

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF ROLAND BARTHES'S THEORY ON COMMUTER LINE (KRL) SIGNS

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Abstract

This study examines the semiotic elements of signs within Indonesia's Commuter Line (KRL) system through Roland Barthes's theory of denotation, connotation, and myth. Public signs are important in shaping commuter behavior by promoting safety, cleanliness, and order in shared spaces. The analysis highlights the dual meanings embedded in the signs, from their immediate messages, such as prohibiting smoking or ensuring evacuation preparedness, to the cultural values they reflect, such as health, environmental responsibility, and respect for public spaces. Through a qualitative approach, the research reveals how these signs not only guide actions but also mirror societal norms and priorities. By linking Barthes's semiotic framework to practical signage design, this research underscores the importance of effectively communicating rules and values in public transportation systems.

Keywords: *Semiotic, Signs, Ronald Barthes, Commuter Line, KRL, Transportation*

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INTRODUCTION

Every day in our life, we are surrounded by signs in order to guide, inform, or even influence us. Simplifying complicated information to simply understandable symbols, colors, and images, they play an important role in our daily lives. Signs serve as a universal language that transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries, enabling people to navigate their surroundings safely and effectively (Barthes, 1972). These signs come in various forms, such as traffic signs, advertisements, or public announcements, all of which convey crucial information (Santoso et al., 2019).

A prominent example of the significance of signs, especially in research contexts, is found in train station environments. Train stations are hubs of activity, filled with directional signs pointing to platforms, ticket counters, and exits, ensuring the smooth flow of passengers (Azizah, 2021). Timetables and digital boards provide vital information on schedules, delays, and platform changes, keeping commuters informed at all times (Yuniarti, 2020). To maintain safety and order, signs such as "no smoking" symbols, emergency exit markers, and evacuation assembly points are essential. These signs do not merely serve practical purposes but also carry connotative meanings tied to safety, discipline, and social responsibility (Hidayatullah et al., 2022).

Barthes's semiotic theory provides an effective framework for analyzing the layers of meaning in such signs. According to Barthes, every sign consists of denotative and connotative

meanings, both of which contribute to the communication process (Barthes, 1977). For example, a "no smoking" sign at a train station denotes the prohibition of smoking but connotes respect for shared public spaces and consideration for others (Rivai & Harmanto, 2020). By exploring these dual meanings, researchers can uncover how signs are designed to influence behavior and align with societal values.



This research applies Barthes's semiotic approach to analyze the signs used in commuter train systems, with a focus on Indonesia's KRL. The study examines how these signs convey their messages through both denotative and connotative meanings, aiming to uncover the cultural and functional significance behind their design and usage (Azizah, 2021). Furthermore, it investigates how these signs influence passenger behavior, ensuring safety, efficiency, and order in train stations (Yuniarti, 2020).



Studying the semiotics of train station signs holds both practical and theoretical importance. Practically, it can help improve the design of effective and universally understandable signs for public transportation (Santoso et al., 2019). Theoretically, it enriches the application of Barthes's semiotic principles by exploring their relevance in contemporary urban spaces. By bridging the gap between semiotic theory and real-world contexts, this research offers valuable insights into the interaction between humans and their constructed environments (Barthes, 1972).

METHODOLOGY



This research employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyze selected signs found in the Commuter Line (KRL), focusing on their denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings through Barthes' semiotic theory. A qualitative method is particularly suited for understanding complex meanings, symbols, and cultural nuances in non-numerical data (Creswell, 2012). The analysis began with a thorough observation of the KRL environment to contextualize the signs within their specific settings. Photographs were then taken to document the signs for detailed analysis, ensuring their visual elements were accurately represented. Using Barthes' framework, the denotative aspect of each sign was examined to identify its literal meaning, followed by an exploration of its connotative meanings, which reflect cultural or emotional associations. Finally, the mythological dimension of each sign was analyzed to uncover the broader ideological and societal messages embedded within it (Barthes, 1972). The findings are systematically presented in tables with detailed descriptions, providing insights into the signs' layered meanings and their role in shaping commuter perceptions and behavior.


RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.



