



Semiotic Analysis of Islamic Communication in The Film "Ajarkan Aku Aceh" for Tourism Promotion

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Abstract

This research analyzes the implementation of Islamic communication semiotics in the film "Ajarkan Aku Aceh" as a medium for promoting sharia-based tourism. Using a qualitative approach with Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, the research examines the construction of denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings in the visual representation of Aceh's tourism. The results show that the film successfully integrated Islamic values with destination promotion strategies by transforming visual elements into symbols of spirituality and community hospitality. The construction of the "Serambi Mekkah" mythology creates a unique selling proposition that distinguishes Aceh from other destinations. The film constructs a holistic tourism paradigm that emphasizes educational, spiritual, and cultural dimensions, creating sacred geography and emotional connections with the audience. The findings reveal the potential of film as an effective contextual preaching instrument in the digital era, contributing theoretically to the development of an Islamic communication model for tourism marketing based on religious values.

Keywords: Semiotics of Islamic communication, tourism promotion, da'wah films

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INTRODUCTION

The digital era and globalization have transformed film from merely an entertainment medium into a multidimensional and strategic mass communication instrument. (Agafonova et al., 2021) Film no longer merely presents visual narratives; it has evolved into a medium for articulating social constructs, representing cultural identities, and serving as an ideological communication medium capable of reaching audiences across geographical and background boundaries (Dwivedi et al., 2022). In the context of Islamic communication, film has opened up a space for cultural da'wah that is symbolic and narrative in nature, allowing the conveyance of religious values through a contextual approach relevant to the realities of contemporary audiences (Najmuddin & Tajibu, 2023). This transformation becomes significant in tourism promotion efforts, especially in areas with distinct religious and cultural identities like Aceh, where film has the potential to be an effective medium for communicating Islamic values while promoting religiously characterized tourist destinations. (Aqila & Rahmat, 2024)

Previous research on film as a medium for communication and tourism promotion has produced various relevant theoretical perspectives. Explain that the advantage of film in conveying messages visually and emotionally makes it a powerful medium for delivering Islamic values, especially in the form of narratives that are close to the realities of society (Afifah et al., 2024). This study provides a foundational understanding of the effectiveness of film as a medium for preaching, but it has not specifically examined the semiotic dimension in the context of promoting tourism based on Islamic law. Meanwhile, identify that films are capable of shaping collective perceptions and building destination images through experiential branding, which ultimately impacts the increase in tourist visit interest (Dias & Lavaredas, 2024). This research emphasizes the importance of film as a destination communication instrument, particularly in promoting regions with distinctive cultural identities.

In the perspective of digital communication, reveal that the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution demands religious leaders and preachers to understand the characteristics of a fully digital social life in disseminating the truth of Islam. (Rahmadi & Hamdan, 2023) This research identifies that the digital space has become an arena of contestation dominated by religious values that tend to be exclusive, thus requiring a more inclusive and contextual approach (Gesiradja et al., 2025). Complements this perspective by explaining that the digital era or multi-screen era creates opportunities for society to access information without time limits and become an integral part of global strategic issues, including tourism and cultural diversity (Kraus et al., 2022). The relevance of the semiotic approach in analyzing cultural representations rich in Islamic values, such as simplicity, togetherness, and social concern in the context of tourism. However, this research is still limited to theoretical analysis without implementation on concrete study objects (Siregar, 2022).

Although various studies have explored the relationship between film, Islamic communication, and tourism promotion, there is a significant gap in the academic literature that needs to be filled. First, there has been no comprehensive research that integrates the semiotic approach of Islamic communication with film analysis for Sharia-based tourism promotion. Previous studies tend to separate the study of film semiotics, Islamic communication, and tourism promotion strategies as distinct domains. Second, the geographical and cultural context of Aceh as a region with a unique implementation of Islamic law has not received adequate academic attention



in film and tourism studies. Third, Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, which combines denotation, connotation, and myth analysis, has not been systematically applied to unravel the complexity of meanings in films that contain Islamic values in the context of promoting tourist destinations.

The novelty of this research lies in the multidisciplinary integration of communication semiotics, Islamic studies, and tourism studies applied to specific and contextual objects of study. This research fills the gap by providing a comprehensive semiotic analysis framework to understand how Islamic symbols in films can function as instruments of da'wah communication as well as effective tourism promotion tools. The theoretical contribution offered is the development of a semiotic analysis model that can uncover layers of denotative, connotative, and mythic meanings in the visual representation of Islam, as well as how these meanings contribute to the formation of an attractive and religious tourism destination image. This research has multidimensional theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of communication semiotics by integrating Islamic perspectives into visual media analysis, while also contributing to the development of da'wah communication theory through the medium of film. The developed approach can serve as an analytical model for similar research in other regions with distinct religious and cultural characteristics. Practically, the results of this research can provide insights for tourism stakeholders, filmmakers, and da'wah practitioners on effective communication strategies in promoting tourist destinations based on religious values.

