



## Semiotic Analysis of KitKat Advertisement

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### Abstract:

This study analyzes the KitKat advertisement “Don’t let life’s interruptions get in the way. Have a quality break with KitKat” through Roland Barthes’ semiotic theory. The advertisement emphasizes the importance of taking a break amid daily busyness, serving as a clear example of how visual elements, music, and minimal narration can effectively convey meaning. The data were collected through textual observation, in which the advertisement was examined scene by scene to identify visual and verbal signs. The analysis was conducted qualitatively using Barthes’ semiotic framework, encompassing the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth. This approach allows the study to explore how the advertisement employs symbolic imagery, background music, and subtle narrative cues to construct the message of rest and recovery. The analysis reveals that KitKat consistently associates its brand with the cultural ideology of quality rest, reflecting broader themes of work-life balance and self-care in modern society.

**Keywords:** Denotation; Connotation; Myth; KitKat Advertisement; Semiotic Analysis

### Abstrak:

Penelitian ini menganalisis iklan KitKat berjudul “Don’t let life’s interruptions get in the way. Have a quality break with KitKat” dengan menggunakan teori semiotika Roland Barthes. Iklan tersebut menekankan pentingnya mengambil waktu istirahat di tengah kesibukan sehari-hari, serta menjadi contoh jelas bagaimana elemen visual, musik, dan narasi minimal dapat menyampaikan makna secara efektif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi tekstual, di mana iklan dianalisis adegan demi adegan untuk mengidentifikasi tanda-tanda visual dan verbal. Analisis dilakukan secara kualitatif dengan menggunakan kerangka semiotika Barthes yang mencakup tiga tingkatan: denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos. Pendekatan ini memungkinkan penelitian untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana iklan memanfaatkan citra simbolik, musik latar, dan isyarat naratif yang halus dalam membangun pesan tentang istirahat dan pemulihan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa KitKat secara konsisten mengaitkan mereknya dengan ideologi budaya tentang kualitas istirahat, yang mencerminkan tema-tema lebih luas mengenai keseimbangan kerja dan kehidupan serta perawatan diri dalam masyarakat modern.

**Kata kunci:** Denotasi; Konotasi; Mitos; Iklan KitKat; Analisis Semiotika

## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary marketing communication, advertising plays a strategic role beyond merely conveying product information (Jamal & Khan, 2024). It has evolved into a cultural text that embeds values, lifestyles, and social expectations into consumers’ everyday lives. This ideological dimension of advertising is not new. As Owen (2025)



demonstrates in his semiological study of Braun's post-war German advertisements, consumer goods have long been used to naturalize social values through visual myth-making — a process that continues to define modern brand narratives. In a society marked by heavy workloads and social pressure, many advertisements construct narratives that emphasize life balance, relaxation, and self-care (Latif & Arslan, 2024). Similar to other modern lifestyle advertisements, online retail campaigns also embed cultural ideologies of hedonism and self-reward, as seen in Shopee's 7.7 Mega Sale campaign that constructs the myth of consumer pleasure (Siden & Junaedi, 2025). Such a communicative pattern makes semiotic analysis highly relevant, as semiotics provides a framework to uncover how signs, symbols, and images shape audience perceptions and produce cultural meanings (Ayu et al., 2025; Sarangi, 2025). Religious-themed advertisements, such as Sasha Toothpaste's Ramadan edition, also exemplify how brands employ cultural symbols to naturalize moral values within commercial messages (Kanzulfikar et al., 2020). Advertising, therefore, functions not only to promote commodities but also to co-create symbolic experiences that strengthen consumers' emotional attachment to brands (Huang & Wang, 2024). Owen, I. W. (2025)

This research employs Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, which identifies three levels of signification: denotation (literal meaning), connotation (cultural or emotional meaning), and myth, an ideology naturalized as common sense (Barthes, 1964). KitKat video advertisements featuring the slogan "Have a Break, Have a KitKat" serve as the main object of this study. The brand has established a global identity that equates its product with the idea of taking a break, making KitKat a compelling case for analyzing how the cultural myth of rest is constructed both visually and narratively.

Although Barthes' semiotic model has been widely applied to advertising studies, especially those promoting beauty or lifestyle products, research on its application to Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), particularly KitKat, remains limited. Previous studies have focused on brands such as Bear Brand and Outside, but few have explored how KitKat systematically constructs and sustains the myth of a "quality break" as a cultural response to modern life's pressures.

