

# NARRATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF VIRAL VIDEO AD VOLVO 'EPIC OF SPLIT'

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**Abstract:** Advertising is one of the sectors targeted in the promotion of creative industries by the Indonesian government in this era. This condition creates a greater competition in the advertising world that demands all advertising practitioners to innovate and be more creative in order to survive. This qualitative study investigates a narrative discourse analysis of viral video ads Volvo 'the Epic of Split' which won various international awards, one of them was at the Cannes Lions Festival in 2014 for Creative Effectiveness category. This study analyzes the narrative discourse of the ads and the meaning of its visual relationship as a component of copywriting in advertising discourse, in addition to describe the denotative and connotative meanings in it. Theoretically, this study can enrich the understanding of narrative discourse concerning viral video ads, particularly for Volvo products. In the field of Visual Communication Design, the research also can be a reference for solving problems in creative process such as copywriting, creative writing and semiotics. The method used is descriptive qualitative data using codification, presenting it with the matrix and concluding the data.

*Keywords: discourse analysis, semiotic, copywriting, viral video ads.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Print and digital media, as a sign of the rise of the communication industry is seen as one of the effective method for spreading information and publications. Most of industrial product or even an ideology will be infamous and appreciated in the absence of the role of these media. Seeing this phenomenon, the industry players compete with each other to attract the attention of potential consumers, and politicians also disseminate their propaganda to gain public support.

Activities to promote the products or specific services deploy a social or political message is referred to as advertising (Danesi: 2011). These messages can be seen everywhere: in the medium of billboards, newspapers, magazines, public transport, or by using the radio facility, television and internet. Therefore, with the proliferation of the advertising industry, the competition is getting tougher in positioning and creating the image of a product or service through a variety of media.

One of the medium used in the advertising industry is a viral video advertising which is becoming more popular over the Internet in the 21st century. Viral marketing can be displayed in the form of video clips, interactive games, e-books, or pictures. This is considered not only cheaper in production costs than TV Commercial (TVC) but also more effective to use because of its extensive coverage and segmentation. Similarly, viral marketing in the form of video clips can reinforce your message specifically for the purpose of the product/brand awareness. In the form of audio-visual, emotional response from prospective customers can be created through a blend of images, sound, motion, color, and drama (Moriarty, et.al:2011).

The elements of viral video ads must be made through a creative process to gain phenomenal results, in order to increase consumer awareness of the products offered and boost sales. The creative process is done by an advertising agency and involves creative team consisted of creative director, copywriters, editors, graphic designers, artists and web developers. The creative process

carried out in depth— searching for advertising concepts, preparing scripts and words, and the creating visual ads. -- will produce effective advertising even receive awards in various advertising competitions.

Ads that won the Creative Effectiveness category in the international competition the Cannes Lions Festival 2014 is Volvo Trucks/Live Test Series (The Epic Split). ForsmanBodenfors and Folke Film as ads agencies involved the actor Jean-Claude Van Damme (JCVD), a legend who is famous for his martial arts as well as his flexible perfect split. From interviews conducted by fxguide (2013), the creative team Folke Film stated that the video clip was made to demonstrate the stability and accuracy of Volvo Dynamic System as the latest innovation designed for Volvo FM, Volvo FH and Volvo FMX truck.

In the creative process of making the ads, Engström (copywriter) found that Volvo Trucks appeared to have emotional value and a clear market segment in Europe and America, with users such as the truck drivers who also had a big influence on the family and their friends (2014). Moreover, according to Rauwald and Schmidt (2012), quoted by the Wall Street Journal, truck drivers can choose the companies where they will work, one of the considerations they make is the convenience and safety of vehicle they will use. This has been one of the cornerstones why writing of text/copy sale of Volvo Trucks is done with the approach of the soft-sell that is usually made with the concept of an intelligent, insightful and emotionally engaging of consumers in a language/meaning figuratively, so that the impact of such ads to changes in consumer attitudes of brand awareness often affects longer than the hard sell advertising.

This study aimed to analyze the narrative discourse of Volvo Truck ads that use the technique of visual story telling with a blend of the Volvo brand image. This ads has been accessed by 101.6 million people in the early months of its release. Urgency study of discourse in Advertising is vital as it has a goal to persuade and change public attitudes towards the products or services offered. Therefore we find a lot of ads use the language which is associated with the word, sentence, or phrase both oral communicative and writing. This discourse analysis is expected to provide an overview of copywriting strategies (the creative process) in advertising which won several awards, it also can be one of the references to the field of Advertising and Discourse Analysis (study of discourse), which is a branch of applied linguistics.

