

## **Social Class Representation in Toyota Commercial Series Film: Ending Love in 3 Episodes**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Mengakhiri Cinta Dalam 3 Episode is a movie series directed by Yandy Laurens and produced in 2018 as part of Toyota's promotional strategy to introduce one of their latest models, Yaris. This hatchback type vehicle was first marketed in Indonesia in 2006 with a market segmentation of consumers from the middle class and the age range of 35-50 years and in the latest model, Toyota shifted the target market of Yaris by targeting the 20-30 age group with the middle to upper economic level called young and affluent drivers. The purpose of this research is to find out how the young and affluent group is represented in the movie series Ending Love in 3 Episodes, as a way for Toyota to reach the new target market. Stuart Hall's representation theory is used as the main theory, along with Rothschild's semiotic theory which is used to analyze the images shown in the film to represent the young and affluent drivers. The research was conducted by analyzing the film series Mengakhiri Cinta Dalam 3 Episode which aired on Toyota Indonesia's Youtube channel, the method used is to separate the signs that appear throughout the film that relate to the representation of the young and affluent driver group.[JV1] The results of this study found that this film series represents certain social groups which are their target market through the depiction of the main character, storyline, setting that represents the traits inherent in the target market.

**Keywords:** Movie Series, Toyota Advertisement, Social Class, Commercial, Representation

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the modern era, companies are required to be more explorative in finding ways to advertise their products, both from the selection of advertising formats and mediums. Because the number of brands and product choices offered makes technical product excellence no longer the only consideration for the public in making choices. So a company needs other ways to be able to attract the attention of potential consumers, one of which is by choosing the right way to advertise.

One way of advertising that is currently being widely used is in the format of a movie or film series broadcast through television, or streaming channels, which in the term advertising world is called branded marketing. This advertising format usually uses short films or series films

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with the aim of advertising a product but packaged with a storyline that can still be enjoyed by the audience [1]. Although it has weaknesses in the form of delivering information related to product specifications that are not well conveyed, this method is considered very effective in spreading brand awareness or in terms of conveying messages that represent the image of a product, because in this method the audience will still be entertained through a storyline that they can enjoy [2].

One company that uses this format in advertising is Toyota, which is used to market the latest model of their product: Toyota New Yaris in 2018. The reason for choosing this format as part of Toyota's marketing strategy is Toyota's need to maintain the market for hatchback models whose sales continue to decline due to the presence of LCGC vehicles, and to target a new market share that they call young and affluent drivers: young urbanites with middle to upper social status [3].

The difficulty of marketing hatchback products in Indonesia is due to the issuance of government regulation PP 41 of 2013, which regulates the Low Cost Green Car: a vehicle produced in Indonesia with lower emission levels and smaller dimensions [4]. As compensation for the vehicle being considered more environmentally friendly and profitable in terms of production, the government also provides lighter taxes so that manufacturers can sell these products more cheaply. The regulation made the hatchback type vehicle lose its main target market, because both vehicles have similar dimensions and similar uses, namely as a car for city use [5]. According to GAIKINDO data, in December 2013 or 6 months after the regulation came into effect, there was a 60% decline in sales of hatchback cars compared to the previous year, while sales of LCGC vehicles tended to increase [6]. The decline in sales due to the presence of LCGC was tried to be dealt with by Toyota by shifting the target market from the age range of 35-50 years and middle or lower middle social status, to the age range of 20-30 years with upper middle social status or classified as young and affluent drivers [7]. The term young and affluent refers to the generation born 1990-2000 or can be classified as the late millennial and early centennial generations [8]. The strategies taken by Toyota to market Yaris include issuing new color variants that are considered more attractive to young people, conducting various creative campaigns, and also changing advertising patterns, one of which is by choosing a series film format [9].