Based on this gap, the main objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive semiotic analysis of KitKat video advertisements through Barthes' theoretical lens. Specifically, the research aims to identify the visual, verbal, and aural elements at the denotative and connotative levels in KitKat video advertisements and interpret the cultural



myth of “the break” that is constructed and naturalized through these advertisements. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the application of Barthes’ model in FMCG advertising, and practically by providing insight into how brands can use cultural symbols to strengthen emotional branding and consumer engagement.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Roland Barthes’ semiotic theory offers a framework for understanding how meaning is constructed through signs within various cultural texts, including advertisements. (Barthes, 1964) divides the process of signification into two levels. The first level consists of denotation, referring to the literal or objective meaning of a sign, and connotation, which arises from the cultural and emotional associations connected to the sign. The second level, myth, emerges when connotative meanings become naturalized within a culture, forming ideological “truths” that shape social perceptions (Barthes, 1972). Through this framework, advertisements can be read not only as tools for persuasion but also as cultural texts that reproduce certain ideologies, values, and lifestyles.

Previous studies have widely employed Barthes’ theory to analyze how advertisements convey meaning beyond their commercial goals. In the field of cosmetic advertising, Andina et al., (2021) conducted a study entitled “Discovering the Meaning of Verbal and Visual Signs in L’Oréal Paris Video Advertisement: A Semiotic Study.” Using Barthes’ theory of meaning along with Saussure’s semiotics and Wierzbicka’s theory of color terms, the researchers analyzed verbal and visual elements in the L’Oréal Paris Total Repair 5 Shampoo advertisement. Their findings revealed that both textual and visual signs, such as the written slogans, imagery, and color composition, carry denotative and connotative meanings related to beauty, self-confidence, and empowerment. This research demonstrates how semiotics can uncover the ideological construction of self-image and attractiveness in cosmetic advertising.

In the field of FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) advertising, Barthes’ framework has also been applied to examine how brands construct symbolic meaning around everyday products. For example, Shabrina et al., (2022) analyzed the Bear Brand advertisement series that appeared during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study explored how health messages were represented through verbal and nonverbal cues, using Barthes’ theory to identify denotative, connotative, and myth meanings. Similarly, Fadillah et al., (2024) investigated the Outside beverage advertisement titled “Enaknya Outside Bikin Jadi



Lupa Teman.” Their research identified fourteen scenes containing visual signs and interpreted them to reveal the message of extraordinary taste and emotional connection through humor and relatable visuals. Both studies exemplify how Barthes’ semiotics can be used to interpret how FMCG brands build consumer attachment by associating their products with particular cultural narratives, such as health, enjoyment, and social connection.

Based on the existing literature, it is evident that previous research has successfully demonstrated Barthes’ applicability in analyzing semiotic meanings in both cosmetic and FMCG advertisements. However, there remains a noticeable research gap in the analysis of KitKat advertisements, particularly regarding how the brand constructs the cultural myth of “taking a break” through its long-standing slogan “Have a Break, Have a KitKat.” Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by applying Barthes’ semiotic model to decode how KitKat’s advertisement system, through its visual, verbal, and aural signs, creates and sustains the ideology of “a quality break” as a symbolic response to the demands of modern life.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative design using a semiotic analysis approach to interpret the symbolic meanings embedded within KitKat video advertisements. The qualitative approach is chosen because it allows an in-depth exploration of non-numerical data, aligning with Roland Barthes’ theoretical framework of semiotics (Sugiyono, 2023). The primary data consist of KitKat video advertisements that explicitly feature the slogan “Have a Break, Have a KitKat.” These advertisements were selected based on their thematic relevance to the concept of “the break” and their availability from official KitKat digital platforms, such as the brand’s YouTube channel and website.

Data were collected through textual observation, where each advertisement was transcribed and segmented into scenes for detailed examination. Visual elements such as color, setting, and gesture, as well as verbal and aural components including slogans, dialogues, music, and sound effects, were documented and interpreted as signifiers. The analysis followed Barthes’ three levels of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth. First, the denotative stage involved describing the literal or surface meaning of the advertisements. Second, the connotative stage focused on interpreting the cultural and emotional meanings that emerge from the combination of visual and verbal signs. Finally,

the myth stage identified how these connotations construct and naturalize ideological messages, particularly the cultural myth of “the quality break” promoted by the brand. Similar analytical frameworks were applied by Faisal et al., (2025), who examined online advertisements using Barthes’ three levels of signification to uncover consumer myths in digital media.

