

Semiotics Analysis of Balinese Culture in Wonderful Indonesia Advertisements

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Abstract

Social media, especially Instagram, plays a crucial role in digital tourism promotion by serving as a medium for cultural expression. Through visual and textual content, these platforms play a crucial role in influencing audience perceptions of cultural values, especially in tourism campaigns such as Wonderful Indonesia. This study examined the use of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory of icon, index, and symbol in analyzing Balinese cultural representations featured in the Wonderful Indonesia Instagram advertisements. The study aims to identify sign types and the sign meaning. Using a qualitative descriptive method, five cultural themes Kuningan Day, Kecak Dance, Legong Dance, Melukat, and the Pelebon Ceremony were analyzed through textual and visual content from posts published between 2023 and 2024. The findings revealed that a total of 62 signs were identified, consisting of approximately 32 symbolic signs, 17 indexical signs, and 15 iconic signs. Symbolic signs appear consistently, reflecting their role in conveying Balinese values, rituals, and spirituality. Indexical signs refer to direct cultural elements, while iconic signs represent visual resemblance. Then focused on the sign meanings in each cultural element to gain a deeper understanding of the values, rituals, and spiritual significance conveyed through the advertisements.

INTRODUCTION

Semiotics, as defined by Charles Sanders Peirce, is the study of signs, symbols, and their meanings within various communication systems. Peirce's Semiotic Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding signification, representation, reference, and meaning (Peirce, 1931). In this framework, signs are categorized into three essential elements: the signifier, which denotes the physical manifestation of the sign (such as a word, image, or gesture); the signified, which refers to the concept or meaning conveyed by the sign; and the interpretant, which represents how the audience understands and interprets the sign. Peirce's semiotics framework is known as the triadic model.

According to Eco (1986), the model consists of three interconnected elements. The first is the representamen, which refers to the form that the sign takes. While it is often understood as a material entity, it does not necessarily have to be physical and is commonly known as the "sign vehicle." The second element is the interpretant, which is not the interpreter but rather the meaning or sense that emerges from the sign within a specific context. Lastly, the object represents the entity or concept to which the sign refers. Often

called the "referent," the object exists independently of the sign itself. Furthermore, semiotics serves as a multidisciplinary approach, intersecting with fields such as literature, anthropology, linguistics, media studies, and philosophy, thus demonstrating its wide-ranging applicability in analyzing the complex systems of human communication.

Communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, and emotions between individuals or groups through various means, such as spoken or written language, gestures, or symbols. It serves as the foundation of human interaction, enabling shared understanding and collaboration (Elebute, 2023). Communication, as a process of exchanging information and meaning, has undergone significant evolution in the digital era, particularly through online platforms. Online communication is characterized by the use of abbreviations, emoticons, memes, and other forms of linguistic innovation, which serve to convey meaning efficiently and foster a sense of belonging within online communities (Gregory, 2015). These elements reflect a shift in how language functions in digital advertising, adapting to the rapid pace and unique cultural dynamics of digital interaction.

According to Bollen (1989), the term advertisement originates from the Latin word *advertere*, which means "to inform someone of something," "to bring to attention," or "to direct focus toward something." Over time, numerous scholars have provided different definitions of advertisement, emphasizing various aspects depending on their perspective and purpose. Bollen, (1989) further characterize advertisement as "a paid, non-personal form of communication disseminated through mass media by businesses, non-profit organizations, and individuals, who are identified in the message and seek to inform or persuade a targeted audience."

Instagram is one of the social media platforms used to promote various cultural products and experiences, including the rich cultural heritage of Bali. Wonderful Indonesia, the official tourism account, plays a significant role in showcasing Bali's distinct traditions through visually engaging content that highlights rituals, arts, and landscapes. Bali was selected as the cultural focus of this campaign due to its internationally recognized cultural wealth, positioning it as a prominent symbol of Indonesia's identity. The official Instagram account @wonderfulindonesia, administered by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, records approximately 1.53 million followers as of August 2025, with this data confirmed by analytic platforms such as Social Blade and HypeAuditor. Analytical reports further indicate that each post generates an average of 2,345–3,944 interactions, producing an engagement rate of about 0.15–0.51%, a level consistent with the performance of large-scale institutional accounts.

