 1.10 encourages the audience to embrace or enjoy the freedom to express themselves. The phrases that convey freedom are “freedom of expression” and “your inner child

craves.” This sentence suggests that freedom arises naturally; in fact, it has existed since we were children we have always wanted to express ourselves freely without limits.

On a connotative level, this sentence suggests that true freedom is when we can unleash our expressions as they are and without fear, just like a child who is known to be spontaneous, honest, and genuine. That freedom has been within us from the very beginning; we just need to embrace it.

Datum 2.11

Textual: “Endless possibilities”

The sentence in datum 2.11 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys freedom; denotatively, this phrase indicates that there are no limits to what can be done, tried, or achieved. The word “endless” directly illustrates freedom because it implies that a person is not constrained by specific rules or choices.

Its connotation is that freedom is the right to choose, try, or create anything without limitations, whether those be social norms or pressures. Its deeper meaning is that life is a vast space full of opportunities, and everyone has the right and power to determine the direction they will choose. Freedom means not being restrained or confined by a particular way of thinking, but being open to all ideas.

Datum 2.12

Textual: “Making waves and finding sisterhood along the way”

Visual:



The sentence in datum 2.12 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys a sense of freedom; it conveys a message about building relationships with other women “finding sisterhood.” The phrase that reflects freedom is “making waves,” which describes the courage to do something different, to stand out, and to explore signifying that a person is free to express themselves and play an active role in their environment.

The connotative meaning of this phrase depicts freedom as the courage to create change while remaining emotionally connected to others. Here, freedom is understood not only in terms of the individual but also in building collective strength through “sisterhood,” conveying the idea that freedom is achieved through mutual support it is not something done in isolation. This demonstrates that being free does not mean being alone; rather, it becomes stronger through solidarity.

Datum 2.13

Textual: “Make a statement wherever you move”

Visual:



The sentence in datum 2.13 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys freedom. Denotatively, the sentence above means that a person can express their true self or convey a message wherever they are. The phrase “wherever you move” reflects unlimited freedom; no matter where a person is, they can move freely and still convey a message or be themselves anywhere. This sentence encourages people to step forward and be themselves whenever and wherever they are.

The connotation of this sentence is that freedom is the ability to openly express one’s identity and personal outlook on life. Implicit in this sentence is the message that every individual has the right to make a statement through their movements, style, messages, and presence. We don’t have to speak to explain who we truly are; our appearance, actions, and the way we move can also be forms of free expression.

Datum 2.14

Textual: “Kicking back and gearing up. The new brown gum sole Premium Old Skools are ready for all the dancing and walking that festival life comes with”

The text in Figure 2.14 is a representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys a sense of freedom. The sentences above contain denotations that depict a

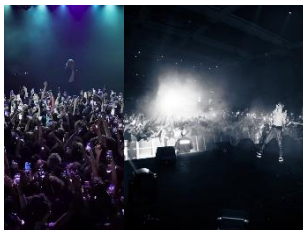
calm yet active atmosphere; the phrases “kicking back,” “gearing up,” and “ready for all the dancing and walking” suggest the freedom to move as one pleases. The term “festival life” also evokes a sense of freedom where one can dance and walk without limits.

In the sentence above, there is a connotation that freedom means the independence to choose one’s own path in life to be calm or active, whenever one desires. A festival serves as a symbol of a rule-free space, a place where one can freely express oneself through dance or clothing. Shoes ready for all activities imply support for a youthful lifestyle having fun while staying comfortable without having to stop.

Datum 2.15

Textual: “Energy unmatched. @nettspend_ just turned 18 and already lighting up the stage for invert tour”

Visual:



The text at 2.15 is a representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys a sense of freedom. Denotatively, the sentence above conveys that a musician named @nettspend_ has just turned 18 and is already making a striking impression on stage during his tour. The phrases that depict freedom are “just turned 18” and “lighting

up the stage.” The age of 18 signifies a transitional period toward adulthood or marks legal adulthood. Meanwhile, “lighting up the stage” demonstrates an energetic and unmatched self-expression.

Connotatively, the sentences above convey that freedom is about daring to perform and showcasing one’s abilities from a young age. This implies that a free person is someone full of energy, unafraid of the spotlight, and ready to contribute to the wider world. Freedom here is not just about age, but about passion, energy, and the courage to create.