## FINDINGS

The results of the current study are presented here and interpreted within the framework of relevant existing

### Data 1



The first data analysis focuses on a scene where a male office employee stands up from his desk while saying, “I’m just going for a break.” The scene is reinforced when his colleague offers him additional work, which he politely declines, emphasizing his decision to leave his workstation. Denotatively, this scene portrays a busy open-space office environment (signifying pressure), where an employee literally stops his task to take a short break. The verbal and non-verbal actions complement each other to construct the main idea of a temporary pause from routine activity.

At the connotative level, the refusal of extra work, supported by the calm tone of voice and composed body language, implies a sense of fatigue and a deep human need for rest. This represents not only a physical withdrawal from work duties but also a psychological act of reclaiming personal space and time (self-care) from professional demands.

This interpretation leads to the myth level, where the advertisement reflects a modern cultural ideology that values life balance amid high productivity. The act of “having a break” is mythologized as a meaningful and even necessary behavior for maintaining well-being. By normalizing this pause, the advertisement conveys the message of a “small rebellion” against the overworking culture, positioning the break as both beneficial and socially accepted.

## Data 2



The analysis continues with a scene where the actor walks toward the break area, saying, “I’m just going for a break” (Verbal), which is supported by the background song lyric “I want to break free.” Denotatively, this verbal sign indicates an explicit desire for a pause, reinforced by the visual or non-verbal sign of work tools, such as sticky notes, maps, and boards, surrealistically sticking to the actor’s body as he walks. This contrast is significant.

On the connotative level, the lyric “I want to break free” associates the idea of a break not merely with physical rest but with emotional liberation from the burdens and demands of work. The work tools attached to the actor’s body function as visual signifiers of the psychological weight that is difficult to shed, suggesting that work pressure continues to haunt even during moments of rest. The combination of these meanings leads to a deeper myth construction.

The myth being built is that an ordinary break is insufficient to truly escape the culture of overworking. The advertisement justifies that one needs a transformative solution represented by KitKat to achieve a moment of genuine, high-quality rest, to truly “break free”, ultimately reinforcing the brand’s positioning as a symbol of well-being and self-care.

## Data 3



The analysis reaches its peak in the scene where the solution is presented, encompassing two crucial moments. Denotatively, the scene shows a close-up of the actor’s hand taking a KitKat bar and beginning to eat it, followed by the disappearance of all work-related attributes, the tools attached to his body, while the

background music stops completely (Verbal/Aural). The actor is now shown with a calmer facial expression in an environment resembling a park (Visual).

At the connotative level, the actor's act of eating KitKat functions as a ritualistic symbol of activating a quality break. The sudden cessation of music associates silence with mental freedom. The disappearance of the physical burdens previously attached to the actor's body connotes that KitKat is not merely a snack, but a trigger that brings both physical and psychological liberation from the hustle of work life.

Through this contrast, the advertisement effectively constructs the myth that KitKat represents the True Key to Transformation. This myth embeds the idea that, to achieve a genuinely liberating break amid the pressures of modern life, consuming KitKat serves as an essential solution that legitimizes self-care, transforming a simple pause into a high-quality moment of recovery, while simultaneously reaffirming the brand's iconic slogan.

#### Data 4



The closing scene focuses on the outcome of the break, presented through a strong contrast. Denotatively, the actor is now shown sitting relaxed on a green, serene park bench (Visual), replacing the cold and pressured office setting (as in Data 1). Verbally, the background music resumes with the lyric "But life still goes on," followed by the actor sharing a KitKat with a weary-looking stranger (Visual/Non-Verbal).

At the connotative level, the park environment functions as an ideal oasis associated with calmness and recovery, sharply contrasting with the chaos of modern life. The lyric "But life still goes on" connotes resilience and optimism, implying that life's challenges can be faced with renewed spirit after being recharged by KitKat. Furthermore, the act of sharing KitKat with a stranger transcends personal kindness, it serves as a non-verbal signifier of social solidarity and collective rejuvenation. This connotes that the self-care triggered by KitKat now extends into social care, sharing positive energy.

