

## Representation of Luxury Lifestyle in Property Billboard Advertisements: A Critical Analysis

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### Abstract

In the world of property marketing, advertising serves as the main tool to attract the attention of potential buyers. Advertisements not only offer products, but also promote the lifestyle attached to these products. This research aims to explore how the representation of luxury lifestyles in property advertisements can influence audience perceptions and aspirations, as well as how advertisements reflect and shape social reality in society. This is a qualitative research. The data in this study are verbal and visual aspects contained in outdoor billboard advertisements with the type of property advertisement. The results of this study indicate that the representation of a luxurious lifestyle in property advertisements is realized through verbal aspects and visual aspects. Based on the structure of property advertisements, the visual components include: (1) lead, (2) display, and (3) emblem. Meanwhile, the verbal or linguistic components include: (1) announcement, (2) reinforcement, (3) emblem, (4) tag, and (5) contact and visit information. property billboards function not just as advertisements but as representations of an aspirational lifestyle, inviting viewers to imagine themselves as part of this exclusive world.

**Keywords:** *representation, luxury lifetyle, advertisement, discourse analysis*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid urbanization in Indonesia has led to an increased presence of billboard advertisements, particularly those promoting luxurious residential properties. These billboards, strategically placed in urban areas, aim to attract middle and upper-class consumers by portraying an aspirational lifestyle filled with prestige, exclusivity, and sophistication. The construction of luxury in these ads is not merely about selling properties but about selling a lifestyle that reflects and reinforces social status. This phenomenon reflects the broader socio-economic shifts in Indonesian society, where the middle class is growing, and the demand for luxury living is on the rise (Tambunan, 2019). However, this trend also raises critical questions about how luxury is defined, perceived, and consumed in contemporary Indonesia, particularly in the public spaces dominated by these advertisements (Nugroho, 2020).

Despite the proliferation of research on luxury branding and advertising in various media formats, the study of outdoor advertising, especially billboards, remains underexplored. Existing literature has largely focused on the effectiveness of billboard advertising in general terms, without delving deeply into how luxury, particularly in the property sector, is represented in these advertisements (Susanto & Widyaningsih, 2021). Billboards, as a form of outdoor advertising, present unique challenges and opportunities due to their static, public, and unavoidable nature, which requires them to convey messages quickly and effectively. The gap in research lies in the lack of focused studies examining the semiotic and socio-cultural dimensions of how luxury is constructed and communicated through billboard property advertisements. This research gap highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the role billboards play in shaping perceptions of luxury and lifestyle in urban Indonesian society (Yulianto, 2022).

Exploring the representation of luxurious lifestyles in billboard property advertisements is essential for several reasons. Firstly, it provides insights into how luxury is constructed and communicated in the public sphere, reflecting and potentially reinforcing social hierarchies and cultural values (Hidayat & Sulistyningtyas, 2020). This study also addresses the critical issue of inclusivity in urban spaces, as the presence of luxury-themed billboards can create feelings of alienation for those unable to participate in the promoted consumer culture. Furthermore, this research offers valuable information for marketers and advertisers, particularly in the highly competitive Indonesian property market, where understanding consumer aspirations is key to effective advertising. By analyzing the content and strategies used in these advertisements, this research can inform better marketing practices and contribute to a more inclusive approach to urban planning and advertising (Gunawan, 2020).