Balinese culture is a unique blend of Hinduism and indigenous spiritual practices deeply rooted in the concept of *Tri Hita Karana*. This concept emphasizes the balance and harmony among humans (*Pawongan*), nature (*Palemahan*), and divinity (*Parahyangan*). According to Wiana, 2004), this principle reflects three inseparable relationships human to human, human to nature, and human to God that shape Balinese life and values. These interconnected bonds form the basis of spiritual identity, social cohesion, and ecological balance within Balinese society. The philosophy is expressed through rituals, arts, and daily practices, allowing traditions to endure despite modern influences. With its rich cultural heritage and global reputation as a major tourist destination, Bali becomes an ideal representation of Indonesia's cultural identity in promotional campaigns.

The selection of Bali aligns with Peirce's Semiotic Theory by providing a clear framework for interpreting cultural symbols in the advertisement. According to Peirce's triadic model, the representamen (the visual and auditory elements presented in the advertisement) includes traditional Balinese dances, temple ceremonies, and natural landscapes. The interpretant refers to the meaning these symbols convey to the audience,

such as spirituality, exoticism, and cultural authenticity. This aligns with Pennington (2010) application of Peirce's triadic semiotic model in heritage tourism marketing, where interpretants emerge as audience responses to the symbolic representations used in promotional materials.

There are many previous studies that have analyzed symbols through semiotic analysis. Here are some studies related to this study. The first study, conducted by Syahdini (2019), titled *Semiotic Analysis of L'Oréal Paris Advertisement*, analyzed the connotations in three L'Oréal Paris advertisements from 2013, 2014, and 2018 used Roland Barthes' semiotic theory which categorized signs into three types: visual imagery, spoken language, and body language, revealing how these advertisements reflect societal beauty standards in France. The second study conducted by Moldez and Gomez (2022), titled *Looking at the Bigger Picture: A Semiotic Analysis of Online News Photographs*, examined how online news photographs rely on language and visual literacy applied the semiotic theories of Saussure (1959) and Barthes (1977), the study analyzed fifteen online news photographs, exploring how the semiotic elements in these images influence students' perceptions of societal issues. The third study by Sihombing and Lestari (2022), *Revealing the Philosophy of Starbucks Logo: Semiotic Analysis*, employed Stuart Hall's representation theory to explore the cultural and philosophical values embedded in the Starbucks logo, showing how a brand symbol can convey broader meanings about kindness and social responsibility.

However, studies on the use of symbols through semiotic theories have been conducted by many researchers, and most of the studies have focused on analyzing symbols and logos in traditional media. There is a lack of studies discussing how cultural symbols and signs are integrated into digital media, particularly in tourism campaigns. After analyzing the Wonderful Indonesia Instagram posts, which emphasize Balinese culture through a variety of elements, such as traditional rituals and landscapes, it was found that cultural symbols are used to communicate the island's heritage and values to a global audience. With the lack of studies on how these symbols convey deeper meanings, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how semiotic elements in digital advertisements influence cultural perceptions and contribute to Indonesia's tourism branding strategy.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to examine Balinese cultural representations in the Wonderful Indonesia Instagram advertisements. The qualitative approach was chosen to allow a deeper understanding of visual and textual materials and the cultural meanings embedded within them (Fraenkel et al., 1993; Chandler, 2002). The primary data were obtained through an interview with Putu Agus Yudiantara, A.Par., M.Par., Head of the Arts Division at the Bali Provincial Office of Culture, providing in-depth insights into the symbolic meanings of Balinese cultural elements such as *Kuningan* Day, *Kecak* Dance, *Legong* Dance, *Melukat*, and *Pelebon*. The interview was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to support the interpretation of cultural signs, complementing the secondary data collected from Instagram posts.