Datum 2.16

Textual: “Playing with contrast in the two-tone Old Skools from the Premium Music Collections”

Visual:



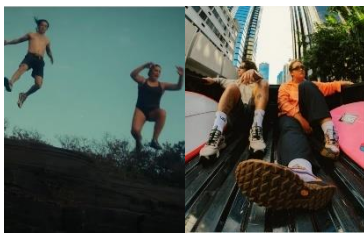
According to Barthes (1967), denotation is the direct meaning of a sign. Visually, this depicts a woman standing on a stack of cardboard boxes, wearing casual clothing in contrasting colors and the sentence above indicates that the Old Skool Vans from the Premium Music collection feature a two-tone design. The phrase “playing with contrast” refers to the use of different colors; simply put, this describes the blending of colors or styles in fashion.

Connotatively, the word “freedom” in this sentence refers to the desire to express oneself through style choices that differ from the norm and the courage to stand out by combining unconventional elements while remaining confident. This symbolizes the freedom to think and express oneself through one’s appearance without fear of being seen as strange or unusual.

Datum 2.17

Textual: “Meet the new crosspath XC. Ready to explore any path, anytime”

Visual:



The sentence above is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys a sense of freedom. “Meet the new Crosspath XC. Ready to explore any path, anytime” directly introduces the latest product and declares its readiness for use. The phrase “ready to explore any path, anytime” directly illustrates the shoe’s function as a tool for movement and exploration.

On a connotative level, freedom here means the full right to determine the direction of one’s life. “Any path” symbolizes diverse career choices, hobbies, or lifestyles, while “anytime” signifies flexibility without any constraints. This advertisement serves as a symbol of support for adventurers; anyone can move, try new things, or go places without any obstacles.

Datum 2.18

Textual: "Fearless energy on every stage"

Visual:



The text at datum 2.18 is a representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys freedom. Denotatively, the sentence above depicts someone who is energetic and fearless on every stage. The phrase "fearless energy" conveys courage and high spirits, while "on every stage" implies that this energy is present in various situations and conditions.

Connotatively, this sentence suggests that freedom is the courage to perform and express one's true self under any circumstances. "Stage" in this context can have a broader meaning, such as the workplace, creative spaces, artistic environments, or everyday life. "Fearless energy" signifies the inner strength to be free from anxiety or fear, social pressure, or restrictive rules and norms.

Datum 2.19

Textual: "Takes slams, get clips, and keep pushing forward for womens snowboarding"

Visual:



The text at datum 2.19 is a representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys freedom. Denotatively, the sentence above refers to a female athlete who falls “takes slams.” The phrase “keep pushing forward” conveys an element of freedom because it depicts the spirit of constantly getting back up and continuing to grow without stopping, even in the face of obstacles.

In connotative sense, freedom here symbolizes the ability to keep moving forward despite facing challenges or setbacks. Snowboarding has become a symbol of open spaces like the great outdoors, which are full of challenges and underscore that freedom means pushing beyond one’s limits, rising from failure, and remaining steadfast in our efforts. For women in particular, this signifies the courage to break through boundaries that have traditionally been considered the domain of men.

Datum 2.20

Textual: “Transcending cultures and pushing boundaries with @littlesimz”

The sentence in data 2.20 represents the textual expression of a Vans advertisement that conveys a sense of freedom. At denotative level, the sentence states that @littlesimz, an artist, “transcends cultural” and “pushing boundaries”. This illustrates the role and activities of an artist who is not confined to a single

culture or specific set of rules, and who courageously explores new possibilities through her works and performances.

Connotatively, freedom here means the ability to create and express oneself without being bound by cultural norms or prevailing social constraints. Freedom can be understood as the power to create something new, different from others, and perhaps never done before, especially within the context of art or music.

Datum 2.21

Textual: “Speed, strength, and a heart of gold”

The text at datum 2.21 is a representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys a sense of freedom. This sentence mentions three characteristics: “speed,” “strength,” and “a heart of gold.” Of these phrases, the words “speed” and “strength” reflect freedom because they indicate flexibility and resilience, free from obstacles much like someone who freely expresses themselves through active pursuits or a dynamic lifestyle.

Connotatively, this sentence implies that freedom is not only about the physical, but also about a balanced personality one that is mentally and emotionally strong. Freedom is about being oneself, being flexible, being strong in the face of challenges, and having a good heart, “a heart of gold.” This shows that a person can be free while remaining true to their humanity.

Datum 2.22

Textual: “Style, power, and positivity”

Visual:



The sentence in datum 2.22 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys freedom. Denotatively, this sentence reflects freedom because it expresses oneself freely through appearance and lifestyle, as embodied in the three key words: “style,” “power,” and “positivity.”