Ultimately, the research aims to fill the gap in the existing literature on luxury branding and outdoor advertising by offering a detailed semiotic analysis of billboard property advertisements. This study seeks to advance the discourse on luxury, urbanization, and public space in Indonesia by providing a deeper understanding of how luxury is constructed, perceived, and consumed in the urban environment (Rahayu & Widodo, 2022). By doing so, it not only contributes to academic knowledge but also offers practical insights for stakeholders in the property and advertising industries. This research ultimately aims to provide a foundation for future studies on the intersection of media, culture, and society in Indonesia, highlighting the importance of considering the socio-cultural context in which luxury is produced and consumed.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Research on representation in advertisements reveals persistent gender stereotypes and racial biases. Women are often portrayed in traditional roles or sexualized, while men are depicted as dominant (Kataria & Pandey, 2014; Kumar &

Sreedharan, 2023). Critical discourse analysis of advertisements across various media platforms demonstrates how these representations reinforce social inequalities and power dynamics (Shaikh et al., 2015). The portrayal of racial and ethnic minorities in advertising has evolved over time, but problematic stereotypes and underrepresentation persist (Davis, 2020). Studies have examined advertisements from different time periods, industries, and global contexts, highlighting the need for more inclusive and diverse representations (Davis, 2020; Kumar & Sreedharan, 2023). While some progress has been made, particularly in digital advertising, there is still a significant need for improvement in how various demographics are portrayed in advertisements to promote equality and challenge societal biases (Davis, 2020; Kataria & Pandey, 2014).

Lifestyle representation in advertisements has been a focus of recent research. Studies have examined how ads portray healthy lifestyles (Widyasari & Wirawanda, 2022), construct gender identities (Fayardi, 2017), and shape urban lifestyles (Liyana et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced lifestyle advertising, with shifts in messaging from e-socialization and working from home during the pandemic to themes of overcoming the crisis post-pandemic (KROM & TAM, 2022). Advertisements often employ semiotic techniques, using language and visual elements to convey lifestyle messages (Liyana et al., 2021). These ads not only promote products but also present idealized lifestyles that consumers are encouraged to emulate (Fayardi, 2017). The representation of lifestyles in advertisements can have significant impacts on consumer behavior and societal norms, influencing how people perceive and adopt various lifestyle choices.

Luxury advertising employs various strategies to represent lifestyle and evoke sensations. Lifestyle advertisements often use aesthetic features like depth of field, color, and light to enhance sensory responses, creating an a historical nostalgia (Flueckiger, 2009). While luxury brands predominantly use lifestyle advertisements, functional advertisements can be more effective in certain purchase stages, particularly when consumers are deciding which product to buy (Ma et al., 2023). Luxury advertisements create a symbolic aura around products, representing status and wealth through visual elements (Mortelmans, 1997). However, these advertisements can also evoke feelings of social exclusion, especially in Chinese consumers. Exposure to luxury ads can increase perceptions of rejection, expectations of being rejected in social interactions, and decrease life satisfaction, particularly for individuals with high rejection sensitivity (Jiang et al., 2014). These findings highlight the complex psychological effects of luxury advertising on consumers.

### **Representation: Theo van Leeuwen's Framework**

Theo van Leeuwen's framework for critical discourse analysis focuses on the representation of social actors and actions in texts (van Leeuwen, 2008). This approach has been applied to various contexts, including ELT textbooks (Rashidi & Hosseini,

2019; Torres, 2015) and newspaper articles (Sapdiani et al., 2019). The framework examines discursive features such as inclusion, exclusion, genericization, and categorization to reveal underlying ideologies and cultural biases (Rashidi & Ghaedsharafi, 2015). It also considers transformations of social actions, like objectivation and deagentialization (van Leeuwen, 2008). Studies have found that ELT textbooks can vary in their cultural impartiality and representation of social actors (Rashidi & Ghaedsharafi, 2015; Torres, 2015). The framework's utility extends beyond textual analysis to visual semiotics, allowing for critical examination of images in educational materials (Torres, 2015). Overall, van Leeuwen's approach provides a valuable tool for uncovering embedded meanings and power dynamics in diverse forms of discourse.

