

## ROLAND BARTHES' SEMIOTICS REPRESENTATION IN THE LYRICS OF THE "TOGETHER TOWARDS A NEW NORMAL" CAMPAIGN ADVERTISEMENT

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### Abstract

The pandemic has not ended since January 23, 2020, when Singapore confirmed its first case related to Covid-19 and until now there are still positive cases reported. It can be said that with all the preparations for handling and further strategies in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, Singapore is ready to adapt to Covid as an endemic and no longer a pandemic. Vaccination is the first step to reducing the risk of infection and transmission of Covid-19. During the socialization process of the Singaporean central government regarding vaccines for its citizens, many negative issues arose regarding the impact after the vaccine was injected. The government ordered that the rumors circulating be corrected and also cooperate with influencers in discussing vaccines again and clearing misunderstandings about the negative issues of vaccines that have been circulating previously. The strategic step that is now attracting the attention of many citizens and the media is related to public service advertisements inviting Singaporeans to vaccinate. The ad is part of the "Igotmyshot" campaign, which is the Singapore government's official campaign to encourage citizens to get vaccinated so they can protect themselves and their loved ones as well as an effort to get back to normal socializing "a new normal life". Purpose: This study was conducted to determine the meaning of semiotics in the song lyrics of the "Together Towards a New Normal" Campaign. Methods: The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative and uses Ronald Barthes' Semiotics theory. Implications: The results of this study indicate that the song lyrics in the advertisement "Together Towards a New Normal" can be interpreted through three stages of Ronald Barthes' sign. Based on the meaning of the message, an invitation to comply with the government's recommendations in following the entire series of protocols of life in the new era is denotatively contained in the entire stanza.

**Keywords:** Covid-19 Vaccine Pandemic New Normal Singapore

### Introduction

It is undeniable that the pandemic has not ended since January 23, 2020, when Singapore confirmed its first case related to Covid-19 and until now there are still positive cases reported. Singapore is a country that has quality health services that are efficient and affordable. Singapore regularly conducts disaster drills; established The

National Center for Infectious Diseases (NCID) (Hennida, 2020). The Singapore government evaluates various ways so that active cases can be controlled and continue to be monitored by the central government. Efforts that have been made by the Singapore government in handling this case are by developing the Terrace Together application. The government requires citizens to download the application to facilitate the tracking of Covid-19 cases. The advantage of the Terrace Together application is that it can track the last contact each citizen had with a patient who was detected as positive. The Trace Together application was developed by a company in collaboration with the government, namely GovTech as a review of the COVID-19 pandemic. This free download application works by exchanging Bluetooth signals with nearby application users and storing data on people who have been infected (Grekin et al., 2019). The application can store data for approximately 21 days so that the government can monitor the activities of its citizens. Another supporting application that has been successfully developed by the Singaporean central government in dealing with this pandemic is PHPC (Public Health Preparedness Clinic). The use of applications like this of course helps in efforts to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus and assists the government in identifying every individual who has the possibility of contracting the virus. But on the other hand, many people have questions regarding the security guarantee for the data of application users managed by the government. We know that there is a risk of misuse of the system or the potential for hackers who have special abilities to obtain personal data (Pratama, E. B., Santoso, T., Millitcyano, D., Sapulette, S., Suryahadi, V., Nirmalasari, H., & Kurniawati, n.d.) The first problem can be described as malicious permissions, applications, or attackers who may continue to collect personal information and data such as location, name, home number, email address, and other data (Ahmed et al., 2020; Azad et al., 2020). The problem is that not all the data and information that has been collected is necessary for effective tracking and tracing. But as we already know that Singapore has strict data protection regulations, therefore it can be said that the security of personal data from every community can be ensured to be safe in the hands of the Singapore government (Loo, Thye, Law, & Law, 2021).

This PHPC application helps patients who have respiratory-related complaints or are infected with Covid-19 to consult online with respiratory specialists and provide SWAB services. The Singapore government has also implemented transparency in dealing with the pandemic in its country, which provides the SG Covid-19 website. The website contains various actual and transparent information from domestic and international stakeholders. Singapore is one of the countries that are very well prepared in dealing with this pandemic. This alertness is supported by Singapore's experience from previous outbreaks, therefore Singapore's health standards can be said to be of high quality, have a good network in all hospitals and health centers throughout Singapore, and also the formation of an immediate task force to deal with COVID-19 (Siregar & Hanifa, 2021).

It can be said that with all the preparations for handling and further strategies in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, Singapore is ready to adapt to Covid as the end is no longer a pandemic. Vaccination is the first step to reducing the risk of infection and transmission of Covid-19. Vaccines can be said to be effective in preventing serious symptoms in patients who have been infected with the Covid-19 virus. Prime minister Lee Hsien Loong became the first person to get a vaccine in Singapore as proof that the vaccine is safe to inject. The vaccination strategy carried out by Singapore began with 40 health workers who handled the majority of people with the Covid-19 virus. Vulnerable groups of people aged around 70 years are the recipients of the vaccine at a later stage. Then followed by elderly citizens aged 60-69 years later, at the same time the vaccine was injected into residents who work in sectors that are prone to contracting Covid.