Issues that will be examined in this study are denotative and connotative in the viral video ads Volvo ' The Epic of Split ' and how the narrative discourse works in the viral video ads Volvo ' The Epic of Split '. Theoretically, it is hoped the research on the analysis of the narrative discourse in Viral Video Ads. Volvo ' The Epic of Split ' can increase understanding of narrative discourse concerning viral video ads, especially the Volvo product, develop knowledge, especially in the realm of visual communication design at the application of the communication on advertising as part of the art and art in general, increase understanding through discourse advertisements interpretation contained through discourse and semiotic theory. In practical terms, it is hoped the research on this narrative discourse analysis in Viral Video Ads. Volvo ' The Epic of Split ' can be developed in finding a way to design an effective and attractive advertising to the target audience and serve as a guide in designing copywriting through a discourse analysis in this study .The purpose of this study was to examine how denotative and connotative in the viral video ads . Volvo ' The Epic of Split ' and examine the narrative discourse in the viral video ads Volvo ' The Epic of Split '.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

An effective advertisement according to Moriarty and friends (2011) is the one with compact, focus, specific, personal, single, conversational, original, varied, and descriptive imaginative text. These text principles are required in any kinds of advertising media.

*TV commercial (TVC) or viral video ads* is a medium which is considered very effective to convey a message in the advertising discourse, and narrative text such as storytelling which reveals a story (Mulyana: 2005) is considered the most interesting advertising strategy. Compared to hard sell commercial, a story telling can give clearer illustration relating to the story and the consumer insight. With the collaboration of visual and narration, the message is able to touch (*soft sell*) so that the message becomes more impressive.

Narrative text usually uses concise description, started with the opening paragraph, content, and ended with the closing paragraph (Mulyana: 2015). Apart from that, a narrative text also has certain components such as them, plot, characters, setting, conflict (*internal conflict*) and external (*external conflict*), and resolution (Wegert: 2013). These components make an advertisement with *storytelling* method becomes more interesting and having values.

This discourse study relates to the studies of body language, the forms of arts, artefacts, gestures or signs, eye contact, clothes, advertising, food, ceremonies, or everything which has been used, created, adopted by humans to produce meaning. These have been discussed in *Semeiotics* (Semiotics) since the 20th century (Danesi: 2011).

Roland Barthes (1915- 1980), a French semiotician has described the Semiotics study excellence in exploring the hidden meaning structure inside a spectacles including advertisements (Danesi: 2011).as a successor of Ferdinand de Saussure, a semiotician who was well-known for the concepts of *signifier* and *signified*, Barthes defines Semiotics in two study aspects—denotative and connotative. Denotative is a real meaning or basic description, a phenomenon that is visible to the senses. Meanwhile, connotation is cultural meanings that appears or can be mentioned as a meaning which is formed from cultural reconstruction, causing a shift but remains to attach the signs or symbols. Danesi (2011) states that “range” of a word can vary, but the basic characteristics do not.

Many preliminary research have been conducted before in analysis of print media and audio visual. A research entitled *Language of Advertising* in England (1966) was carried out by Geoffrey N. Leech disseminated the basic theory to explore language in advertisements. Torben Vestergaard and Kim Schoder (1985) used the same title to observe the *language features* and the function of advertising communication. Then in 1989, Courtland L. Bovee and William F. Arens made a research entitled *Contemporary Advertising*. The research findings are the characteristics of contemporary advertising and the advertising effect as a form of communication. In the 21st century, the advertising research is expanding, therefore an academic text book entitled *Analysis of Advertising Text* written by Profesor Huang Guowen contributes a great impact to the advertising world in China. In Indonesia, an advertising research has been done by Yoana Julita Sumasari (2014) in *Jurnal Pena* Vol. 4, No. 1, entitled *Analisis Wacana Iklan Kosmetik di Media Televisi*. The analysis result stated that the aspect of persuasive language used in cosmetic TV commercials was formed from repetition of words, and sentences, and ear-catching vocabulary.

From these previous research, it can be concluded that the analysis can be developed to make and strengthen advertising theories through the study of advertising language used. This research entitled *Narrative Discourse Analysis of Viral Video Ad Volvo 'The Epic of Split'* can enrich the findings in discourse and semiotics studies in order to observe the visual meaning and the language used in the viral ad.