No.	Data	Barthes's Theory		
		Denotation	Connotation	Myth
1.		The sign shows a red background with white text saying, "Dilarang Merokok di Seluruh Area Stasiun" (No Smoking in Station Area). It also has the same message in English and a picture of a cigarette crossed out by a red line, a symbol for no smoking.	The red color and crossed-out cigarette show strict rules and danger. The sign warns people not to smoke to protect health and safety. Adding English makes it clear for everyone, including tourists, showing this is a public and global-friendly space.	The sign promotes the idea that smoking in public places is bad and harmful. It also shows how modern society values health, safety, and shared responsibility in public areas.
2.		The sign has a green background with white text saying "Titik Kumpul Evakuasi" (Evacuation Assembly Point). It also includes the English translation, "Assembly Point." The image shows three people grouped together with four arrows pointing toward them.	The green color represents safety and guidance. The image of people and arrows suggests that this is a safe place to gather during emergencies. The bilingual text ensures that both locals and visitors can understand it, making it inclusive and clear for everyone.	The sign reflects the idea of preparedness and community safety during emergencies. It emphasizes how modern spaces prioritize organization and collective action to protect people in dangerous situations.


3.	 A red rectangular sign with a white border. At the top, the word "SOS" is written in white. Below it is a white icon of a hand pressing a button. Underneath the icon, the text "Tombol Alarm Darurat" is written in white, followed by "Emergency Alarm Button" in a smaller font. At the bottom, there is a white box containing the text "Tekan Tombol Alarm jika terjadi keadaan darurat" in red, and "In emergency push to activate alarm" in a smaller red font.	<p>The sign shows a red background with white text saying "Tombol Alarm Darurat" (Emergency Alarm Button). It also includes the English translation and an instruction: "Tekan Tombol Alarm jika terjadi keadaan darurat" (Press the Alarm Button in Case of an Emergency). The image shows a finger pressing a button under the label "SOS."</p>	<p>The red color symbolizes urgency and danger, emphasizing the importance of quick action. The image of a finger pressing a button visually instructs people on what to do during an emergency. The bilingual text ensures accessibility for both locals and foreigners.</p>	<p>The sign reflects the value of preparedness and immediate response in emergencies. It reinforces the idea that modern spaces prioritize safety systems to protect individuals from potential risks.</p>
4.	 A yellow rectangular sign with a black border. On the left, there is a black upward-pointing arrow. Next to it is a black icon of a person walking through a door. To the right of the icon, the word "Keluar" is written in black, followed by "Exit" in a smaller font. On the far right, there is a small black letter "A" inside a yellow square.	<p>The sign has a yellow background with black text saying "Keluar" (Exit) and its English translation. It also includes an upward arrow and an image of a person walking through a door, indicating the direction to exit.</p>	<p>The yellow background symbolizes guidance and attention, making the sign visible and easy to follow. The upward arrow indicates the direction clearly, while the door icon with a person suggests movement toward safety or an exit point. The bilingual text ensures it is understood by both locals and visitors.</p>	<p>The sign represents organization and safety in public spaces, emphasizing the importance of clear directions for navigation. It reflects the modern expectation of efficient design to help people move easily and avoid confusion.</p>


5.		<p>The sign shows a red-bordered square with an image of a gas canister and a fuel container marked with flames. A red diagonal line crosses over the image. Below, the text says "Dilarang Membawa Benda Mudah Terbakar" (Bringing Flammable Items are Prohibited).</p>	<p>The red color and diagonal line symbolize prohibition and danger, warning passengers not to carry flammable materials. The image of the gas and fuel containers, paired with flame icons, visually represents dangerous objects that could pose a fire risk. The text reinforces the message for clarity.</p>	<p>The sign reflects the importance of safety and responsibility in public transportation. It highlights the collective effort to prevent accidents, ensuring a secure environment for everyone. The prohibition serves as a reminder of societal rules prioritizing public welfare over individual actions.</p>
6.		<p>The sign features a red-bordered square with an image of a handgun and a knife, both crossed out with a red diagonal line. Below the image, the text reads: "Dilarang Membawa Senjata Api/Tajam Tanpa Izin" (Carrying Handguns or Sharp Weapons Without Permission is Prohibited)</p>	<p>The red diagonal line signifies prohibition, while the handgun and knife represent weapons that are dangerous and pose a threat to public safety. The text clarifies that these items are not allowed unless proper authorization is obtained, emphasizing strict security measures.</p>	<p>The sign reflects society's commitment to maintaining peace and security in public spaces. It reinforces the importance of law and order, ensuring that weapons are only carried by authorized individuals. This regulation symbolizes the collective</p>