Theo van Leeuwen's framework for analyzing representation, especially in the context of media and advertisements, is rooted in his theory of social semiotics (Leeuwen, 2004). Theo van Leeuwen's framework for analyzing representation is centered on several key aspects. First, Social Actors are identified, where the analysis focuses on who the people or entities represented in the visual or verbal text are. These actors can be individuals, groups, or even abstract entities, and the analysis looks at the roles they play within the representation. This involves understanding the functions these actors fulfill, such as their social roles and how they are portrayed. Next, the framework examines Processes and Actions by analyzing what actions are depicted and how the social actors interact with each other. This includes looking at both material processes, which involve physical actions, and mental or relational processes, which reflect thoughts, perceptions, or social relationships.

The Settings aspect of the analysis considers the location and time within which the representation takes place. This involves exploring the physical and social contexts, as well as the temporal setting—whether the events are set in the past, present, or future—and how this affects the overall interpretation of the representation. Visual and Verbal Interaction is another crucial element, where the focus is on how visual elements are arranged within the representation. This includes analyzing the layout, color schemes, and spatial arrangements that contribute to the message. Additionally, the interaction between text and visuals is examined to understand how they complement or contrast with each other to create meaning. Finally, the analysis looks at Ideology and Meaning by exploring the ideologies or values conveyed through the representation. This involves understanding how the representation reflects or perpetuates certain beliefs, values, or power dynamics, and how meanings are constructed through the combination of visual and verbal elements to create a specific perspective or message.

### **3. METHOD**

This research on representation in property billboard advertising will utilize a qualitative research design, grounded in Theo van Leeuwen's social semiotics approach

(Leeuwen, 2004). The study will focus on analyzing how lifestyle and ideologies are represented in property advertisements, with an emphasis on both visual and verbal elements. Data collection will involve purposive sampling to select billboard advertisements from various urban locations, specifically targeting those that promote residential complexes, commercial buildings, and luxury estates to ensure a diverse representation of the property market. High-resolution photographs of selected billboards will serve as the primary data source, capturing all visual elements, text, and relevant contextual surroundings. The collection process will include field visits to document the billboards using a Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) camera, alongside detailed notes on the billboard's location, size, and display duration.

The analysis will begin with identifying the social actors represented in the advertisements, examining the individuals, groups, or entities depicted and their roles within the ad. This will be followed by analyzing the processes and actions depicted, including material processes like physical activities and relational or mental processes that suggest social relationships or aspirational thoughts. The settings of the advertisements will be analyzed in terms of location and temporal context, exploring the physical environment and any implied time frame, such as modernity or tradition. The interaction between visual and verbal elements will be closely examined to understand how the billboard's message is constructed, focusing on layout, color schemes, spatial arrangements, and the relationship between text and visuals. Finally, the research will explore the underlying ideologies and values conveyed through the advertisements, analyzing how these ads reflect or perpetuate beliefs about luxury, exclusivity, modern living, or social status, and how these meanings are constructed through the combination of visual and verbal elements.

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### 4.1 Verbal and Visual Aspect in Property Billboard Advertising



Figure 4.1



Figure 4.2

The billboard advertisement for Figure 4.1 "Kuantan Regency Kwarasan" effectively combines verbal and visual elements to create a compelling message. The name "Kuantan Regency" is prominently displayed in large, bold yellow letters at the top of the billboard, immediately drawing attention to the property development. Below it, the location "Kwarasan" is indicated in white, providing specific information about where the property is situated. The address "Jl. Kabupaten, Sleman, Yk." is included to give potential buyers the exact location, while the contact numbers are presented in large, readable font for easy communication. Additionally, a yellow directional arrow labeled "Lokasi" points viewers towards the property's location, emphasizing convenience.

Visually, the billboard features a gradient background that transitions from dark blue to lighter shades, suggesting a clear, open sky, which conveys a sense of calm and tranquility. The central imagery showcases modern two-story homes with cars parked in front, offering a preview of the upscale, suburban lifestyle the property promises. A family of three, smiling and standing in front of the homes, is depicted in the foreground, highlighting the family-friendly, secure, and happy living environment that the development aims to provide. The logo and name of the developer, "Merapi Arista Graha," are placed at the top of the billboard, lending credibility to the project. The overall design is clean and organized, with contrasting colors ensuring that the text is easily readable, even from a distance, making the billboard both informative and visually appealing.