Based on this fact, movie series was taken as an advertising format by Toyota because Toyota's interest at that time was no longer about conveying basic information such as product specifications that could be easily found through the internet. Toyota's interest was to attach an image to the Yaris product so that it is considered to represent their target audience as well as their target market, or in the marketing world known as affiliated product to consumer [10] and movies or film series became the most effective format to achieve this goal. The storyline in a movie or film series is often perceived as the social reality of society by the audience, and

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there is a sense of representation when the audience watches the movie. But on the other hand, reality in movies can be easily shaped by filmmakers [11].

In addition to the effectiveness of film in depicting social reality, the characteristics of this social class also need to be seen as something that underlies the decision to use the medium of film series for advertising by Toyota. The fact that this social class is also portrayed as a group that consumes movies has led to a decision that is a breakthrough in the world of marketing, because the use of film series as a medium of advertising is a relatively new and rarely encountered thing, and specifically for advertising automotive products for the first time done by Toyota through this film series. Novelty in terms of designing marketing strategies for automotive products and novelty in the series film design strategy make this series film important to be researched [12]. To see how Toyota through the film series constructs a reality that represents a group of young and affluent drivers who are their target market, through symbols that appear in the film series ending love in 3 episodes.

### METHOD

This research uses Stuart Hall's representation theory to see how the young and affluent drivers group is represented through the film series Ending Love in 3 Episodes, this group itself is a representation of the social class that is the target market of Toyota Yaris products. While to dissect the messages conveyed through signs or symbols in this film series, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is used.

The stages that will be passed in this research are by grouping scenes based on the similarity of signs or symbols conveyed, in some discussions one scene can be combined with other separate scenes because they have similar topics of discussion or similar signs, this collection of scenes will then be interpreted using the semiotic theory of Rothschild Barthes to see what the filmmaker is trying to represent.

According to Hall, representation is the process of producing a meaning by using language and exchanged between group members in a culture [13]. In the process, the construction of meaning involves 2 important components, namely concepts in the mind (meaning) and language (language), language in this case has a broader meaning, namely a system of signs both verbal and nonverbal including visual [14]. In the process of producing meaning, Hall emphasizes that the people involved in the process must be in the same cultural background or share the same knowledge so that they can create an understanding that is almost the same or the same, because the meaning of something can be very different in different knowledge or cultural backgrounds [15].

In this research, there is a concept in mind (meaning) conveyed by the filmmaker using visual language (language) in the film. Because of the interest to convey the concept in mind, every visual component in the film is certainly designed to convey these concepts, in this film series Toyota needs to portray the characters in the film who are users of Toyota Yaris products as a representation of a certain social class as part of the affiliated product to consumer strategy,



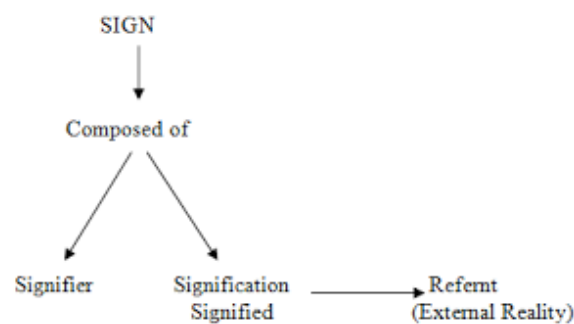
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so this research will try to see the visual language displayed, and see its relationship with the social class that is trying to be represented. The stage of reading language to find the concept in the head (meaning) that is trying to be conveyed, in this research model is commonly called the decoding process [16].

Meanwhile, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is used to dissect the symbols that appear in this film series, these symbols when associated with Stewart Hall's construction of representation thinking are referred to as Language (language) which is exchanged with the concept of thought (meaning) by the community to get the meaning of representation [17].

Semiotics itself is the science used to interpret a sign, where language is also an arrangement of signs that have certain messages from society. Barthes is known as the successor of Saussure's thought, which divides the relationship between signifier and signified based on a convention called significance [18].



**Figure 1** Ferdinand Saussure's stages of signification

Finally, modern semiotics has evolved to apply to other linguistic concepts beyond written language. In this case, the use of this method in audio-visual research can be done by placing visual objects as language or text." [21] Semiotics has also developed into not only a branch of science that is oriented towards the method of study (decoding) but also as a method of creation (encoding), so every visual object that appears can be studied from two sides using this method [22].