Amid the socialization process of the Singaporean central government regarding the vaccine to its citizens, many negative issues arose regarding the impact after the vaccine was injected. The available vaccines are Moderna and Sinovac. Previously, one study in Singapore claimed that the Sinovac vaccine was less effective than other vaccines such as Pfizer and Moderna. This of course causes a decline in public confidence to vaccinate. The rumors circulating have succeeded in changing the public stigma that vaccines do not reduce the risk of being exposed to the Covid-19 virus. It did not stop there, information regarding the side effects of the vaccine was also exacerbated by the news circulating on social media that the Covid-19 vaccine could cause strokes and heart attacks.

Singapore's disaster management system is arguably one of the best. Singapore's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vivian Balakrishnan (2020) said that three mitigation measures were needed against the pandemic disaster: quality of health services, government legitimacy, and social capital. The same thing was also stated by Quah (2020) (Hennida, 2020) The central government of Singapore is trying to restore the confidence of its citizens in the following vaccination, the first step taken is a statement issued directly by the Ministry of Health of Singapore. The government ordered that the rumors circulating be corrected and also cooperate with influencers in discussing vaccines again and clearing misunderstandings about the negative issues of vaccines that have been circulating previously.

The strategic step that is now stealing the attention of many citizens and the media is related to public service advertisements inviting Singaporeans to vaccinate. The advertisement is part of the "Igotmyshot" campaign, the Singapore government's official campaign to encourage citizens to get vaccinated so they can protect themselves and their loved ones as well as an effort to get back to normal socializing with a new normal life. Residents who have been vaccinated, voluntarily provide reviews about the effects they feel after getting the vaccine and give reasons why they finally decided to follow the vaccination. Public service advertisements made by the Singapore government are packaged in an entertaining, interesting, and educational way, not forgetting to

consistently encourage local and international citizens to adhere to the protocol even though they have been vaccinated.

### **Research Method**

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The object of this qualitative research is to use the Singaporean public service advertisement video "Together, Towards a New Normal". Data collection will be carried out using content analysis techniques, researchers classify the meaning of each scene in the form of (text and images). The focus of the analysis will be on sentences of invitation or persuasion in participating in the Covid-19 vaccination. Semiotic analysis in this study will use the Roland Barthes model, where the research focuses on the idea of two-stage significance. The first stage of signification is the relationship between signifiers and signs related to science in studying signs of life signs that exist amid social society. Roland Barthes uses the term to indicate the level of meaning. This theory is the basis of the idea of two orders of signification, namely denotation, and connotation, the development of this theory of meaning is divided into three stages including:

#### 1. Denotation

Denotation refers to the relationship between the signifier and the sign which is oriented towards what is believed by common sense and the meaning of a sign.

#### 2. Connotation

Connotation is understood as the interaction that occurs when a sign meets the emotions of the signifier as well as the science of culture and ideology. It can be said that the difference between the two stages above is that connotation discusses how the process of taking an object is, while denotation is about what is depicted on the object.

#### 3. Myth

Myths identify how a culture explains and understands some aspects of reality or natural phenomena. Broadly speaking, it can be said that myth works on the second stage of signification (connotation) related to content (Pratiwi A., 2018).

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### **Results and Discussion**

The meaning of vaccination persuasion in the lyrics of the advertisement song "Together, Towards a New Normal", is a step in preparation for a new era or new normal. The analysis of the song uses Ronald Barthes' semiotic theory, namely, denotation, connotation, and myth so that it can be known more deeply about how the song can attract Singaporeans to participate in vaccination.

#### **A. The Meaning of Denotation and Connotation**

The lyrics of the commercial song "Together, Towards a New Normal" consist of 5 stanzas in the entire song lyrics. The author will analyze all of these verses which are

considered to have a strong enough persuasive message inviting citizens to participate in Covid-19 vaccination activities. Each stanza in the song is interrelated, it can be said that each verse has been carefully designed so that it becomes a strategy as the first step to living a new era of life.

Bait 1: Hey Singapore, a warm welcome aboard. There's no better place than our little red dot. Please give us your attention to this safety briefing. Cause we're going on a journey to a whole new beginning. We have 3 new strategies to get us safely there.

### **B. Analysis Denotation**

The first stanza describes that Singapore has re-opened its country tourism. Singapore informs both local and international citizens that certain things must be adhered to for the common good to start a new life. No country is better than Singapore, and Singapore is optimistic that its 3 strategies can keep citizens safe from the virus.

### **C. Analysis Connotation**

Singapore's confidence in facing a new era is a strategic step to rise from adversity after undergoing an uncertain situation for approximately one year that has had an impact on its economy. Currently, Singapore believes that there is no better country to serve as a tourist destination than Singapore. There's no better place than our little red dot, it can be interpreted that the red dot is a point on the map. Singapore is the right destination for a vacation destination.