The billboard advertisement figure 4.2 prominently features both verbal and visual elements that effectively communicate a message of comfort and luxury. The main text "PULANG," meaning "come home" in Indonesian, is displayed in large capital letters, evoking a sense of warmth and tranquility associated with returning to a familiar and comfortable place. The phrase "ke UTTARA" is written in smaller letters beneath it, indicating the specific destination—Uttara, which is likely the name of a serviced residence being advertised. Below this, the phrase "[A SERVICED RESIDENCE]" further emphasizes that Uttara offers not just a place to stay but a residence with added services, creating an image of luxury and convenience.

Visually, the billboard employs a dark background, likely in black or deep blue, which exudes elegance and exclusivity while making the text stand out. The word "PULANG" is crafted in a warm brown or gold color with a wood-like texture, adding a natural and inviting feel that aligns with the theme of coming home. The typography for "PULANG" is rounded and soft, conveying a welcoming atmosphere, while "ke UTTARA" is rendered in a modern, geometric font, suggesting a contemporary and urban lifestyle. The phrase "A SERVICED RESIDENCE" is presented in a simple, formal font, reinforcing the idea of professional, high-quality service. The composition directs the viewer's attention to the central message of "PULANG," with supporting

information placed in a smaller, less dominant position, ensuring a clear visual hierarchy. Overall, the billboard effectively combines these elements to convey the comfort and luxury associated with living at Uttara.

#### 4.2 Structure of Property Advertisement Discourse

The discourse structure of outdoor advertising is built through a combination of verbal and visual aspects that complement each other in conveying messages. Verbal aspects include texts, slogans, and sentences used in advertisements to convey information explicitly. Meanwhile, visual aspects include graphic elements such as colors, images, layouts, and typography that are used to attract attention and reinforce the message conveyed verbally. In its arrangement, this discourse structure is designed with the aim of highlighting the main message of the advertisement in the most effective way. Verbal elements are usually carefully selected to maximize their impact, using strong and direct words or phrases. On the other hand, visual elements are designed to captivate the audience's attention, create emotional appeal, and facilitate quick understanding of the message.

In addition, the discourse structure of the advertisement also reflects the social and cultural identity of its target audience. The use of language, images, and symbols relevant to a particular social group not only aims to attract attention, but also to establish an emotional connection and affiliation with the audience. By incorporating elements relevant to the social and cultural identity of the audience, advertisements can be more effective in creating a sense of community, identification, and loyalty to the advertised brand or product. Based on the discourse structure theory by Hassan and Yuen (2004), the structure of print advertisements is divided into two main components: visual and verbal. The visual components include: (1) lead, (2) display, and (3) emblem. Meanwhile, the verbal or linguistic components include: (1) announcement, (2) reinforcement, (3) emblem, (4) tag, and (5) contact and visit information. In Yuen's study, the visual component is referred to as non-verbal elements in this research. The term "non-verbal" is chosen with the assumption that non-verbal is broader than visual. Below are the details of each of these structures.