Secondary data were gathered using a document-based approach, focusing on the visual and textual content including images, videos, and captions of selected posts published between 2023 and 2024 on the official Wonderful Indonesia Instagram account. The posts highlight key Balinese cultural events, rituals, dances, and ceremonies. Data collection involved systematically observing, transcribing, and cataloging significant signs using a detailed observation checklist. Each visual and textual element was then analyzed

through Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework, classifying signs into icons, indexes, and symbols, and interpreting their representamen, object, and interpretant. The triangulation of primary and secondary sources ensured a comprehensive understanding of the cultural meanings conveyed in the advertisements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

According to Peirce (1931) semiotic theory, signs can be categorized into three types: icon, index, and symbol. Icons represent signs that visually resemble their objects, indexes indicate signs that are directly connected to real-life practices, and symbols convey deeper cultural and spiritual meanings. To explore the cultural representations in the Wonderful Indonesia Instagram advertisements, a semiotic analysis was conducted focusing on five Balinese cultural elements: *Kuningan* Day, *Kecak* Dance, *Legong* Dance, *Melukat*, and the *Pelebon* Ceremony. From the selected posts published between 2023 and 2024, a total of 62 signs were identified, comprising approximately 32 symbolic signs, 17 indexical signs, and 15 iconic signs.

Discussion

A. Types of Meaning

Peirce's semiotic theory classifies signs into icons, indexes, and symbols, operating through the triadic relation of representamen, object, and interpretant (Peirce, 1931–1958). In Wonderful Indonesia Instagram advertisements featuring Balinese culture, two to six signs were identified in each ad, showing how cultural narratives are embedded through continuous semiosis. The cultural elements analyzed include the *Kecak* dance, *Melukat* ritual, and *Pelebon* ceremony, which visually represent deeper layers of Balinese tradition.

1. First Sign: The Caption in the Post

Data 1: Kuningan Day

The first caption from Wonderful Indonesia emphasized the celebration of Kuningan Day:

"Today, Bali celebrates Kuningan Day, marking the end of the Galungan festival. Offerings and prayers fill the island as families honor their ancestors one last time. 🌸🌺 Kuningan is a day of gratitude, with yellow rice and flowers symbolizing blessings. Ancestors are believed to return to heaven, leaving behind peace and prosperity. 🙏🙏 With vibrant ceremonies and the graceful Rejang Dance, Kuningan Day is a beautiful finale to Bali's spiritual journey, blending tradition and heart. 🌺🌀"

The caption of Kuningan Day posted by Wonderful Indonesia demonstrates multiple layers of cultural meaning through symbolic, indexical, and iconic signs. There are 6 symbolic signs identified: "Kuningan Day" which denotes a sacred religious celebration, "yellow rice and flowers" symbolizing blessings and gratitude, and emojis such as 🌸 (floral offering/purity), 🌺 (sacred energy), 🙏 (prayer and devotion), and 🌀 (blessing and transcendence). In addition, 2 indexical signs are evident: "ancestors return to heaven" which indicates spiritual belief and ritual closure, and "offerings and prayers fill the island" that points to communal devotion. Meanwhile, 2 iconic signs are

represented through the “Rejang Dance,” reflecting sacred grace and tradition, and the 🎭 emoji, an icon of performance.