				desire for a safe and harmonious environment.
7.		The signs feature the red-bordered square with the image of a spoon, fork and a drinking cup all crossed out with a red diagonal line. Below the image, the text reads “ Dilarang Makan & Minum ” (Eating & Drinking is Prohibited)	The red color diagonal line signifies prohibition, while the image of spoon, fork and drinking cup represents actions that include eating and drinking. The text clarifies that those actions are not allowed.	The sign reflects society's commitment to maintaining cleanliness and order in shared spaces. It reinforces the importance of respecting communal environments by prohibiting actions that may cause disruption or mess. This regulation symbolizes the collective desire for a tidy, respectful, and harmonious public atmosphere.
8.		The signs feature the red-bordered square with the image of a lit cigarette with smoke on it crossed out with a red diagonal line. Below the image, the text reads “ Dilarang Merokok ” (Smoking is Prohibited)	The red color diagonal line signifies prohibition, while the image of a lit cigarette with a smoke on it represents the action of smoking. The text clarifies that the action of smoking is prohibited.	The sign reflects society’s commitment to health and well-being in shared spaces. It emphasizes how everyone works together to make places


				<p>convenient and clean so that bad habits like smoking won't harm other people. The prohibition serves as a reminder of social norms that place a higher priority on responsibility and public health than on private rights in public spaces.</p>
9		<p>The sign features a red-bordered square with the image of a dog crossed out by a red diagonal line. Below the image, the text reads "Dilarang Membawa Binatang" (Pets are Prohibited).</p>	<p>The red border and line emphasize strictness, while the depiction of a dog suggests all pets, not just dogs, are prohibited. The prohibition reflects an effort to maintain cleanliness, hygiene, and order in shared public spaces. It ensures that all passengers experience a comfortable and pet-free environment.</p>	<p>This sign represents a societal value placed on cleanliness and respect for shared spaces. It suggests an understanding that public transportation is a place where individual preferences or actions, such as bringing pets, should not disrupt the collective comfort and safety of others.</p>

10		<p>The sign features a red-bordered square with the image of a person sitting on the floor and another person sitting on a folding chair, both crossed out with a red diagonal line. Below the image, the text reads "Dilarang Duduk di Lantai atau Membawa Kursi Lipat" (Sitting on the Floor or Bringing Folding Chairs is Prohibited).</p>	<p>The sign conveys a sense of order and professionalism, suggesting that certain behaviors, such as sitting on the floor or using personal furniture, disrupt the atmosphere of the station.</p>	<p>The sign reflects a societal emphasis on maintaining decorum and cleanliness in public spaces. It implies that modern public areas are designed to promote efficient use of space and a professional image. This prohibition also symbolizes collective respect for shared environments, ensuring the area remains comfortable and accessible for all passengers.</p>
11		<p>The sign features a red-bordered square with the image of a person throwing trash, crossed out with a red diagonal line. Below the image, the text reads "Dilarang Membuang Sampah Sembarangan" (Littering is Prohibited).</p>	<p>The sign conveys a sense of cleanliness and respect, indicating that actions such as throwing trash in the train disrupt the environment and create a less pleasant experience for passengers.</p>	<p>The sign reflects a societal emphasis on maintaining cleanliness and respect in public spaces. It implies that actions like throwing trash in the train undermine the shared environment.</p>

				and disrupt the experience of all passengers. This prohibition symbolizes a collective responsibility to preserve a clean and welcoming atmosphere, ensuring that the train remains comfortable and pleasant for everyone
12		The sign features a red-bordered square with the image of a person carrying two satchel, crossed by a red diagonal line. Below the image, the text reads " Dilarang Berjualan " (Selling is Prohibited).	The sign emphasizes that selling goods in the designated area is strictly prohibited. It symbolizes the importance of maintaining order and preventing unauthorized commercial activities that could disrupt the flow of public spaces or inconvenience others.	The prohibition on selling reflects a societal focus on ensuring that public spaces remain free from unregulated commerce. It reinforces the collective understanding that shared environments should prioritize the comfort and needs of all individuals rather than being dominated by private economic activities. This type of sign conveys