Connotatively, this sentence suggests that freedom is the ability to express one’s uniqueness “style”, to possess the strength to face challenges and obstacles “power”, and to maintain a consistently positive attitude “positivity”. Freedom is not merely about physical actions, but also about mental attitudes and ways of thinking that provide space to express one’s true self with confidence.

Datum 2.23

Sentence: “Powerful stylish turns and her strong connection with her community”

The sentence in datum 2.23 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys a sense of freedom. The denotative meaning of this sentence lies in the words that describe freedom, such as “powerful stylish turns,” which evoke free and expressive movement during activities, and “strong connection with her community,” which conveys the freedom to build strong and supportive social relationships or communities.

Connotatively, this sentence reflects that freedom does not only arise from physical activities full of style and strength, but also from the freedom to choose to connect and grow together with a community. Freedom here means being fully oneself, both when appearing in public and when with the people around you.

Datum 2.24

Sentence: “Style is freedom of expression”

Visual:



The sentence above is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys the concept of freedom. The phrase “style is freedom of expression” directly states that “style” is a form of freedom to express ourselves in accordance with our true selves. The phrase “freedom of expression” clearly reflects the element of freedom the right to express who we are through our clothing, appearance, or the way we carry out our activities and behave.

The deeper meaning of this sentence implies that style is not just about fashion, but also serves as a personal symbol and a reflection of one’s life choices. Freedom here means having full control over how we present our personality and thoughts to the world without fear of judgment.

Datum 2.25

Sentence: “Expressing yourself is what becomes your style”

Visual:



The sentence in datum 2.25 is a textual representation of a Vans advertisement that conveys freedom. This sentence directly implies that self-expression is what shapes a person's style. The phrase “expressing yourself” conveys freedom because it describes the act of freely expressing our identity through various means, including our demeanor, clothing, and behavior.

Connotatively, this sentence implies that freedom is the core of personal identity. This means that if a person is given the freedom or space to express themselves, that is where their identity is formed. Freedom of expression is not merely about choosing clothes, but about choosing to be oneself without limitations.

B. Discussion

This study aims to answer two research questions concerning the representation of freedom in @Vans Instagram advertisements. The first research question examines how textual and visual signs represent freedom. Based on the findings, freedom is represented through textual signs such as “freedom of expression,” “endless possibilities,” “make a statement wherever you move,” and

“expressing yourself is what becomes your style.” These expressions emphasize individuality, creativity, authenticity, and self expression. Visually, freedom is represented through street culture activities and casual fashion. Therefore, research question 1 has been answered, as the findings demonstrate that freedom is constructed through the interaction of textual and visual signs that symbolize independence, creativity, exploration, and personal identity.

The second research question investigates the myths or cultural ideologies of freedom embedded in the advertisements. The findings reveal that Vans advertisements construct freedom as a natural and desirable value closely associated with self-expression, individuality, creativity, confidence, and personal choice. Through repeated textual and visual representations, the advertisements naturalize the belief that authentic identity can be achieved by freely expressing oneself and pursuing personal passions. Therefore, research question 2 has also been answered because the study successfully identifies the myth of freedom that underlies the advertisements.

The findings of this study share several similarities with previous studies. First, this study is consistent with (Be, 2023), (Udyani et al., 2024), (Wayan et al., 2021), and (Gede Jody Agastya & Wayan Suastini, 2024), which found that verbal and visual signs contain denotative and connotative meanings that help communicate messages to audiences. Similarly, the present study found that textual and visual signs in Vans advertisements construct meanings related to freedom through denotative and connotative level of signification.

Second, the findings are also similar to (Tubagus & Gunawan, 2024) who emphasized that verbal and visual elements work together to strengthen advertising messages and brand narratives. Likewise the present study demonstrates that textual and visual elements collaboratively construct the narrative of freedom, creativity, and self expression promoted by Vans. Third, the findings support the studies of (Rais & Fadillah, 2025), (Intan Rahman et al., 2025), and (Zhykharieva et al., 2024), which employed Roland Barthes semiotic theory to reveal denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings. Similar to those studies, the present research found that advertisements contain ideological messages that operate at the level of myth.

However, several differences can also be identified. First, this study differs from (Muazzomah, 2023), which employed Charles Sanders Peirce semiotic theory and focused on identifying icons, indexes, and symbols in Joker poster advertisements. In contrast, the present study applies Roland Barthes semiotic theory to analyze denotation, connotation, and myth in Instagram advertisements. Therefore, the difference lies in both the theoretical framework and the analytical focus.