Data 2: Kecak Dance

The second caption from Wonderful Indonesia highlighted the Kecak Dance:

“Keh-Chak, Keh-Chak, Keh-Chak the hypnotic chant fills the air as the Kecak Dance begins. 🎭 🌅”

Beneath the setting sun, Rama battles dark forces to rescue Sita, guided by the mighty Hanuman. This ancient tale of love, courage, and the triumph of good over evil unfolds under the Bali sky. 🌅 🔥 A truly magical experience that will leave you in awe. 🙏 🌿”

The representation of Kecak Dance in the caption emphasizes both its ritual origins and its role as a performative retelling of the Ramayana. Within the text, 3 symbolic signs appeared: “Rama battles dark forces to rescue Sita,” which evokes the Ramayana epic through cultural and narrative codes; “Guided by the mighty Hanuman,” highlighting the symbolic strength and loyalty embodied by this mythological figure; and “The triumph of good over evil,” an abstract moral value that reflects universal ethics and spirituality. Meanwhile, 1 indexical sign is seen in “Keh-Chak, Keh-Chak, Keh-Chak,” where the repetitive chant directly points to the actual soundscape of the performance. Finally, 2 iconic signs are evident: “Beneath the setting sun,” which conveys vivid atmospheric imagery, and the emojis 🌅 🔥 that visually represent sunset and fire, anchoring the performance to both temporal and energetic dimensions.

Data 3: Legong Dance

The third caption from Wonderful Indonesia focused on the Legong Dance:

“There’s something magical about the Legong Dance the fluidity of the movements 🎭, the sparkle of the costumes ✨, and the deep connection to Balinese spirituality and history 🌿.”

Each step is a homage to the island’s artistic traditions 🎭, passed down through generations.

A beautiful glimpse into the soul of Bali’s vibrant culture 🌿 ☁️”.

The caption constructs several layers of meaning: 4 symbolic signs are present in “The Legong Dance,” which directly denotes the traditional performance itself; “Deep spiritual connection to Balinese heritage,” which underscores its sacred and ancestral role; “Every graceful motion honors the island’s time-honored art,” suggesting preservation of artistic legacy; and “A vivid reflection of Bali’s vibrant cultural soul,” where the dance is framed as a metaphorical expression of identity and creativity. Meanwhile, 2 indexical signs emerge through “The brilliance of its traditional costumes,” pointing to the richness of attire as markers of cultural identity, and “Handed down through generations,” which signals historical continuity and intergenerational transmission. In addition, 5 iconic signs reinforce the imagery, including “The elegance of its movements,” which mimics the graceful physical gestures, along with emojis 🎭 (dance movement), 🌿 (flower), 🎭 (performance mask), and ☁️ (cloud), all of which visually resemble concrete aspects of the performance. Furthermore, one additional indexical sign is conveyed by the emoji ✨, evoking sparkle and atmospheric brilliance, while 🌿 functions symbolically as a representation of nature (Talukdar, 2021).

Data 4: Melukat

The fourth caption from Wonderful Indonesia presented the Melukat ritual:

"Melukat is an ancient Balinese Hindu purification ritual"

"Melukat means 'to cleanse' in Sanskrit. It purifies the body, mind, and spirit"

"Holy water washes away impurities, leaving you refreshed and revitalized"

In the textual data of Melukat, there are three symbolic signs that emphasize its sacred and spiritual role. The first symbolic sign (1) appears in the statement "Melukat is an ancient Balinese Hindu purification ritual", which highlights its traditional and religious significance within Balinese Hindu culture. The second symbolic sign (2) is reflected in "Melukat means 'to cleanse' in Sanskrit. It purifies the body, mind, and spirit", conveying the etymological roots and the holistic purpose of cleansing both physically and spiritually. The third symbolic sign (3) is seen in the phrase "Holy water washes away impurities, leaving you refreshed and revitalized", which symbolizes the transformative power of water as a sacred medium of purification.