Figure 4.3 Struktur Wacana Iklan

In the property advertisement data presented in Figure 4.3, the lead character is a young woman with fair skin and long, flowing hair. She is dressed in a gray t-shirt and is carrying a black bag. The model is smiling broadly, with her gaze directed at the camera. Positioned in the lower left corner, this female lead stands out in the advertisement. Additionally, the display features a luxurious two-story house, illuminated with bright lights. Figure 4.3 also displays the logo of the company overseeing Barsa City as an emblem within the advertisement, which is located at the top center of the ad. The first structural analysis for the verbal aspect is the "announcement." This is represented by the word "APARTMENT," which indicates the type of property being advertised. The emblem in the verbal aspect is marked by the product's name. Figure 4.3 shows that the emblem is linguistically realized through the property name, "Barsa City." Furthermore, the position of the "enhancer" in the verbal aspect of the property advertisement is expressed through explanations linking nonverbal and verbal elements. The enhancer includes promotional offers and facilities available upon purchasing the product. In this case, the enhancer refers to the visualization of the luxurious multi-story house and the verbal aspect, "Apartment". The data indicates that the tag used is the text "Urban Millennial Living." This tag suggests that the advertised property is targeted towards urban millennials. Additionally, visit information is provided in the form of a website address for online visits and a phone number for direct contact. According to Gunther Kress & Leeuwen, (2001) theory on discourse structure in advertisements, this analysis reveals that the advertisement uses a multimodal design approach, where text and images work harmoniously to convey a cohesive and engaging message.

#### 4.3 Analyzing Representation in Property Billboard Advertising

Analyzing representation in property billboard advertising involves examining how these ads construct and convey meanings related to lifestyle, social status, and consumer identity. The representation often reflects broader societal values and ideologies, particularly those associated with wealth, luxury, and modern living. Property billboards typically represent social actors who embody aspirational qualities. These actors might be depicted as affluent individuals or families enjoying a luxurious lifestyle within the advertised property. The portrayal often includes well-dressed individuals, suggesting a high social status. The absence of certain groups can also be telling, as it may imply exclusivity or target a specific demographic. Social actor in property advertisement as follow.

Tabel 4.1: Social Actor

Figure	Identification	Representation Social Actor		Category and Nominalization
		Inclusion	Exclusion	
1	• Family (father,	The Happy Family is	No	other happy, ideal



	mother, and child)	shown explicitly	family representation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modern House as the setting</li> </ul>		
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text that engages the audience</li> </ul>	that the People who have an emotional connection or aspiration to live in a place of comfort and luxury	- -

In property billboard advertisements, the family is often depicted as a central social actor, embodying the ideal of happiness, harmony, and success. This representation taps into the audience's aspirations for a perfect family life, reflecting widely accepted societal values. The visual portrayal typically shows a family enjoying life within the housing estate, engaged in activities that signify comfort, security, and togetherness, such as spending time in a well-maintained garden, enjoying leisure activities, or simply relaxing in a beautifully furnished home. These images are carefully crafted to convey the message that owning a property in the advertised estate will lead to a fulfilling and prosperous life. The family's happiness and harmony in the advertisement are not just about the physical space, but about what that space symbolizes—stability, love, and achievement. This representation resonates with the audience's desires, reinforcing the notion that purchasing a home in such a community is a step toward realizing their own ideal family life.

The actions depicted in property billboards are usually related to leisure, comfort, and success. For example, visuals may show people relaxing in spacious, well-designed interiors, or engaging in activities like swimming, dining, or socializing in luxurious settings. These actions emphasize the comfort and prestige associated with living in the advertised property. Mental processes are also suggested, where the billboard invites viewers to imagine themselves in these desirable scenarios, thus appealing to their aspirations and desires. Action and process in advertisement are shown in following table.

Tabel 4.2: Process and Action

Figure	Actions	Processes	Transivity
1	The family is depicted in front of the house, smiling (showing happiness and peace)	Material: The family appears to be enjoying life at home. Relational: Modern homes signify social status and prosperity	Families as active agents who enjoy a harmonious home and living space.
2	The use of the word "Pulang" signifies the act of returning or heading to a place of comfort and	Relational: UTTARA is linked to the idea of home as a place of	There is a deep emotional connection between the audience

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safety, which is usually safety and comfort. and the place.  
associated with home.

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The combination of text and images work together to grab the audience's attention and provide the information needed to make a buying decision. Salience and framing ensure that the important elements of the ad (family, house, name of the estate) are clearly visible and memorable to the audience.