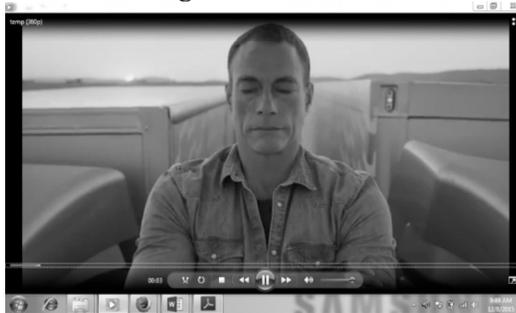
### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative method. According to Djajasudarma (2006), descriptive research is a research that describes, creates pictures, depicts the data, as well as the properties of the phenomena studied in a systematic, factual and accurate way. Qualitative research is a research that uses methods to explore and understand the meaning in social or humanitarian problems (Creswell: 2010). So we can conclude that qualitative research is descriptive research that depicts, describes or depicts a social phenomenon systematically to gain a deep understanding. The researcher would use this approach to study of narrative discourse ads by reviewing its components such as theme, plot, character, setting, conflict and resolution (Wegert:2013), as well as a semiotic approach to analyzing the visualization of advertising that will be studied .

Referring to an article in a journal Arts Education written by Kasiyan (2015), triangulation theory (theoretical triangulation) can be used as a data collection technique. In this study, the research method used library research or studied the literature to obtain the theoretical foundation, factual information or expert opinion as a scientific basis to answer the formulation of research problems (George: 2008). In addition, a direct observation was also conducted on the narrative discourse in the virtual video ads Volvo "The Epic of Split". In the process of data collection, the author documented the data in the video in the form of images, then the research data was presented (data display) by using the theory of denotation and connotation from Roland Barthes to look at this aspect and visual meaning and language in one of the ads Volvo that will be examined before all the phenomena seen inferred (conclusion) or verified (Miles at.al: 2015).

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Denotative and Connotative Meaning



#### Visual 1:

Type of shoot: Medium Close Up (MCU) with a normal angle. The figure is taken from the chest upwards to capture the expression and character of the main object in detail.

**Denotative:** the orange sunrise (morning), a mature man with a casual outfit (shirt denim/jeans with rolled long sleeves and cargo pants), and fingerless leather gloves, folding his arms with her eyes closed, calm face ... a few moments later with a distinctive voice and his typical alto voice starts talking about the journey of his personal life/ career that has experienced numerous obstacles.

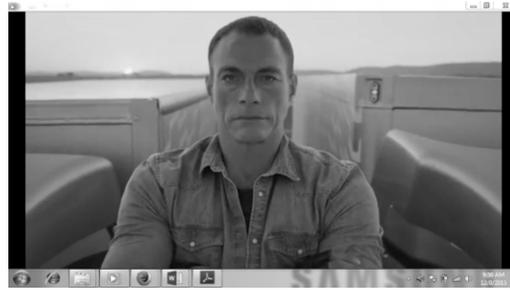
**Connotative:** Orange color in Western culture means glory, visibility, or it can also be defined as visibility/prominence/popularity.

Denim clothing with its rolled sleeves, cargo pants and fingerless gloves impose masculinity and shapes the image of the man who becomes a figure in this viral advertising as a hard worker. Male masculinity is also represented by the alto voice with his distinctive accent and articulation.

Hands-folded/self-hug, according to a study of universal culture of body language, comfortable position is to demonstrate the power and confidence that he manages to face all the obstacles. Meanwhile, closed eyes can be interpreted that the model is a visual thinker who pensive/make self-reflection about his life journey which is full of 'ups and downs' and obstacles.

Music background is quiet and elegant. It is connoted from the idiomatic main sentence-*I've had my ups and downs* defined a *succession of both good and bad experiences*, meaning this object has experiences happiness and sadness or success and failure.

*My fair share* means *many of bumpy roads and heavy wind*. It is a metaphor of obstacles that he faces. *This Idiomatic expression* also clarifies the previous main sentence.



**Visual 2:**

**Denotative:** The man opened her eyes slowly, staring ahead with confidence and almost no eye blinks.

**Connotative:** The way he stares implies the main object of this visual focuses and shows the seriousness of what he was talking about.

*I've had my ups and downs, my fair share of bumpy roads and heavy wind. This is the key to the success of the main object expressed in the phrase ... what made me what I am today ... So that this figure may appear to be ' somebody ', expressed by the statement ... Now I stand here before you.*



**Visual 3:**Tracking out with a low angle (camera position away and lower than the figures) and the type of shoot is switched to medium long shoot, long shoot and extreme long shoot to capture the activities performed by the object and the surrounded atmosphere and conditions.

**Denotative:** Still with his arms folded, figures is seen standing upright, steady with both legs stretched between two rearview mirror 2 pieces of large trucks .