Second, this study differs from (Suryasa Sjaerodji & Indrawati, 2022), who analyzed typography, sound effects, music, and other multimodal elements in YouTube advertisements. In contrast, the present study is limited to textual and visual signs found in Instagram advertisements. Therefore, the difference lies in both the advertising platform and the analyzed semiotic elements.

Finally, although (Zhykharieva et al., 2024) also employed Roland Barthes semiotic theory to reveal denotative, connotative, and myth, their study combined semiotics, stylistics, and pragmatics to investigate Harley Davidson advertisements. Meanwhile, this study focuses solely on Barthes semiotic framework and analyzes how freedom is represented through textual and visual signs in Vans advertisements on Instagram. Overall, this study contributes to the existing body of semiotic research by providing a deeper understanding of how freedom is represented in social media advertising. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on identifying signs and meanings, this study demonstrates how textual and visual signs work together to build the cultural myth of freedom, thereby reinforcing Vans brand identity as a symbol of freedom, individuality, creativity, and self expression.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter presents conclusions and suggestions derived from the discussion.

A. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the textual representations in @Vans' Instagram ads in the form of words, phrases, and sentences convey meanings of freedom, individuality, creativity, and self-expression through Roland Barthes' theory of semiotics, which employs denotation, connotation, and myth. The visuals in these ads also reinforce the textual message by showcasing various street activities, street culture, casual fashion, and expressive poses, thereby linking visual signs to cultural meanings and myths about freedom and the identity of modern youth. Thus, these two elements complement each other to create an image of Vans not merely as a fashion brand, but as a symbol of freedom, authenticity, and self-expression for the younger generation.

This study theoretically enriches the field of semiotics, particularly regarding advertisements on Instagram, by applying Barthes's theory of semiotics. Barthes's theory of semiotics (1967) explains that meaning in communication does not stem solely from literal meaning or denotation, but also includes hidden meanings or connotations that collectively form a socially accepted myth within society. Barthes theory (1967) is applied in this study to reveal how Instagram ads for @Vans create perceptions of identity and freedom through textual and visual symbolism. In addition to literally depicting the product, elements like the phrase "freedom of expression" and "endless possibilities" along with images of street

scenes, create a statement about freedom, creativity, and a genuine lifestyle within contemporary youth culture.

B. Suggestion

After finishing the study, the researcher discovered that there were still a number of limitations. This study is limited to the analysis of textual and visual elements in advertisements posted on the @Vans Instagram account and only employs Roland Barthes semiotic theory. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to examine other communication elements that I not covered in this study, such as audio or sound in video advertisements. In addition, future studies may analyze audience responses through the comment section to gain a broader understanding of how freedom is interpreted by viewers. Researchers may also investigate the effectiveness and impact of advertisements on consumers by applying different theories or methods, such as audience receptions analysis or consumer behavior studies. Furthermore, future research can expand the data source by comparing the ads from different brands or social media platform to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the representation of freedom in advertising.

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CURRICULUM VITAE



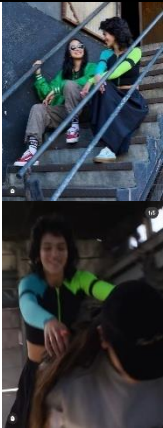
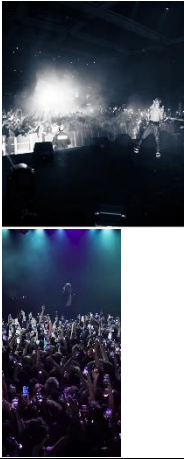
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APPENDIX

No	Datum	Semiotic Analysis (Roland Barthes)				
		Visual	Textual	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
1	“Style comes easy too Little Simz, both and of stage” 	√	√	Little Simz appears stylish effortlessly in different setting.	Freedom is the ability to express oneself without restrictions.	Authentic style comes naturally to individuals who are true to themselves
2	“Little Simz finds inspiration everywhere, resulting in a style that is completely her own” 	√	√	She gains inspiration from many places and develops her own style.	Creating a unique identity through self expression	Freedom is achieved by freely drawing inspiration from diverse experience
3	“Beatrice Domond is redefining what it means to be a pro skater by embracing a unique path that highlights her bold, original style”		√	Beatrice follows her own path as a professional skater.	Freedom is courage to challenge conventions and be different.	Success belongs to those who challenge traditional norms and create their own path