Table 4.3 Composition

Figure	Salience	Framing
1	Lead (visualization of happy family) Announcement (Kuantan Regency)	The family is at the center, showing them as the main focus. Text and logos are placed around the main image to support the core message.
2	Lead (the word "PULANG" written in large size)	Text as the main focus

The settings in property billboards are often idealized, showing beautifully landscaped environments, modern architecture, and serene surroundings. These settings are carefully curated to evoke a sense of peace, security, and exclusivity. The temporal setting is usually aligned with contemporary or futuristic lifestyles, emphasizing the property as a symbol of modernity and progress.

Table 4.4 Setting

Figure	Description	Meaning
1	A modern house with a neat garden and a car in the garage.	It signifies luxury, comfort and a successful life.
2	The background is text and logos with no visual images of the property itself.	The use of the words "PULANG" and "Serviced Residence" creates a sense that UTTARA offers more than just a place to stay, but also services that make its residents feel at home.

This setting creates an aspiration for the audience to have a similar lifestyle. The setting depicted in property billboard advertisements is meticulously designed to evoke an aspirational lifestyle that resonates with the audience's desires and dreams. By showcasing idyllic scenes—such as a beautifully landscaped garden, a modern, luxurious home, and a content family engaging in leisure activities—the advertisement creates a vision of an ideal life that potential buyers are encouraged to envision for themselves. This carefully curated setting not only highlights the features of the property but also taps into broader aspirations for success, comfort, and fulfillment. The visual portrayal of this aspirational lifestyle suggests that by purchasing the property,

the audience can achieve a similar level of happiness and status, making the ad's offer more compelling and desirable. This aspirational quality drives the emotional appeal of the advertisement, motivating the audience to imagine themselves living that ideal life and prompting them to take steps toward making it a reality.

### **Visual and Verbal Interaction**

The interaction between visual and verbal elements on property billboards is crucial in constructing the overall message. Visually, the layout is designed to highlight the property's most attractive features, using high-quality images, strategic lighting, and appealing color schemes. Verbal elements, such as slogans or key phrases, are often concise and impactful, reinforcing the visuals. Phrases like "luxury living," "exclusive community," or "modern comfort" are common, directly linking the property to desirable lifestyle attributes.

### **Ideology underlying Property Advertisement**

The representation in property billboards often conveys ideologies related to consumerism, wealth, and social mobility. By associating property ownership with success, happiness, and prestige, these advertisements promote the idea that purchasing such a property is a pathway to a better life. This not only reflects but also perpetuates societal values that equate material possessions with personal and social worth. The meanings constructed through these billboards are intended to resonate with the aspirations of the target audience, reinforcing the idea that living in such a property is not just a purchase but an investment in a desired lifestyle and social identity. The ad emphasizes family values, luxury, and comfort, creating aspirations for the audience to achieve that lifestyle. The modern home setting and strategic location reinforce the message that this housing estate is a wise choice for families seeking a better quality of life.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The analysis of property billboard advertising reveals that these advertisements are carefully crafted to convey messages related to lifestyle, social status, and consumer identity. Through both visual and verbal elements, these billboards emphasize themes of luxury, comfort, and modern living, targeting aspirational qualities and appealing to the desires of affluent individuals or families. The use of imagery, such as happy families and modern homes, along with strategic textual elements like catchy slogans, creates a strong emotional connection with the audience. The representation on these billboards often excludes certain groups, thereby implying exclusivity and targeting specific demographics. Actions depicted in the visuals are typically associated with leisure and success, reinforcing the idea of an idealized lifestyle that the advertised property offers. The interaction between visual and verbal elements is crucial, with each complementing

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the other to strengthen the overall message of luxury and desirability. The settings are often depicted as peaceful, secure, and exclusive, further enhancing the property's appeal. Overall, property billboards function not just as advertisements but as representations of an aspirational lifestyle, inviting viewers to imagine themselves as part of this exclusive world.

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