The combination of these meanings constructs the myth that KitKat is a Symbol of Balance and Sustainable Social Connection. This myth embeds the idea that the KitKat

solution does not end at individual recovery but also acts as a catalyst for fostering positive energy and warm social interaction within an increasingly individualistic society. Thus, eating KitKat is mythologized as a small ritual that restores both external and internal balance.

#### Data 5



This final scene functions as the resolution, featuring the slogan “Have a break, have a KitKat” over a bright red background (Visual) displaying the KitKat logo. Denotatively, the visual signs highlight the brand’s core elements: the KitKat logo, the solid red color, and its slogan. The red color itself acts as a strong signifier.

At the connotative level, the solid red associates the brand with energy, attention, and passion, indirectly reinforcing the idea of energy restoration. The verbal sign, the slogan, directly links the product to an action, making KitKat a synonym for “taking a break.” The visual emphasis on the word “break” strengthens the connotation that the brand offers not merely chocolate, but a ritualistic solution for pause.

The combination of these elements constructs the most fundamental myth: KitKat as the Synonym and Legitimization of a Break. This myth serves as the ideological punchline of the entire advertisement’s narrative, that KitKat is not just a snack but the very permission and validation one needs to liberate oneself from work-related pressure. It functions as the anchor that ties together the overarching narrative of liberation (Data 1–5) with the brand identity, ensuring that the ideology of self-care is permanently associated with the product.

## DISCUSSION

The main findings from the Roland Barthes semiotic analysis of this KitKat video advertisement affirm that the brand successfully constructs the myth of a “Quality Break”, one that transcends the product’s basic function as a snack. The analyzed visual and verbal signs, ranging from scenes of workplace tension to the act of sharing in the park, consistently position KitKat as both the catalyst for and legitimization of self-



liberation from psychological work burdens. This discussion section aims to compare these findings with relevant scholarly contexts, particularly prior studies, to highlight this research's theoretical contribution.

The semiotic analysis of the KitKat video advertisement using Barthes' framework reveals that the brand constructs the myth of a "Quality Break," centered on self-avoidance and psychological recovery. The ad positions KitKat as a liberating trigger that allows individuals to detach from work-related pressures. This section compares the identified myth with earlier studies to highlight key ideological distinctions.

Unlike L'Oréal's advertisements, which promote compliance with external beauty standards as a path to acceptance (Andina et al., 2021), KitKat's myth emphasizes internal restoration. While L'Oréal encourages transformation for social conformity, KitKat legitimizes temporary withdrawal from work demands as a ritual of self-care. Both employ semiotics to frame products as routes to well-being, yet their ideological directions diverge, KitKat's approach is introspective, while L'Oréal's is performative.

Compared to Bear Brand, which centers on survival and health (Shabrina et al., 2022), and Outside, which emphasizes personal pleasure (Fadillah et al., 2024), KitKat presents a more socially expansive myth. The Quality Break acts as a restorative ritual that not only benefits the self but also fosters positive social connection, as shown through sharing scenes in the ad. Thus, KitKat sells balance and communal well-being, not merely physical health or sensory indulgence.

This research contributes theoretically by validating Barthes's model in revealing transformational myths within FMCG advertising. It fills a gap in the literature by focusing specifically on KitKat's distinctive "pause" narrative. The analysis demonstrates that successful branding strategies in the modern era involve mythologizing the product as an authorization of self, empowering consumers to prioritize mental health and life balance.

## CONCLUSION

This research analyzes the construction of meaning and myth in the KitKat video advertisement through Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, examining denotation, connotation, and myth across its visual, verbal, and aural elements to reveal how the concept of "Quality Break" operates as a cultural ideology. The findings show that the



advertisement mythologizes KitKat as both a Trigger of True Transformation and a Symbol of Social Balance, contrasting modern work pressures with the liberating act of consuming the product. KitKat is positioned not merely as a snack but as an essential means of self-authorization and self-care, with the closing scene extending individual recovery into social connection and underscoring the broader societal value of taking breaks. The study contributes to Barthes' semiotic theory by applying it to Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) advertising, highlighting a myth rooted in socio-psychological narratives rather than the more common focuses on taste or health.

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