4	“From the way we skate to the way we dress, our individual style is an essential elements of who we are. It’s the unique way we express ourselves in anything we do”	√	Style is reflected in daily activities and appearance.	Freedom is expressed through individuality and personal choices.	Personal identity is reflected through everyday choices, including fashion and lifestyle, it assumes that clothing and lifestyle naturally communicate who a person is	
5	“his goals is to encourage future generations to be bold with their creative endeavor, and to be first at something”	√	He motivates young people to be creative and innovative.	Freedom is the confidence to create, dream, and become a pioneer.	Creative individuals have the power to inspire and shape future generations, it reinforces the cultural belief that creativity leads to social influence and progress	
6	“There’s still so much to create and explore. I want to keep creating until I’ve explore everything that I can” 	√	√	There are endless opportunities to create and explore.	Freedom is continuous growth, creativity, and exploration.	Life offers unlimited opportunities for those willing to explore and create, it presents opportunity and self development as accessible through personal initiative
7	“Brings the energy to any stage”	√	Someone brings energy wherever they perform.	Any place can become a space for self expression	it normalizes the idea that individuals should publicly express their identity	
8	“Future make is here”	√	A person who creates the future is present	Freedom is the power to shape one’s own future	Individuals are capable of creating and controlling	

						their own future
9	“From the streets to the stage”	√		A journey from public spaces to performance space	Freedom enables personal growth and achievement regardless of background.	Social background does not limit personal achievement and self development which frames authenticity as universal path to personal fulfilment
10	“Embrace the freedom of expression your inner child craves” 	√	√	People are encouraged to express themselves freely	True freedom comes from authentic fearless self expression	Returning to one's authentic self is the key to genuine freedom
11	“Endless possibilities”		√	Unlimited opportunities exist.	Freedom is having limitless choices and opportunities	Freedom provides endless possibilities for personal growth and fulfilment
12	“Making waves and finding sisterhood along the way” 	√	√	Creating change while building relationships	Freedom includes empowerment, solidarity, and community support.	Promotes collective support as an essential aspect of empowerment
13	“Make a statement wherever you move”	√	√	People can express themselves wherever they are	It means that freedom is openly showing identity and personal values	Self expression should be visible and celebrated in all aspects of life

						
14	“Kicking back and gearing up. The new brown gum sole Premium Old Skools are ready for all the dancing and walking that festival life comes with”	√	√	Enjoying activities such as dancing and walking	Freedom is choosing one’s lifestyle and enjoying life without restrictions.	A fulfilling life is achieved by freely enjoying experiences and personal choices
15	“Energy unmatched. @nettspend_ just turned 18 and already lighting up the stage for the invert tour”	√	√	A young musician performs confidently on stage	Freedom is the courage to showcase talent and creativity	It reinforces the belief that creativity should be openly showcased and appreciated
						
16	“Playing with contrast in the two-tone old skools from the Premium Music Collections”	√	√	A model with contrast colors	Experimenting with style and embracing individuality	Uniqueness and originality are valuable qualities that should be embraced, it naturalizes individuality as a positive social value

						
17	“Meet the new crosspath XC. Ready to explore any path, anytime” 	√	√	A shoe designed for exploration and movement	Freedom is choosing one's own path and lifestyle	Life is a journey where individuals are free to choose their own direction
18	“Fearless energy on every stage” 	√	√	Someone performs with confidence and energy	Expressing oneself without fear or social pressure	Fearlessness is an essential characteristic of authentic self expression
19	“takes slams, get clips, and keep pushing forward for womens snowboarding” 	√	√	A female athlete continues despite setbacks	Freedom is resilience, perseverance, and breaking gender barriers	Determination and perseverance can overcome social and gender barriers

20	“Transcending cultures and pushing boundaries with @littlesimz.”	√		An artist moves beyond cultural limitation	Creating beyond social and cultural constraints	Cultural boundaries should not restrict creativity and personal identity
21	“Speed, strength, and a heart of gold.”	√		Someone possesses speed, strength, and kindness	Freedom is balancing personal strength with humanity and compassion	True strength combines personal achievement with kindness and humanity
22	“Style, power, and positivity.” 	√	√	A combination of style, confidence, and optimism	Freedom is self confidence and maintaining appositve identity	Confidence positivity, and style are signs of a successful individuals, it construct these characteristics as indicators of personal success
23	“powerful stylish turns and her strong connection with her community”		√	Stylish movement and community relationships are highlighted	Freedom is being oneself while remaining connected to others.	Personal freedom can coexist with strong community relationships
24	“Style is freedom of expression” 	√	√	Style is directly linked to self expresssion	Communicating identity through appearance and personal choices	Fashion and style are legitimate forms of expressing personal identity
25	“Expressing yourself is what becomes your style.”	√	√	Self expression shapes and individual’s style	Foundation of identity and authenticity is freedom	A person’s styles is a direct reflection of their authentic self expression