The film "Ajarkan Aku Aceh," produced by the Aceh Bergerak Community in 2019, was chosen as the subject of study due to its relevance to the phenomenon of tourism globalization, which relies on audiovisual narratives to create destination appeal. This film not only showcases the visual aspects of the tourist destination but also shapes the imagined geography and experiential branding of Aceh as a unique destination. With a duration of 53 minutes and a genre of education, drama, and comedy, this film presents a representation of Acehese culture rich in Islamic values through the story of two Malaysian tourists who undergo a transformation in their perception of Aceh post-2004 tsunami. The complexity of meaning in this film requires an analytical approach capable of unraveling the non-explicit symbolic structure. Roland Barthes' semiotics was chosen for its ability to analyze two levels of meaning - denotation as literal meaning and connotation as the ideological and cultural meaning inherent in the sign.

Moreover, Barthes' concept of myth allows for the analysis of how Islamic symbols such as hijabs, mosques, the call to prayer, and Islamic social practices are used to construct the myth of Aceh as an Islamic region worth visiting. This approach is relevant to uncover the ideology and image of Aceh that is intended to be formed through persuasive visual media in the context of sharia-based tourism promotion. This research aims to analyze how Islamic communication semiotics operates in promoting tourism aspects through the film "Ajarkan Aku Aceh," examining the delivery of Islamic information and the use of semiotics to uncover the deep meanings of symbols, messages, and values contained in the film, as well as analyzing the representation of Islamic identity in the film through the analysis of visual signs and symbols in the context of tourism promotion. Through this approach, the research is expected to contribute to the development of contextual and effective da'wah communication strategies in the digital era, while also providing a tourism promotion model that appreciates and utilizes religious identity as a strength in attracting destinations.



METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with content analysis and semiotic analysis methods to examine the film "Ajarkan Aku Aceh" in the context of tourism promotion. Content analysis was chosen as the main research technique due to its ability to make inferences about the specific characteristics of a message objectively, systematically, and generally. This approach allows researchers to analyze the representation of Acehese culture, Islamic communication values, and tourism promotion strategies contained in the film. (Gesiradja et al., 2025)

The subjects of the research include the film "Ajarkan Aku Aceh," produced by PT. Aceh Asia Multimedia through the Komunitas Aceh Bergerak, with a focus on scenes that showcase aspects of tourism and Islamic communication. The research instrument consists of a coding sheet designed based on categories of semiotic analysis and Islamic communication. Data collection techniques were carried out through film documentation from the YouTube platform, observation of visual and narrative elements, as well as analysis of dialogue and symbolism that appeared in the film (Afifah et al., 2024). The data analysis process uses six stages of Krippendorff, namely unitizing, sampling, recording/coding, reducing, inferring, and narrating. The validity of the research is ensured through construct validity, which assesses the alignment of theory and concepts with the measurement tools used in this study (Salam, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Description

This research analyzes the film "Ajarkan Aku Aceh," which is a cinematographic work by the Aceh Bergerak Community with a duration of 53 minutes. This educational genre film was produced by Amri, directed by Davi Abdullah, and written by Eva Hazmaini. This cinematographic work was launched on December 26, 2019, coinciding with the 15th anniversary of the Aceh tsunami. The film's narrative centers on two Malaysian teenagers, Ros and Ema, who embark on a sightseeing trip to Aceh. Ros suffers from psychological trauma related to the tsunami disaster, while Ema has previous experience with organizations involved in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of post-tsunami Aceh. Their journey is guided by Bang Praak as a local tour guide and Gam Pacok as a rickshaw driver with knowledge of disaster mitigation. The filming locations include the city of Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar, showcasing various tourist destinations such as beach panoramas, Mount Seulawah, the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, the Tsunami Museum, and various culinary and historical attractions. This film integrates disaster mitigation education aspects with the promotion of Aceh tourism.

Semiotic Analysis of Islamic Communication in Promoting Aspects of Tourism

Semiotic analysis using Roland Barthes' theory identifies three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and mythology in the representation of Aceh tourism.





Figure 1. Sunset Panorama of Pantai Cermin Lhok Nga

Denotatively, the visualization displays a beach view with a sunset and the text "Teach Me Aceh". The connotation shows the symbolism of the sea as a representation of tranquility, spiritual reflection, and the transition of life. The formed mythology is a narrative of Aceh as a tourist destination that not only offers natural beauty but also spiritual and cultural learning. Islamic communication is reflected through the concept of ayat-ayat kauniyah, which invites humans to contemplate the greatness of Allah through His creations.