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before entering into the discussion of film series, it is necessary to know in advance that the use of film series as a medium of advertising is a new thing in the world of advertising, and specifically for advertising automotive products this is the first time Toyota has done this through this film series. The series movie format, which has an average duration of more than 5 minutes, is considered ineffective in conveying messages [23]. But as explained in the

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previous explanation, there are different interests that are trying to be achieved by using this advertising medium, where in conventional advertising the information conveyed is the basic characteristics of the product, while in advertising with the affiliated product to consumer marketing method, there is an attachment that is trying to be built between the product and the consumer, where a product is described as representing the characteristics of its users [24]. In this series of movie format advertisements, there is a social class that is trying to be represented in the movie, to show the attachment between the social class and the Toyota Yaris product.

Research that looks at class representation in an advertisement has been conducted previously by Pardede Trinata in 2019 who looked at the representation of modern lifestyles in Gojek Indonesia's advertisement version of Life Without Limits That's What, the study found that the advertisement describes gojek as a product that can eliminate many limitations in life and representations of certain social classes as their efforts to persuade these social classes to use gojek products [25]. Research that makes advertisements in a series film format has also been conducted previously by Febri Dwi Atmojo, Silviana Purwanti, and Annisa Wahyuni Arsyad in a study entitled Representation Analysis in the Film "Sore Wife From the Future" in 2019, the study looked at how a healthy lifestyle is represented in a series film to advertise Tropicana Slim Stevia artificial sweetener products which are claimed to be healthier than conventional sweeteners [26]. The things that distinguish this research from previous research include the factor of Toyota Yaris products that do not have strong basic characteristics that distinguish this product from competing products as explained in the previous discussion, this factor makes Toyota have to reach a new market that is trying to be created one of them by using the medium of this film series, representation in the previous two studies was used to attract a pre-existing market, while in this advertisement Toyota tries to represent a new social class to attract the social class to become Toyota Yaris users by associating the group with Toyota Yaris products in the film series or commonly referred to as the Toyota Yaris product.

As explained earlier, the ultimate goal of this research is to find the visual representations that Toyota is trying to convey in this film series to represent their products. These visual representations are explored from the messages conveyed through signs or symbols in the form of visuals.

### 1. SPBU/PETROL STATION SCENE

In this scene, it is depicted that the characters Satrio and Ayu are traveling and stop at a gas station to refuel. Analysis of this scene can be seen in the Table 3.1.

### 2. SHIPYARD SCENE

In this scene, the characters Satrio and Ayu stop at a shipyard, Satrio appears to walk up to one of the workers there who then appears to be talking, while Ayu sits in the car. In the last



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scene one of the workers appears to give a file which Satrio then reads and signs. Analysis of this scene can be seen in Table 3.2.

### 3. WILDLIFE PARK SCENE

In this scene, it is depicted that the character Satrio accompanies the character Ayu, who works as a veterinarian, to work to examine several animals in a wildlife park. Analysis of this scene can be seen in Table 3.3.



### 4. DROWNING AND SWIMMING SCENE

Telling 3 separate scenes with similar discussions related to Satrio's ability to swim, in the first scene Satrio is depicted drowning and is helped by Ayu. In the second scene Satrio is depicted learning to swim. In the third scene Satrio who can swim is described as helping a child who is drowning, SEE Table 3.4.

### 5. HEARTBREAK AND FALLING IN LOVE SCENE

The story depicts Satrio previously ending his relationship with Ayu. After time goes by, Satrio realizes his mistake and hopes to get back together with Ayu, but Ayu already has another partner. The next scene depicts Satrio trying to start a new relationship with a woman he met at the swimming pool, see Table 3.5.