Data 5: Pelebon (Cremation Ceremony)

The fifth caption from Wonderful Indonesia depicted Pelebon, the royal cremation ceremony:

"In the heart of Bali, the sacred Pelebon cremation ceremony pays tribute to the late Tjokorda Bagus Santaka, son of the King of Ubud. ❤️ The purple buffalo takes the lead as a symbol of strength and renewal, followed by the majestic Naga Banda (dragon) and Waddhu (tower), guiding the soul on its sacred passage. 🌈. With solemn devotion, a Pedanda high priest pierces the dragon effigy's heart with an arrow, igniting months of meticulous craftsmanship into a sacred ritual rarely seen. 🙏

Amidst vibrant hues and profound traditions, thousands gather to honor life, spirit, and eternity a timeless ceremony found only in Bali. 🌺"

The caption constructs layered meanings: 6 symbolic signs are identified in the phrases "The royal cremation of Pelebon," which denotes the sacred status of this ceremony in royal Balinese culture; "A purple buffalo," symbolizing strength, transformation, and the soul's passage; "Naga Banda (dragon) and Waddhu (tower)," representing ritual vehicles that aid the journey of the deceased; and "Honor life and the spirit," which underscores respect for the soul's continuity beyond death. Symbolism is also evident in the emoji ❤️, reflecting purple love and sacred meaning, and 🙏, expressing prayer, reverence, and gratitude. 2 indexical signs are identified in "A Pedanda priest shoots an arrow into the dragon effigy," which indexes the ritual enactment of animating sacred figures, and 🌈, pointing to the natural rainbow as a divine transition. 1 iconic sign is identified in 🌺, which directly resembles the hibiscus flower often used in ritual offerings.

2. Second Sign: The Image

The first visual component of the Wonderful Indonesia post dated October 5, 2024, layered several semiotic dimensions relevant to the Kuningan Day celebration. Specifically, three indexical signs were identified: "Women in rows carrying offerings (gebogan)", which indicated an actual ceremonial procession; "A woman adjusting her headpiece," pointing to the ritual's preparation phase; and "Calm facial expressions of the performers," reflecting spiritual focus and inner peace. Meanwhile, one iconic sign emerged from "Hand gestures and traditional dance costumes," as these elements visually

resembled the Balinese dance form. Additionally, one symbolic sign was evident in “The headpiece made of leaves, flowers, and seeds,” which culturally signifies purity and offerings according to Balinese code.

The second visual component of the Wonderful Indonesia post dated November 8, 2024, illustrated several symbolic and indexical layers within the Kecak Dance performance. Specifically, three symbolic signs were identified: “Male dancer in red demonic costume (Rahwana)”, which represented the mythological villain from the Ramayana epic and symbolized the struggle between good and evil; “Two dancers in traditional attire (Rama and Sita)”, embodying sacred love and duty as central figures of Hindu mythology; and “The white monkey figure (Hanuman)”, symbolizing loyalty, strength, and divine assistance, all culturally coded in Balinese belief. Meanwhile, two indexical signs were also present: “Red hibiscus flowers on male dancers’ ears”, indicating ritual participation in ceremonial practice, and “Bare-chested male dancers sitting in a circle”, which indexed the actual Kecak ritual by signifying the collective chant that grounds the performance.

The third visual component of the Wonderful Indonesia post dated November 17, 2024, reflected the aesthetic and spiritual depth of the Legong Dance. Within this performance, several semiotic layers were observed. A symbolic sign appeared in the depiction of “Legong dancer in red costume with a waterfall backdrop”, representing the sacred elegance of Balinese dance, while simultaneously merging artistic beauty with the purity of nature. An iconic sign was embodied in “Two dancers in synchronized red-gold attire”, directly resembling communal harmony and the disciplined grace that defines traditional Balinese performances. Furthermore, a hybrid indexical-symbolic sign emerged in the image of “A dancer in golden attire under radiant sunlight”, which suggested a divine connection and embodied spiritual grace, highlighting the ritualistic essence of Balinese cultural expression.

The fourth visual components of the Wonderful Indonesia post dated May 17, 2024, reflected the spiritual and ritualistic essence of the Melukat purification ceremony. Within this ritual, several semiotic layers were observed. An indexical sign appeared in the depiction of “a woman praying with offerings”, pointing to the devotional and ceremonial aspects of the purification practice. Another indexical sign was observed in “a woman being cleansed by water”, which suggested the physical act of purification through holy water. Furthermore, an iconic sign emerged in the image of “a woman facing a flowing stream with offerings above her”, representing the concept of purification through a realistic portrayal of the ritual scene, combining both spiritual intention and tangible ritual action.