**Connotative:** Power and character of superiority is still represented with folded arms and legs open and the camera position lower than the main object (low angle). According to scripts and in reality, a model is an action movie actor; he has the ability to perform a perfect split. This is what makes him a legend. His talent is used to demonstrate the stability and accuracy of Volvo Dynamic System as a cutting-edge innovation.

Enya's song titled '*Only time*' also strengthens the image of Volvo as a brand that stood the test of time and still prevails until now since it was founded in 1927.

*Who can say where the road goes,*

*Where the day flows?*

*Only time...*

The feature and image attached to this brand succeed to make Volvo is selected by the target market with high loyalty.

*And who can say if your love grows, as your heart chose?*

*Only time...*



**Visual 4:**

Extreme long shoot (ELS) with a low angle camera position and pan right (the camera from left to right) to capture the activities performed by the object as well as capturing the atmosphere and conditions.

**Denotative:** Orange with the sunrise (morning), a long single lane road not winding. Still with his arms folded, the object is seen standing upright, steady with both legs stretched between two trucks' rear-view mirrors and the truck runs backwards.

**Connotative:** The most epic of split is a phrase that refers to the perfection of the split is done with courage. The split by JCVD in the Volvo test is demonstrated live at 2 Volvo trucks that runs backwards and becomes the main object of this viral ad to prove the stability and accuracy of Volvo Dynamic System.



**Visual 5:**

Extreme long shoot (ELS) with a low angle camera position and pan right (the camera from left to right) to capture the activities performed by the object as well as capturing the atmosphere and conditions. *Text fade in* (text appears)

**Denotation:** Setting: The color orange with the sunrise (morning), a long single lane road not winding. Main Objects: Still with his arms folded, the object is seen standing upright, steady with both legs stretched between two trucks' rear-view mirrors and the truck running backwards. (*Fade in text: 'This test was set up to demonstrate the stability and precision of Volvo Dynamic Steering'*)

**Connotation:** With the phrase 'to demonstrate', viral ad declares that Volvo FM and Volvo FH Volvo FMX truck are really a kind of advanced vehicle technology undoubtedly true.



**Visual 10:** *fade in text*

**Denotative:** *Fade in text: 'It was carried out by professionals in a closed-off area'.*

**Connotation:** With the phrase 'Carried out by professionals', viral ad declares that Volvo FM and Volvo FH Volvo FMX truck are really kinds of advanced vehicle technology undoubtedly true.

## 4.2 Narrative Discourse

**Theme:** The theme of this Volvo viral ad is about ambition because it is illustrating the ambition of a person wading to resolve all the trials and obstacles so that his ambition can enrich experiences of his life to achieve success.

**Plot:** In a discourse, at least one plot contained or there are also stories that contain more than one plot at a time. Plot is also collaborated with the theme in a story. In this viral ad that is the subject of this study, the ambition contained themes and plot *rags to richest*, which is represented by the phrase "*I've had my ups and downs ...*" was the phrase "*That's what made me what I am today.*"

**Hero Character:** Volvo is a transportation company with B2B (Business to the Business) category as well as B2C (Business to Customer) that produces vehicle products in Belgium, Sweden and China. In the viral ad, the product is offered directly to consumers through an emotional strategy with an analogy of excellence action star Jean - Claude Van Damme (JCVD) with the Volvo FM and Volvo FH Volvo FMX.

***Conflict and Resolution:***

In the viral ads Volvo's dynamic system, there are two conflicts namely Internal and external conflicts. Those are illustrated with his split- points that stand between the two Volvo trucks that are running backwards, but then Volvo gives a resolution with its dynamic system so that the characters can show off his skills.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In the midst of competitive global industries, varied method have been conducted by producers and *advertising agencies* to build people's *awareness* about the products they sold, thus the consumers' behavior can change as they expect. Accuracy in conveying what to say and how to say becomes extremely crucial in designing a campaign.

One of commercials/campaigns which is considered creative and effective, and has won varied awards and appreciations is *viral ad Volvo the epic of split* with Jean-Claude Van Damme as the *talent*. This is a reason why this narrative discourse analysis was taken as a qualitative research. The findings are expected to give a sample of creativity in conveying messages by its visual form and its copywriting.

This qualitative research was to analyze its denotative meaning and connotative meaning described by the images and commercial script. Furthermore those available data were used to analyze the campaign discourse through the aspects of theme, plot, characteristics, conflict, and resolution. To gain an in-depth analysis, the writer has to enrich her understanding about the expressed and implied context in other cultures.

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