**Table 3.1**

Time code	Sign	Lateral signification		Cultural signification	
		Signified	Signifier	Signified	Signifier
Eps.1 Scene 3 (00.02.18-00.00.20)  Scene 3 (00.00.28-00.00.29)	  	Pertamax fuel usage on Toyota Yaris	Satrio uses fuel with a research octane number of RON 95.	Pertamax fuel usage on Toyota Yaris	Satrio chose a higher grade of fuel, namely Pertamax (RON 95) compared to pertalite which is commonly used in LCGC vehicles (RON 90).
				<b>Connotative Sign</b>	
				Pertamax (in 2018) is considered a fuel for the middle class and above.	
	<b>Representation</b>	Represents Yaris users who come from the middle to upper class.			

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## 6. TOYOTA YARIS SCENE

There are at least 3 scenes that capture Toyota Yaris near other cars. All three scenes have something in common: First, the color of the car near the Toyota Yaris is always neutral, either black, white, or a derivative of both. Second, the car near the Toyota Yaris is an older model, which is the first generation Toyota Innova (produced between 2004-2015), see Table 3.6.

## CONCLUSION

From the results of the discussion above, it can be concluded that the representation of the Young and Affluent Driver group is conveyed through the depiction of characters, time setting, place setting, storyline, to the properties used, all of which are intended to describe the character of young and affluent drivers, which are obtained at least 2 main characteristics, namely related to social status, and depiction of the nature of the drivers.

Related to social status, Satrio as the main character in this film series is described as coming from the upper middle class, it can be seen from the depiction in the gas station scene where in the scene Satrio uses pertamax fuel which in his time was described as fuel for the upper middle class. Satrio's figure is also described as a shipyard entrepreneur where socially, entrepreneurs are considered to have high social status in Indonesia, this is also supported by the depiction of Ayu's character as Satrio's partner who works as a veterinarian who is also considered a profession with high social status.


In the depiction of nature, the figure of Satrio is still described as a young man who often makes mistakes but always tries to get up and move forward. the depiction of nature in this series of films can be seen in the drowning scene where Satrio is described as having almost drowned, but in the next scene Satrio is described as learning to swim and even being able to help a child who is almost drowning, this series of scenes illustrates the character of young people who continue to learn from past mistakes. In another scene, Satrio is also depicted trying to improve his relationship that has ended with Ayu, but at the same time it turns out that Ayu already has a partner, the next scene actually depicts Satrio trying to start another relationship, which shows the character of young people who do not drag on in failure and dare to start to move on. apart from the series of scenes, the young and energetic character is also depicted by the selection of car colors used by Toyota in advertising, in this series of films Satrio is depicted using a car with a citrus green color that represents the values of novelty and youthful spirit.

From the study above, it is found that the main character Satrio, with all the attributes attached to him, represents young people with middle to upper socio-economic levels. This character is also described as a character who has made the wrong decision, but still moves forward, continues to learn and correct mistakes, a typical character of the younger generation who is a representation of the young and affluent driver group.




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**Table 3.2**

Time code	Sign	Lateral signification		Cultural signification	
		Signified	Signifier	Signified	Signifier
Eps.1 Scene 5 (00.03.09-00.03.11)  Scene 5 (00.03.10-00.03.12)		Satrio came to the shipyard and confronted the head of production who showed respect.	Satrio is respected in the shipyard and is the owner of the business.	Satrio came to the shipyard and confronted the head of production who showed respect.	Satrio is a shipyard business owner who shows his social status
				<b>Connotative Sign</b>	
				The white helmet indicates a high position in the production hierarchy (usually used by the head of production). The respectful attitude of the head of production towards satrio shows his high status as a business owner, as well as signifying satrio's social status.	
<b>Representation</b>		Representing Yaris users from middle to upper social class.			

