

## **ANALYZING VISUALS OF SHOE PRODUCT PHOTOS IN 2023 THROUGH INSTAGRAM MEDIA USING QUALITATIVE SEMIOTIC METHODOLOGY**

**Muhammad Farhan Aqsha**

Master of Design, Faculty of Postgraduate, Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

Email: [farhan.75323008@mahasiswa.unikom.ac.id](mailto:farhan.75323008@mahasiswa.unikom.ac.id)

**Rahma Wahdiniwaty**

Master of Management Study Programme, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Universitas Komputer  
Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

Email: [rahma@email.unikom.ac.id](mailto:rahma@email.unikom.ac.id)

### **ABSTRACT**

Product photography plays a pivotal role in business, demanding cameras attuned to lighting nuances and medium capturing. High-quality product visuals foster consumer trust, convey sophistication, and reinforce brand recognition. Particularly in platforms like Instagram, visually appealing photos are instrumental in driving engagement and sales. This study delves into innovative camera methods and background preparation to craft captivating product imagery, aiming to enrich comprehension of crafting unique, consumer-attracting visuals aligning with brand attributes. This research contributes as a knowledge repository, sparks creativity in image creation, and bolsters consumer appeal on social media. Employing a qualitative approach, it entails observation, literature review, and documentation, progressing through initial research, image curation, and analysis of design, material quality, and lifestyle integration. Findings underscore the significance of photography techniques, background curation, and camera angles, furnishing insights to elevate product aesthetics, notably on social platforms.

**Keyword :** Instagram, Photography, Product, Promotion.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sneakers have emerged as a preferred choice among youth due to their comfort, diverse designs, and versatility in pairing with clothing. In Indonesia, there exists a plethora of sneaker types and brands, originating from both foreign and local manufacturers. In today's digital age, there is a significant influence on various aspects of life, including the rapid dissemination of information facilitated by advancements in technology. This influence extends to the sneaker industry in Indonesia.

Local footwear brands have emerged to cater to the Indonesian market's demands. To remain competitive, a brand must establish a robust brand image encompassing corporate identity, user perception, and product representation. A strong brand image serves as an invaluable asset and plays a pivotal role in consumer purchasing decisions. Consumers are influenced by diverse factors when selecting products or services, necessitating producers to comprehend consumer behavior and preferences to effectively penetrate the market.

One noteworthy example of a local brand garnering attention is Brodo Shoes. This footwear brand stands out due to its inception as a solution to the scarcity of shoes available in larger sizes, particularly size 46. Its distinctive chicken head-shaped logo holds profound significance. Brodo Footwear was established in 2010 by two engineering students from Bandung Institute of Technology, Yukka Harlanda and Putera Dwi Karunia, with limited initial capital, yet managed to produce high-quality products.



**Figure 1.1 Brodo Logo**

Source: (Image from Google)

Brodo's journey from its inception to its current state reflects a remarkable evolution in its sales and marketing strategies. Initially, the company embarked on its sales journey through diverse social media platforms like Kaskus, Facebook, and Blackberry Messenger. These platforms served as effective channels for reaching potential customers and showcasing Brodo's offerings to a wider audience.

As sales began to surge in 2011, Brodo recognized the need to expand its marketing efforts further. This led to partnerships with prominent retailers such as The Goods Dept and other distributors in key cities like Jakarta and Bandung. Collaborating with established retailers helped Brodo tap into existing customer bases and gain visibility in bustling urban markets.

The transition from a micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) to Brodo Indonesia marked a pivotal moment in the company's trajectory. In 2012, the company's CEO initiated discussions with investors, leading to a decision to rebrand the company as Brodo Indonesia. This strategic move not only reinforced the brand's identity but also positioned it for growth and scalability.

By 2017, Brodo had made significant strides in expanding its presence across major cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, Bekasi, Surabaya, and Yogyakarta. The opening of outlets in these urban centers signified Brodo's commitment to broadening its sales reach and catering to a diverse customer base.

In parallel with its physical expansion, Brodo also recognized the importance of leveraging social media, particularly Instagram, as a powerful marketing platform. The shift towards customer engagement became central to Brodo's marketing ethos. By crafting compelling content and fostering emotional connections with consumers, Brodo aimed to not only capture attention but also cultivate brand loyalty.

The significance of customer engagement in today's digital landscape cannot be overstated. As highlighted by Strauss & Frost (2011), when consumers develop emotional and cognitive ties with a brand's content, they are more inclined to actively engage with the brand and show preference towards its offerings. Moreover, Forrester (2007) emphasizes the role of customer engagement as a key metric for evaluating the effectiveness of marketing activities in online media.