The fifth visual components of the Wonderful Indonesia post dated April 16, 2024, reflected the ceremonial and spiritual significance of the Pelebon (Ngaben) cremation ritual. Within this ritual, several semiotic layers were observed. An indexical sign appeared in the depiction of “a person offering incense to a large, decorated Barong-like figure”, pointing to the purification, prayer, and reverence for ancestral or divine spirits inherent in the ceremony. An iconic sign was embodied in the “Barong-like mythical creature statue”, representing spiritual protection and the cosmic balance central to Balinese Hinduism. A symbolic sign emerged in the image of “a large purple bull effigy on an ornate platform”, highlighting the bull as a vessel used to purify and release the spirit of the deceased. Furthermore, a hybrid indexical-symbolic sign was observed in “a group carrying a covered figure under an umbrella”, signifying a ceremonial tribute to the deceased, possibly a royal or respected elder, as they are carried toward cremation. Finally, an icon-symbol sign appeared in the depiction of “a tall cremation tower (bade) carried during a procession”, representing the transition from the physical world to the spiritual realm in the Ngaben ceremony.

B. Sign Meaning

In analyzing the Wonderful Indonesia advertisements, each visual and textual element is examined through the semiotic framework developed by Charles Sanders Peirce. This framework identifies meaning as a result of a triadic relationship among the representamen (the perceptible form of the sign), the object (the referent it points to), and the interpretant (the mental concept formed by the observer). Based on the interview with Putu Agus Yudiantara, Head of the Arts Division at the Bali Provincial Office of Culture (July 15, 2025), the analysis also revealed how each ritual, offering, and symbolic element reflected Balinese religious beliefs, communal values, and spiritual practices, providing a deeper understanding of the cultural narratives embedded in the advertisements.

a. Kuningan Day

The visual and textual elements of the Wonderful Indonesia post captured the spiritual and cultural essence of Kuningan Day, as explained by Putu Agus Yudiantara, A. Par., M. Par., derived from the Balinese word *uning*, meaning “to inform,” Kuningan functions as a sacred announcement, a day when Hindus express gratitude to ancestors, deities, and Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa for both material and spiritual blessings, following Galungan’s celebration of dharma’s triumph over adharma. Indexical signs appeared in women carrying tall *gebogan* offerings and in the performers’ serene expressions, indicating ceremonial procession and spiritual focus. Iconic signs were seen in hand gestures and traditional dance costumes of the Rejang Dance, visually embodying sacred beauty and devotion. Symbolic signs were present in headpieces, yellow rice, and flowers, representing purity, offerings, and prosperity, while emojis in captions 🌸, 🙏, 🌺, 🌼, 🌻 further reinforced offerings, prayer, harmony with nature, dance, and spiritual transcendence.

b. Kecak dance

The second Wonderful Indonesia post featuring the Kecak Dance highlighted rich spiritual, historical, and communal significance. Originating from an agrarian context, the dance began as an expression of gratitude for abundant harvests, with farmers chanting “keh-chak” in unison to symbolize social interaction, solidarity, and collective joy. Over time, the Ramayana narrative was incorporated, where Rama and Sita embody sacred love and moral virtue, Rahwana represents antagonism and chaos, and Hanuman symbolizes loyalty, courage, and divine service. Visual elements reinforce these meanings: the red Rahwana costume signals opposition and evil, Rama and Sita’s traditional attire reflects devotion and harmony, Hanuman conveys guidance, red hibiscus flowers mark ritual participation, and the bare-chested circular formation indexes the authentic communal chant at the heart of the performance. Captions and emojis, such as 🗡️, 🙏, further amplify the narrative, moral, and aesthetic dimensions.