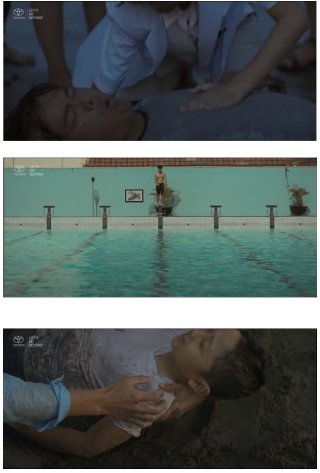
**Table 3.3**

Time code	Sign	Lateral signification		Cultural signification	
		Signified	Signifier	Signified	Signifier
Eps 2 Scene 3 (00.05.32-00.05.36)  Scene 8 (00.10.37-00.10.39)		Satrio accompanies Ayu to work as a veterinarian	Satrio is Ayu's partner and Ayu works as a Veterinarian.	Satrio accompanies Ayu to work as a veterinarian	Ayu as Satrio's partner works as a veterinarian which is considered an honorable job.
				<b>Connotative Sign</b>	
				Satrio's partner comes from the upper-middle social class as his job is considered honorable in Indonesia.	
<b>Representation</b>		Representing Yaris users as a young couple from middle to upper social class			




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**Table 3.4**

Time code	Sign	Lateral signification		Kultural signification		
		Signified	Signifier	Signified	Signifier	
Eps 3 Scene 6 (00.10.42-00.10.44)  Eps. 4 Scene 5 (00.04.44-00.04.48)		Scene one, ayu helps Satrio who is drowning because he can't swim Scene two, Satrio learns to swim. Scene three Satrio helps a drowning child after learning to swim	Satrio initially drowned because he could not swim. Then Satrio learns to swim and is able to help a child.	Scene one, ayu helps Satrio who is drowning because he can't swim Scene two, Satrio learns to swim. Scene three Satrio helps a drowning child after learning to swim	Satrio is portrayed as willing to learn from his mistakes and improve himself.	
				<b>Konotatif Sign</b>		
				Describes Satrio's character as a young man who continues to grow, willing to learn and correct mistakes.		
	<b>Representation</b>	represents the character of young people who continue to learn and grow.				


**Table 3.5**

Time code	Sign	Lateral signification		Kultural signification		
		Signified	Signifier	Signified	Signifier	
Eps 4 Scene 7 (00.07.40 - 00.07.44)  Eps. 4 Scene 8 (00.10.13 - 00.10.15)		First Scene Satrio invites Ayu to mend the relationship, Ayu's new partner comes to them Second Scene Satrio meets a new woman at the swimming pool	Satrio was unable to return to Ayu, and Satrio started a new relationship with someone else.	First Scene Satrio invites Ayu to mend the relationship, Ayu's new partner comes to them Second Scene Satrio meets a new woman at the swimming pool	Satrio is described as a figure who wants to start something new and leave the past behind.	
				<b>Konotatif Sign</b>		
				Describes Satrio as a figure who can move forward and not be dissolved by the past.		
	<b>Representation</b>	Representing the character of Yaris users who continue to move forward				



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**Table 3.6**

Time code	Sign	Lateral signification		Kultural signification	
		Signified	Signifier	Signified	Signifier
Eps 2 Scene 2 (00.05.20 - 00.05.21)  Eps. 3 Scene 2 (00.02.10 - 00.02.11)  Eps. 4 Scene 9 (00.10.15 - 00.10.16)		First scene, in the night time setting, Toyota Yaris is in a car park with a silver Toyota Innova. Second Scene, Toyota Yaris is on an uphill road near a black Toyota Innova. Third Scene, there are 2 Toyota Yaris which between them there are 4 silver Toyota Innovas, and Black	The citrus green Toyota Yaris is close to the neutral-colored Toyota Innova, in both day and night time settings, and in both running and parked conditions	First scene, in the night time setting, Toyota Yaris is in a car park with a silver Toyota Innova. Second Scene, Toyota Yaris is on an uphill road near a black Toyota Innova. Third Scene, there are 2 Toyota Yaris which between them there are 4 silver Toyota Innovas, and Black	The citrus green color on Toyota Yaris is a color with a high saturation level or bright, symbolizing a young and fresh impression. Green also symbolizes harmony with the environment .
	<b>Connotative Sign</b>				
				The citrus green color depicts a youthful spirit, and a new spirit	
<b>Representation</b>		Representation of the youthful spirit full of new spirit			

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