In essence, Brodo's journey underscores the transformative power of effective sales and marketing strategies, from its humble beginnings in social media to its current status as a prominent player in Indonesia's footwear industry. Through strategic partnerships, brand repositioning, and a focus on customer engagement, Brodo has successfully navigated the complexities of the market landscape and emerged as a leading brand in its segment.

The study conducted by Putri and Pradana (2020) evaluated the influence of Instagram content on consumer behavior, focusing on Brodo Shoes' followers. Through regression analysis, this research identified the relationship between Brodo Shoes' Instagram content and consumer purchasing behavior, as well as the factors influencing consumer purchase decisions.

Currently, Brodo stands as Indonesia's pioneering direct-to-consumer shoe company, offering a diverse range of high-quality products, including formal and casual shoes, sneakers, and boots. Brodo firmly believes in every individual's right to pursue their own life goals, share compelling life stories, and embrace a unique lifestyle. Brodo Shoes' products are accessible through their official website, bro.do, and their Instagram account @bro.do, which provides up-to-date information on products and pricing.

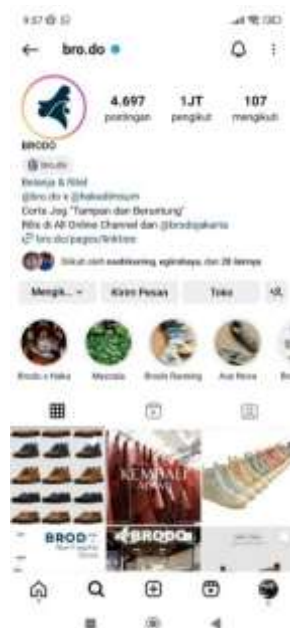


Figure 1.2 Brodo's Instagram

Source: Personal

The @bro.do Instagram account has already amassed one million followers. Alfajri, Adhiazni, & Aini (2019) underscored the effectiveness of Instagram as a tool for companies in achieving their objectives by fostering and enhancing brand awareness, brand image, and direct engagement with consumers. Brodo's journey from its inception to its current state reflects a remarkable evolution in its sales and marketing strategies. Research conducted by Ahmad and Sari (2020) aimed to analyze the role of Instagram in building brand image, using Brodo Indonesia as a case study. Through content analysis and interviews, this study explored Brodo's strategies in utilizing Instagram to establish a strong brand image and its impact on the perception and response of their followers. Initially, the company embarked on its sales journey through diverse social media platforms like Kaskus, Facebook, and BlackBerry Messenger. These platforms served as effective channels for reaching potential customers and showcasing Brodo's offerings to a wider audience.

Instagram's features such as followers and following enable users to gauge interest in their account. Moreover, the ability to post photos and videos with hashtag captions, as well as receive likes and comments from other followers, presents opportunities to boost user engagement. Additional features like IGTV and LIVE facilitate direct interaction with followers, while the Instastory feature allows users to share ephemeral stories lasting 24 hours. By leveraging these interactive features, companies can effectively conduct consumer needs research.

In the process of crafting content for Instagram, several steps are involved, one of which is photography. Sudarma (2014: 2) elucidates that photo media serves as a communication medium, conveying messages or ideas to others. Photography, or the medium of photography, serves to document significant moments or events. According to Bull (2010: 5), the term photography derives from the Greek words photo (light) and graphy (writing or drawing), suggesting the literal meaning of writing or drawing with light. This encapsulates the essence of photography—a fusion of natural occurrences (light) with human cultural activities (writing and drawing/painting).

Utomo and Wibowo (2018) conducted a semiotic analysis of brand communication on Instagram, specifically focusing on Brodo Shoes. This research identified denotative and connotative messages conveyed through Brodo Shoes' Instagram content, uncovering hidden meanings contained within the visuals and texts used in their posts.