Figure 2. Prayer Ritual at the Mass Grave

The visual representation shows Bang Praak performing a prayer ritual at the mass grave of tsunami victims alongside Ros and Ema. Denotation displays spiritual activities in an open space, while connotation presents the symbolism of healing collective trauma through a religious approach. The constructed Islamic communication is manifested through visual preaching without verbalization.



Figure 3. Exploration of the Tsunami Museum Corridor

The visualization shows three hijab-wearing women walking through the curved corridor of the Tsunami Museum in a dim atmosphere. The futuristic architecture of the museum serves as a medium of communication that conveys a message about the journey from darkness to



enlightenment. The connotation suggests the symbolism of a spiritual journey and deep introspection related to the tsunami tragedy. The mythology that has formed is a narrative of the museum as a contemplative space that combines educational functions, spirituality, and the preservation of collective memory. The integration of Islamic communication in promoting Aceh tourism is reflected through the application of values of hospitality, tolerance, and humanitarian solidarity. This film builds a tourism narrative that not only focuses on commercial aspects but also integrates educational, spiritual, and local cultural dimensions. Visual representation creates a model of emotional and spiritual tourism that invites visitors to experience transformative interactions with the history, culture, and religiosity of the Acehnese people. Analysis shows that the film "Ajarkan Aku Aceh" successfully constructs a unique identity for Aceh tourism by combining natural beauty, cultural richness, Islamic values, and lessons from past tragedies into a comprehensive and meaningful narrative.

The results show that the semiotic analysis of Islamic communication in the film "Teach Me Aceh" produced comprehensive findings regarding the construction of meaning in tourism promotion based on Islamic values. Data that has been processed through a descriptive qualitative approach identifies three levels of Roland Barthes' semiotic meaning manifested in the film's visual representation. Denotative findings show the visualization of physical elements of Aceh tourism, including natural panoramas, traditional architecture, and the socio-religious activities of the community. The analysis identifies the use of cultural symbols such as the Aceh-patterned cap, wooden accommodation architecture with white brick walls, and the representation of the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque as a spiritual landmark.



Figure 4. Bang Prak is Calming the Guests So They Don't Panic

Figure 4 shows the interaction between a local tour guide and a hijab-wearing female tourist at a coastal inn. Denotative findings show a visualization of a simple wooden inn with white brick walls in the coastal area. Connotatively, this representation communicates the values of hospitality and openness of the Acehnese people in welcoming tourists, reflecting the principle of ikram ad-dhuyuf in Islam. The mythological construction that emerges is the narrative of Aceh as a destination that is inherently Islamic and open to tourists, especially female tourists who wear the hijab. The Connotative Dimension reveals a construction of deep meaning that goes beyond literal representation. The findings show the transformation of visual elements into symbols of Islamic communication, such as the hospitality of the community represented through an open attitude in welcoming tourists and the manifestation of spirituality through collective prayer rituals.



Figure 5. Bang Prak is Calming the Guests So They Don't Panic

Figure 5 shows Bang Prak's expression of happiness with an Aceh-patterned cap in the vehicle. The denotative analysis identifies a man wearing an Aceh-patterned cap with a broad smile. The connotation shows the representation of the character of the Acehnese people as friendly, polite, and religious. The Aceh-patterned kopiah has become a symbol of local cultural identity that reflects pride in traditional heritage. The constructed mythology is a narrative about the Acehnese people as a community that is spiritually and geographically resilient. The Mythological Construction shows the formation of an ideological narrative about Aceh as a tourist destination that integrates spirituality, culture, and natural beauty. The findings reveal the myth of "Aceh as the Veranda of Mecca," which is constructed through the harmonization of Islamic values with local wisdom.



Figure 6. Bang Prak is Calming the Guests So They Don't Panic

Figure 6. displays the grandeur of the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque with a symmetrical reflection on the water's surface. The denotative representation shows the distinctive architecture with domes and tall minarets. Connotation evokes a sense of spiritual tranquility and the grandeur of Islam as the center of Aceh's community identity. The mythology that has formed is the image of Aceh as the "Veranda of Mecca," which upholds Islamic law and represents a devout Muslim community. Islamic communication analysis shows the implementation of da'wah principles through visual media without explicit verbalization, creating a holistic tourism paradigm that emphasizes spiritual, educational, and cultural aspects.