c. Legong Dance

The third Wonderful Indonesia post depicted the Legong Dance as a display of Balinese artistic and spiritual elegance, as explained that created in the 1920s, the dance expressed grace, poise, and devotion through delicate hand gestures, expressive facial movements, and coordinated body postures. Elaborate costumes and headdresses symbolized sacred status and connected dancers to spiritual realms. A dancer in red against a waterfall backdrop highlighted sacred elegance, two dancers in red-gold attire reflected communal harmony, and a dancer in gold under sunlight suggested divine grace. Visual elements and symbols such as 🌺, 🌼, 🌻, and 🌸 enhanced the ritual’s aesthetic and

spiritual meaning. Overall, the dance conveyed the integration of Balinese art, cultural identity, and spiritual reverence.

d. Melukat

The Wonderful Indonesia post depicted Melukat as a serene Balinese purification ritual, aimed to cleanse body, mind, and spirit, using holy water from springs or fountains, accompanied by prayers from priests or pendande, while flowers and focused intention symbolized purity and devotion. Visuals showed a woman praying with offerings, highlighting the ritual and spiritual aspects, another being cleansed with water to signify tangible purification, and a third facing the water with offerings above, demonstrating the integration of action, sacred elements, and devotion. Through these signs, Melukat conveyed holistic cleansing, renewal, and spiritual connection, reflecting both the personal and cultural preservation of Balinese religious and ancestral traditions.

e. Pelebon (Cremation Ceremony)

The Wonderful Indonesia post depicted Pelebon as a sacred Balinese cremation ritual, as explained by Putu Agus Yudiantara, A. Par., M. Par. The ceremony celebrated life, death, and the soul's spiritual journey, using symbolic objects such as a large purple bull effigy, Barong-like statues, and the tall Waddhu cremation tower, which guided the spirit toward a higher realm and represented the return of the five elements earth, water, light, wind, and sky. Visuals showed a participant offering incense to the Barong-like figure, demonstrating devotion and respect, while a group carrying a covered figure under an umbrella highlighted social hierarchy and communal participation. These images, alongside the symbolic actions and ritual grandeur, conveyed the holistic essence of Pelebon, emphasizing spiritual liberation, reverence for ancestors, and the preservation of Balinese cultural and religious values.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the representations of Balinese cultural elements in the Wonderful Indonesia advertisements, specifically Kuningan Day, Kecak Dance, Legong Dance, Melukat, and the Pelebon Ceremony, using Peirce's (1931–1958) semiotic framework to discover how visual and textual signs convey cultural and spiritual meanings. From the five advertisements, a total of 62 signs were identified, comprising 32 symbols, 17 indexes, and 15 icons. The frequent presence of symbols indicates that spiritual and cultural meanings were emphasized, while indexes connected the audience to real practices, and icons depicted tangible cultural elements such as costumes, offerings, and ritual objects. Symbols, such as Rama and Sita in the Kecak Dance or the sacred cow in Pelebon, conveyed deeper spiritual and moral values, whereas indexes, like the chanting of "*keh-chak*" or the ritual use of water in Melukat, reflected actual Balinese practices. Icons provided direct visual recognition, such as the yellow rice cone in Kuningan Day or the Legong dancers' costumes.

Next, to explore the interpretive meanings embedded in the advertisements, the signs were analyzed for how they conveyed layered cultural narratives. Kuningan Day emphasized gratitude, purity, and communal devotion; the Kecak Dance illustrated ethical values, mythological narratives, and ritual energy; the Legong Dance highlighted aesthetic elegance, spiritual harmony, and cultural continuity; Melukat reflected purification, renewal, and devotional practice; while the Pelebon Ceremony symbolized spiritual transition, ancestral reverence, and cosmic balance. The combination of icons, indexes, and

symbols enabled the advertisements to communicate Balinese culture as both authentic and meaningful, with textual captions and visual imagery working together to guide the audience through multiple levels of interpretation. Overall, the study demonstrates that the semiotic construction of these advertisements effectively conveys the identity, spirituality, and cultural heritage of Bali to a global audience.

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