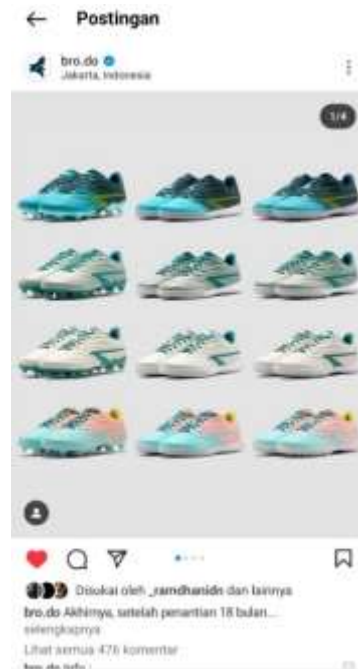
As per Gani & Kusumalestari (2014), photography transcends mere technicalities; it embodies aesthetic value capable of expressing the thoughts and emotions of the photographer. Creating meaningful imagery entails not only proficiency in photographic techniques but also a profound artistic sensibility. Conversely, videography serves as a medium for capturing events in video and audio formats, facilitating retrospective analysis or serving as research material to comprehend past occurrences.

The study conducted by Putri and Pradana (2020) evaluates the influence of Instagram content on consumer behavior, with a specific focus on Brodo Shoes' followers. Through regression analysis, this research identifies the relationship between Brodo Instagram content and consumer purchasing behavior, as well as the factors influencing consumer purchase decisions.

This research aims to conduct a semiotic analysis of the content published by Brodo's official Instagram account in the year 2023. Using a semiotic approach, this study will explore how symbols, images, and implied messages are utilized to convey meaning to the followers. The research method involves observing Brodo Instagram posts, followed by in-depth analysis of the posted content. This study is essential to understand how brands like Brodo leverage social media, particularly Instagram, to build



brand image and influence the perceptions of their followers. The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable insights into how visual messages on social media can affect consumer behavior and perception.



**Figure 1.3 Instagram Promotion in the Form of a Catalog**

Source: Personal

This process causes the brand image built by the company to influence people's buying interest in making purchasing decisions. Individuals engage in selecting various stimulus information presented to form a comprehensive picture, where the meaning contained in Brodo's Instagram promotions becomes one of the important factors for consumers in evaluating their choices. In their book, Gani & Kusumalestari (2014: 6) state: "It seems that there is no print mass media (newspapers, tabloids, and magazines) in this country that does not include photos in every issue. Photos are often an attraction for readers before reading the news." The position of photo work here is as an attraction, so the essence of photo work in journalism is as a complement/supplement to a news story. Gani & Kusumalestari added that in general, photojournalism is an image produced through a photographic process to convey a message, information, story of an event of interest to the public and disseminated through mass media.

The purchase decision-making process involves the knowledge to evaluate several options and choose one of them. This research uses a quantitative approach by distributing surveys, focusing on the effect of sales via Instagram for brand image on purchasing decisions for Brodo Shoes in West Java.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Brodo Instagram Publication Media

Communication plays a vital role in everyday life as one of its essential aspects, where activities such as speaking, exchanging ideas, and sharing information have become basic necessities for every individual (Ruliana et al., 2019). Currently, internet-based communication technology has become an inseparable part of human life, with the increasing need for information that can be accessed without spatial and temporal limitations (Pebriany & Sanusi, 2020).

social media, as an internet-based communication platform, has revolutionized virtual interaction, sharing, and communication, significantly impacting human lifestyles and creating new opportunities (Khasanah et al., 2020). Many companies view social media not only as a source of entertainment but also as a tool to start businesses, voice opinions, build self-image, and increase brand awareness (Khasanah et al., 2020). The potential of digital communication tools, such as social media, facilitates two-way communication between companies and consumers, enabling better interaction and creative promotions at lower costs (Indika & Jovita, 2017).

Despite the extensive literature available on the impact of social media, there is still a research gap in understanding how companies effectively utilize specific features of platforms like Instagram to support their publications and brand image (Maryolein et al., 2019; Khoiri & Palupi, 2019; Sofiana, 2016). Therefore, this study aims to understand how companies, represented by Brodo Indonesia, harness Instagram features for effective brand communication.

Brodo Indonesia serves as a real example of a company using Instagram not only for promotional purposes but also to effectively convey brand values. By analyzing Brodo's use of Instagram, this study aims to provide insights into effective strategies in leveraging social media platforms to strengthen brand image and interact with consumers. Through a semiotic approach, this research seeks to uncover the embedded messages in symbols, images, and content displayed by companies like Brodo on Instagram.

Previous studies have explored the utilization of Instagram as a platform for diverse purposes, such as establishing brand awareness and engaging with the public (Maryolein et al., 2019; Khoiri & Palupi, 2019; Sofiana, 2016). However, there hasn't been a specific investigation delving into how companies like Brodo harness Instagram's features to bolster their publications. Through this research, the objective is to scrutinize how Brodo Indonesia employs Instagram as a publishing platform to shape their brand identity. This inquiry holds significance as publishing mediums, encompassing social media platforms like Instagram, play a pivotal role in introducing and fortifying a company's reputation while influencing the perceptions and responses of their followers.