				<p>a clear message of maintaining an orderly and distraction-free environment, whether in a train station, public transport, or other communal areas.</p>
13		<p>The sign features a red-bordered square with the image of playing a musical instrument, crossed by a red diagonal line. Below the image, the text reads "Dilarang Ngamen" (Busking is Prohibited).</p>	<p>The sign clearly communicates that busking or performing for money is not allowed in the designated area. It aims to maintain a peaceful and orderly atmosphere, free from disruptions caused by unsolicited performances or requests for money.</p>	<p>This prohibition reflects the societal value of maintaining public spaces that are orderly and free from activities that could be considered intrusive or disruptive. While street performances can be a form of cultural expression, the restriction acknowledges the need to balance creativity with the comfort and convenience of all individuals in shared environments. This type of sign</p>

				reinforces the idea of creating a space where individuals can move or gather without being disturbed by unauthorized performances or requests for attention.
14		<p>The sign features a red-bordered square with the image of a durian or other strong-smelling item crossed by a red diagonal line. Below the image, the text reads "Dilarang Membawa Benda Berbau Menyengat" (Bringing Strong-Smelling Items is Prohibited).</p>	<p>The sign clearly communicates that carrying items with strong odors, such as durians, is not allowed in the area. This restriction aims to maintain a pleasant and neutral environment for everyone, avoiding discomfort caused by overpowering smells in confined or shared spaces.</p>	<p>The prohibition reflects a societal emphasis on consideration and respect for others in shared environments . It underscores the collective responsibility to ensure that public spaces remain comfortable for all individuals, particularly in crowded places such as trains, buses, or waiting areas. This sign promotes harmony and comfort by preventing potential complaints or disruptions caused by the presence of</p>

				strong-smelling items, fostering a more pleasant experience for everyone.
15		The image shows a dual-compartment waste bin with separate sections labeled for "Recyclable" and "Other Waste." Each compartment is marked with respective symbols: a recycling triangle on the left and a general waste symbol on the right. The bin has a worn appearance, with rust and chipped paint visible.	The bin promotes waste segregation, encouraging environmentally responsible disposal practices. The "Recyclable" section is for items that can be processed and reused, while "Other Waste" is for non-recyclable materials. This reflects efforts to reduce environmental impact through recycling.	The bin symbolizes societal awareness and commitment to sustainability . Despite its worn condition, it stands as a representation of the push toward eco-conscious behaviors, emphasizing that small individual actions, like proper waste disposal, contribute to broader environmental goals.

The signs in the train station and on the trains reflect how society prioritizes safety, order, cleanliness, and mutual respect in shared public areas. Each sign is crafted to help individuals follow rules that maintain a secure and pleasant environment.

In the station area (represented by signs 1-4 and 15), the emphasis lies on safety, clear navigation, and environmental care. Simple colors and symbols, such as red and green, communicate urgency and security. For example, evacuation points and emergency alarm signs inform people about essential actions during emergencies. The use of both Indonesian and English ensures inclusivity, accommodating local and international passengers. Additionally, the waste bin signage promotes recycling, demonstrating the significance of environmental awareness.

Inside the train (depicted by signs 5-14), the focus shifts to maintaining cleanliness and comfort. Signs discourage activities like smoking, eating, littering, or bringing pets, ensuring a

pleasant experience for all passengers. Rules against unauthorized selling or performing aim to keep the environment calm and distraction-free. Collectively, these signs indicate societal values that prioritize shared welfare and respect for public spaces.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of signs in the KRL system reveals their crucial role in ensuring safety, order, and comfort in public transportation. By employing Roland Barthes's semiotic theory, this study uncovers the deeper cultural and ideological meanings these signs carry, beyond their literal instructions. Whether guiding evacuation during emergencies or prohibiting disruptive behaviors, these signs reflect a society that values health, environmental sustainability, and mutual respect. The research emphasizes the importance of thoughtful sign design in promoting an orderly and harmonious public environment, making shared spaces more navigable and enjoyable for everyone.

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