Bait 2: *we're firing up our testing. To detect cases early. We're actively testing. So you don't have to worry. We've got different tests now, for our different needs.*

### **D. Analisis Denotation**

Singapore has a variety of covid checks for different needs. Starting from having an application that can make it easier for citizens to interact with medical personnel for consultation, follow-up actions (swab tests), and detecting anyone who has been exposed to the Covid virus and anyone who has had direct contact with patients. There is nothing to worry about because the government has been very nimble in anticipating the spread of this virus.

### **E. Analysis Connotation**

The facilities provided by the Singaporean government to its citizens to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus are various, the Covid-19 monitoring application and web that have been made transparently make it easier for all citizens to access these sites and applications. Likewise, the development of various Covid tests makes it easier for residents to get quick and accurate results. This is what the government does to make its citizens feel safe.

Bait 3: *You can even test at home now if you follow my lead. Grab a self-test kit, and remove it from the box. Slip the swab into your nose. Before you take off, remember your token. Stow it safely in your pocket. You'll be using it often.*

### **F. Analysis Denotation**

Singapore is optimistic that Covid-19 is no longer a pandemic but an endemic. Covid will be treated like a common cold virus, Singapore with its mature and structured technology and systems are much more prepared to face the new normal. The

central government is not tired of asking its citizens to cooperate in vaccination activities for the common good. Singapore will be reopened to the public, therefore all citizens must be disciplined against the policies that have been made by the government.

### **G. Analysis Connotation**

A new normal life after the Covid-19 pandemic which has been going on for approximately one year is a big challenge and also a tough decision for the Lion country. Requires various strategies to discipline its citizens to keep following government regulations, one of which is by using attractive advertising campaigns. To everyone in Singapore, thank you for flying your part, a thank you from the government to its citizens who have been willing to work together so far in complying with the prokes until following the vaccine.

### **H. The Meaning Of Myth**

In the first stanza, the meaning of the myth listed is about the tourism sector which is one of the sectors affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Singapore government took steps to improve tourism by developing a proposal for opening a tourism sector business by applying Safe Management Measures (SMM). Companies in the tourism business sector that have been certified (SG clean) have received approval to continue operations. The Marketing Partnership Program is also an effort to support marketing in developing the tourism sector, the program (MPP) was also launched in conjunction with the Singapore Stories Content Fund (SSCF) to create interesting content about Lion country. Not only that, tourists visiting Singapore are allowed to enter through :

1. Air Travel Pass
2. Connect@singapore (Connect@SG)
3. Reciprocal Green Lane (RGL/office and business visits)

Upon arrival in the Lion country, tourists must show arrival documents, run a PCR test and stay safe by contact tracing through the TraceTogether application.

The second stanza has the meaning of the myth about self-swab which was launched by the Singapore government starting June 16, 2021, this was done to speed up the transmission of the easing of the regional quarantine so that it can detect cases more quickly and be easily accessible by its citizens. This self-test swab tool also supports Singapore's tracing and testing strategy to the fullest. There are only four brands of antigen swab tests that the Singapore Ministry of Health recommends.

The meaning of the myth in verse three is that the tests carried out are valid for all Singaporeans, especially for individuals who feel they have been exposed to the Covid-19 virus without any symptoms. If the self-administered test shows a positive result then the next step is a swab that must be done at the local clinic. Individuals exposed to Covid-19 will need to link the token with the pre-uploaded TraceTogether app so the government can confirm additional cases.

The next myth in verse four is about how to register for a vaccine using only your cellphone. Residents who want to vaccinate against Covid-19 only need to fill out an online form by including their data, choosing a location, and the date to participate in

the vaccination. The benefits of vaccines are to encourage the formation of herd immunity, reduce mortality, prevent experiencing severe symptoms if exposed to Covid-19, and form group immunity. The vaccine used by Singapore is the Pfizer or Moderna type because the effectiveness of the two vaccines is relatively high.

The meaning of the myth of verse five about Singapore will consider Covid-19 as endemic. Endemic is a disease that can be cured with little treatment without any treatment from the hospital. The new normal life still has to be followed by health protocols and Singaporeans are expected to have thoroughly implemented every recommendation and policy that the government has announced.

### **Conclusion**

The lyrics to the campaign ad song "Together Towards a New Normal" can be interpreted through three stages of R. Barthes' sign. Based on the meaning of the message, an invitation to comply with the government's recommendations in following the entire series of protocols of life in the new era is denotatively contained in the entire stanza. Based on the connotative meaning in the lyrics of the song, the involvement of all levels of Singaporean society can accelerate the process of living in a new era because the facilities that the government has provided are very capable of handling and overcoming the Covid-19 virus. The meaning of the myth in the song "Together Towards a New Normal" contains a message stating that the efforts that the government has made are optimal and optimistic enough to start moving into a normal era by assuming the Covid-19 virus is not a pandemic but an endemic. From the findings obtained through the advertising campaign "Together Towards a New Normal" it is hoped that it can bring new studies to Communication Science research using R. Barthes' semiotic analysis. In further research, it is hoped that there will be research that analyzes other elements such as interpreting images in detail (scenes) and describing the effects of images (non-verbal communication) such as facial expressions, body gestures, and the dominant color that appears in each scene as a follow-up step from the study.

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