Brodo Indonesia has effectively leveraged Instagram as a conduit to showcase their products and cultivate brand recognition. They don't just employ Instagram as a promotional tool but also as a channel to convey their brand's values to consumers. In dissecting Brodo's Instagram usage, this study will center on publication elements such as activities, content, packaging, and branding. Additionally, semiotic concepts will be integrated into the analysis, delving into the study of signs and their underlying meanings. Through a semiotic approach, this research will explore how Brodo employs various symbols, images, and messages to convey specific narratives to their Instagram followers.

## METHODOLOGY

### Method Used:

The data collection method employed in this research is observation and interviews, utilizing qualitative analysis. The research was conducted at the Brodo studio located at Jl. Lombok No 11, Merdeka, Kec. Sumur Bandung, Kota Bandung, West Java. The subject of this research is a professional photographer who plays a primary role in creating photos for Brodo's Instagram. Mr. Gugun serves as the key to the success of photography on Brodo's Instagram media. The techniques and instruments for data collection include observation, interviews, and documentation for data analysis. All data obtained in the field are related.

issue: Denotative and Connotative Semiotic Messages in Brodo's Instagram Photography.

### Field Research:

Time Frame: The research will be conducted over a specific period, for example, 3-4 months, starting from November 2023 to March 2024.

Date: Data collection will be conducted on specific dates within the mentioned time frame, starting from November 20, 2023, and ending on March 31, 2024.

Location: The research will be conducted at the Brodo studio located at Jl. Lombok No 11, Merdeka, Kec. Sumur Bandung, Kota Bandung, West Java.

Respondents: The main subject of the research is a professional photographer responsible for creating photos for Brodo's Instagram. Mr. Gugun, as a key figure in Brodo's photography, will be interviewed.

Brand/Institution: The focus of this research is on Brodo, specifically on its Instagram media, which is the main focus of the researcher.

Other Details: Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. These methods will aid in analyzing the denotative and connotative messages conveyed through Brodo's Instagram photography.

## DISCUSSION

Applying Barthes' semiotic concepts (1977:17) to the Brodo shoe brand, it is revealed how Instagram photography media is used as an effective visual communication tool to convey denotative and connotative messages to the audience. Through interviews with Mr. Gugun from Brodo, we gained valuable insights into their brand's Instagram photography strategy.

In the initial stage of the interview, Mr. Gugun explained that the selection of Instagram as Brodo's primary marketing platform is based on its visual nature and popularity among their target market, especially the younger demographic. This aligns with Barthes' semiotic approach, which emphasizes the power of images in conveying messages.

Furthermore, Mr. Gugun elaborated that Brodo develops its Instagram photography strategy with a focus on quality and consistency. Every shared photo must reflect the brand's values and capture the audience's attention. Consistency in the brand's Instagram photography is key to maintaining a professional and organized impression.

In selecting photo subjects or objects, Brodo strives to showcase their shoes in everyday life contexts relevant to the audience. This approach reflects the brand's efforts to build a connected brand image and identity with their target market's lifestyle.

To measure the success of Brodo's Instagram photography strategy, they pay attention to various metrics such as engagement rate, new followers, and sales conversions. This aligns with Barthes' evaluative approach in semiotics, which considers the audience's responses and reactions to visual messages.

Mr. Gugun also highlighted challenges in using Instagram as a marketing tool for shoe products, including fierce competition and changing trends. However, by staying focused on their brand and audience, Brodo can continue to innovate and adapt to the dynamic digital environment.

These interview results provide a deeper understanding of how Brodo uses Instagram photography as an effective visual communication tool in promoting their brand and products. Brodo's Instagram photography strategy reflects the application of Barthes' semiotic concepts, depicting the complexity of denotative and connotative messages in visual media.

Applying Barthes' semiotic concepts (1977:17) to the Brodo shoe brand reveals how Instagram photography media is used as an effective visual communication tool to convey denotative and connotative messages to the audience. Through interviews with Mr. Gugun from Brodo, we gained valuable insights into their brand's Instagram photography strategy.