Discussion

Research findings on the implementation of Islamic communication semiotics in the film "Ajarkan Aku Aceh" for tourism promotion show the complexity of meaning construction that

transcends the dimension of conventional visual representation. The analysis results indicate that the film successfully integrates Roland Barthes' three levels of semiotic meaning denotation, connotation, and mythology in constructing a tourism narrative based on Islamic values. The construction of denotative meaning that presents the physical elements of Aceh tourism, such as natural panoramas, traditional architecture, and socio-religious activities, provides a strong visual foundation for the transformation of meaning at the connotative and mythological levels. The connotative dimension revealed in this study demonstrates the transformation of visual elements into profound symbols of Islamic communication. The representation of the hospitality of the Acehnese people through their openness in welcoming tourists, the manifestation of spirituality through collective prayer rituals, and the use of cultural symbols such as Aceh-patterned caps reflect the contextual principles of Islamic propagation. These findings confirm the proposition that emphasizes the superiority of film in conveying messages visually and emotionally as an effective means of communicating Islamic values.

The convergence of research findings with previous studies indicates a theoretical consistency regarding the effectiveness of visual media in transmitting religious values. The mythological construction manifested through the narrative "Aceh as the Veranda of Mecca" demonstrates the sophistication of communication strategies that integrate religious identity with tourism appeal. This mythology not only functions as an ideological construct but also as a destination differentiator that provides a competitive advantage in the global tourism industry. These findings align with the perspective of Khairuddin (2025), who identifies the ability of films to shape collective perceptions and build destination images through experiential branding. However, this research expands that understanding by revealing how Islamic values function as a unique selling proposition that cannot be replicated by other destinations. The analysis of Islamic communication in the context of tourism promotion yields significant findings regarding the implementation of da'wah principles through visual media without explicit verbalization. This approach creates a holistic tourism paradigm that emphasizes spiritual, educational, and cultural aspects. This phenomenon confirms the observation about the need to understand the characteristics of digital social life in disseminating the truth of Islam (Sahin, 2018).

This research demonstrates how the medium of film can serve as an effective da'wah instrument in the digital era, utilizing visual and narrative appeal to implicitly yet persuasively transmit Islamic values. The integration of spirituality with tourism promotion identified in this research presents a new paradigm in tourism marketing based on religious values. The findings show that the film "Ajarkan Aku Aceh" successfully created an emotional and spiritual tourism model that invites visitors to experience a transformative journey. This model contrasts with the conventional tourism promotion approach, which tends to focus solely on commercial aspects. A holistic approach that integrates educational, spiritual, and local cultural dimensions provides significant added value to the tourist experience while simultaneously strengthening the destination's identity. The visual representation that transforms public spaces into sacred spaces, as observed in the prayer ritual scene at the mass grave of tsunami victims, demonstrates the film's ability to construct sacred geography that enhances the spiritual appeal of the destination. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of ayat-ayat kauniyah in Islam, which invites humans to reflect on the greatness of Allah through His creation (Wahid, 2024).

This construction not only strengthens Aceh's religious identity but also creates a deep emotional connection between the audience and the destination. The theoretical contribution of this



research lies in the development of a semiotic analysis model that integrates Islamic perspectives in the study of visual media for tourism promotion. This model expands the conventional semiotic analysis framework by incorporating dimensions of spirituality and religious values as constructive elements in meaning formation. This development makes a significant contribution to the literature on Islamic communication and tourism studies, particularly in the context of sharia-based tourism. The practical implications of the research findings indicate the potential for implementing similar communication strategies for other tourist destinations with distinct religious and cultural characteristics. The communication model that integrates Islamic values with tourism promotion can serve as a template for the development of authentic and sustainable destination branding.

This approach not only provides competitive differentiation but also strengthens social cohesion and the cultural identity of the local community. The limitation of this research lies in the analysis focus being restricted to a specific study object, thus the generalization of the findings requires validation through comparative studies with similar films in other sharia-based tourist destinations. Subsequent research can explore the effectiveness of similar communication strategies in different geographical and cultural contexts, as well as examine the impact of this model's implementation on the quantitative increase in tourist visits. The development of instruments to measure the effectiveness of Islamic communication in tourism promotion is also a relevant research agenda for future exploration.

CONCLUSION

The semiotic investigation of Islamic communication in the film "Ajarkan Aku Aceh" reveals a multidimensional meaning construction that integrates Barthes' three levels of signification in sharia-based tourism promotion. The findings demonstrate the transformation of visual elements into contextual da'wah instruments that create a holistic tourism paradigm. The denotative representation of natural panoramas and traditional architecture transforms into connotative symbolism of spirituality and community hospitality, culminating in the mythology of "Serambi Mekkah" as the unique selling proposition of the destination. The film successfully constructs sacred geography through the integration of Islamic values with experiential branding, creating an emotional connection that strengthens Aceh's religious identity as a transformative destination that emphasizes educational, spiritual, and cultural dimensions within the paradigm of contemporary tourism.

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