Semiotics is the study of signs, symbols, and how they are used to convey meaning. When applied to Brodo's Instagram photography, we can identify denotative and connotative messages in that context. In literature applying Barthes' concepts (1977:17) to the Brodo shoe brand, we can see how photography media is used as a visual communication tool conveying denotative and connotative messages to the audience. Here is the application of these concepts in the context of the Brodo brand:



**Figure 1.4 Denotative and Connotative Messages in Brodo Photography.**

Source: Personal



Brodo's photography not only conveys denotative messages about the product directly but also connotative messages that involve visual elements or additional contexts leading to interpretation or additional meanings, such as specific lifestyles, brand image, or consumer aspirations.

**Denotative Message:**

**Brodo Product:** The main denotative message in this photography is the shoes or Brodo product being promoted. This is the clearest and most directly visible meaning. The Image Appearance Style may also indicate the style promoted by the brand. This could include clothing that complements Brodo shoes, hairstyles, accessories, and so forth.

**Connotative Message:**

**Lifestyle:** The photography may also attempt to convey connotative messages about the lifestyle associated with Brodo products. This may include messages about freedom, confidence, or modern urban lifestyle.

**Social Status:** The use of certain brands is often associated with social status. Therefore, this photography may also seek to convey messages about the status or prestige associated with wearing Brodo shoes.

**Identity Expression:** Another connotative message may be related to identity expression. Choosing a specific product, such as Brodo shoes, can be part of how someone identifies themselves or part of a specific social group.

**Aesthetics and Image:** Brodo's Instagram photography may be designed to create a specific aesthetic associated with the brand. This could be in the form of color tones, visual composition, or photography style that reflects the brand's image and values.

Additionally, elements such as background, models used, lighting, and photography style can be used to add layers of connotative meaning. All of these are designed to influence the audience's perception and interpretation of the brand and its products



**Figure 1.5 Trick Effects in Brodo Photography.**

Source: Personal

The use of specific photography techniques, such as dramatic lighting settings or attention-grabbing backgrounds, can create powerful visual effects in Brodo product photos, capturing attention and influencing audience perception.



Figure 1.6 Poses in Brodo Photography:

Source: Personal

The model's pose or product layout in Brodo photos can also convey complex connotative messages, such as confidence or desired lifestyle.



Figure 1.7 Objects in Brodo Photography.

Source: Personal

Placing Brodo shoe products in appropriate contexts, such as using relevant backgrounds or adding supportive accessories, can influence the audience's interpretation of the brand and its products.



Figure 1.8 Photogenia and Aestheticism in Brodo Photography.

Source: Personal

The use of lighting, illumination, and aesthetically pleasing visual composition techniques can enhance the visual appeal of the product and strengthen the brand message conveyed to the audience.



Figure 1.9 Syntax in Brodo Photography.

Source: Personal

Brodo product photos can also be used in a series of images forming a larger narrative or story, helping convey more complex connotative messages about the brand and its products.

By applying Barthes' semiotic concepts in the literature study of Brodo product photography, we can understand how photography media is used as a powerful communication tool in influencing the audience's perception and interpretation of the brand and its shoe products.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

This research reveals how Brodo Indonesia utilizes the Instagram social media platform as the primary tool to publicize their products and build brand image. The study aims to provide a clear understanding of Brodo's product photography strategy on Instagram and its impact on the perception and response of their followers. In the product photography process, Brodo emphasizes the importance of quality and consistency, focusing on creating attention-grabbing photos that reflect their brand values. Interview results with Mr. Gugun from Brodo highlight their brand's Instagram photography strategy, monitoring various metrics to measure campaign success. Literature studies also shed light on how photography media serves as a powerful visual communication tool in influencing the perception and interpretation of the Brodo shoe brand and products. Therefore, this research offers a comprehensive understanding of how companies like Brodo employ social media, particularly Instagram, to construct their brand image through product photography, emphasizing the significance of understanding the conveyed messages in visual media and their impact on followers' perception and response.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to this research on analyzing Brodo shoe products on Instagram with a semiotic approach. Special thanks to the participants who generously shared their insights and experiences, as well as to the Brodo Indonesia team for their cooperation and support throughout this study. Your invaluable contributions have greatly enriched our research and made this endeavor possible.

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#### **AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES**

Muhammad Farhan Aqsha is a designer who has grown and developed in Bandung, West Java. His interest in design and technology has driven him to pursue education in the field of design. After completing his undergraduate education in Visual Communication Design at Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Farhan continued to sharpen his skills by participating in the Master of Design program at the same institution. There, he delved into various design concepts and techniques that formed the foundation of his professional career. Farhan also has a vision to become an innovative and influential designer and photographer in the creative industry.