

## ROLAND BARTHES' SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF SUSTAINABILITY ON THE COVER OF PT PERTAMINA'S 2023 SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the symbolic meaning of sustainability contained in the cover of PT Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. This approach is used to interpret the three layers of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth that shape the company's sustainability image and ideology. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a focus on visual and narrative signs that represent sustainability messages. The analysis focuses on visual elements such as color, images, typography, and communication themes used on the report cover to build an image of social and environmental responsibility. In addition, this study also links the findings with legitimacy theory to explain how these visual representations function as a corporate communication strategy in gaining and maintaining social legitimacy. The results show that symbols such as blue and green, wind turbines, solar panels, and the theme "Ensuring Transition, Energizing the Nation" not only represent a commitment to clean energy but also shape the corporate sustainability myth, namely the belief that fossil fuel companies can be the main agents of energy transition. Thus, the cover of the sustainability report acts as a symbolic legitimation tool that strengthens Pertamina's image as an innovative, responsible, and sustainability-oriented national company.

**Keyword:** *Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis, Symbolic Meaning Sustainability, The Cover Of Pt Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A sustainability report is a form of non-financial reporting that demonstrates an organization's transparency and accountability for implementing social and environmental responsibilities. Through this report, companies measure, disclose, and account for the economic, social, and environmental impacts of their business activities to stakeholders (Chairanee et al., 2022). Sustainability reporting serves not only as a formal communication tool but also as part of a corporate reputation and legitimacy strategy. By disclosing their commitment to sustainability, companies can build trust, strengthen relationships with stakeholders, and enhance their image as responsible entities (Appiah-Kubi et al., 2024). From the perspective of legitimacy theory, sustainability reports serve as an instrument for companies to gain, maintain, and restore social legitimacy in the eyes of the public. In Gray's (2006) view, social and environmental reporting practices are often used as strategic communication mechanisms to maintain organizational legitimacy. According to him, companies use sustainability reports as a means to "negotiate" a social contract between the organization and society, so that they remain seen as legitimate to operate in their social environment. Gray emphasized that these reporting practices are often symbolic, aimed at managing public perception and creating an impression of corporate morality, rather than demonstrating substantive changes in organizational behavior.

Globally, sustainability reporting practices have become an integral part of good corporate governance. This development is also influenced by the growing attention to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles in the business world (De Villiers et al., 2022). In Indonesia, the trend in sustainability reporting has shown significant growth in recent years. According to research by Limarwati et al. (2024), in 2018, only 58 companies (approximately 10.58%) published sustainability reports. In 2019, this figure increased to 94 companies (15.54%), and in 2020, it reached 140 companies (21.21%). Although this figure shows a positive trend, the percentage remains low compared to the total number of companies in Indonesia. This situation indicates that corporate awareness of the importance of non-financial reporting still needs to be improved.

Sustainability reporting serves not only to report activities and achievements but also as a means of symbolic communication that conveys a company's moral and ideological messages. Visual elements such as colors, images, logos, and narratives used in reports have meanings that can influence public perception of a company's identity and credibility (Sundberg & Trast, 2025). According to Bonaccorso (2023), sustainability reports can be analyzed as semiotic texts, where visual and linguistic signs are used to construct an image of sustainability and corporate social responsibility. The cover is the first thing readers see, and in the context of a Sustainability Report, it serves to communicate the key message, summarizing the company's goals, achievements, and commitments to sustainability. Therefore, the report cover is not merely a visual addition, but a crucial communication tool for introducing and reinforcing the company's messages to readers. An attractive and engaging cover is a manifestation of the company's Corporate Communications or Public Relations efforts in presenting its best report, creating a first impression, and portraying the company's 'face,' culture, and spirit, projected to the public. This research focuses on PT Pertamina (Persero), one of the largest State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and a key player in the national energy sector. Pertamina's position as an energy company places it at the intersection of economic development and significant environmental impact. Therefore, Pertamina's disclosure of sustainability commitments and performance, particularly through its Sustainability Report, is a highly important and relevant subject for various stakeholders, from the government, investors, local communities, to environmental activists. In this context, PT Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report was selected as the object of analysis. The 2023 report reflects the company's performance amidst post-pandemic global dynamics and the increasingly pressing energy transition. This report is the company's primary medium for conveying its sustainability narrative and image.

This study uses a semiotic approach rooted in communication traditions to uncover the hidden meanings and ideologies behind the cover and main themes of Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report. While Charles Sanders Peirce's classical semiotics focuses on the triadic relationship between signs, objects, and interpretants, this study adopts Roland Barthes' theory, which emphasizes how visual signs can shape ideological meaning through a two-tier system: denotation and connotation. Roland Barthes (1957), in his work *Image, Music, Text*, explains that every sign has two levels of meaning: denotation and connotation, which then form myths. Denotation describes the literal meaning of a sign, while connotation refers to the implied cultural or ideological meaning. Through this process, signs can naturalize certain ideologies so that they appear as natural truths in the eyes of society. Using Barthes' framework, sustainability reports can be understood as a system of signs that represent a company's ideology of social responsibility and sustainability (Rusli et al., 2025).

This study refers to the study of Lubis et al. (2022) who analyzed the visual meaning in Bank Mandiri's Annual Report, with the main difference being the object of study, namely the 2023 Sustainability Report of PT Pertamina. Meanwhile, Taslim (2024) examined the 2022 Sustainability Report of PT Astra Agro Lestari and showed that visual elements such as the color green, recycling symbols, and images of male and female workers were used to represent collaboration, equality, and environmental responsibility. Both studies still focus on Peirce's semiotics, which emphasizes the relationship between signs and meaning without addressing the ideology behind visual representations. Based on this gap, this study uses Roland Barthes's semiotic approach to explore the layers of meaning—denotation, connotation, and myth—in PT Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report. Pertamina was chosen because of its strategic role in the energy sector and its contribution to sustainable development. This study focuses on how the report's visual elements and opening narrative shape the symbolic meaning and sustainability ideology constructed by the company. Furthermore, this study provides an opportunity to examine the extent to which the symbolic messages constructed by the company are understood by readers or stakeholders. This study seeks to explain the effectiveness of PT Pertamina's visual communication in conveying sustainability messages. Therefore, it is interesting for researchers to examine the symbolic meaning on the cover of PT Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report using key concepts from Roland Barthes's semiotic theory to understand how visual representation plays a role in shaping the company's sustainable image in the public eye.

## **2. THEORETICAL BASIS AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Semiotics**

Semiotics is a branch of science that studies signs and how these signs are used by humans to construct, convey, and interpret meaning in various communication contexts. Through semiotics, every social, cultural, and even economic phenomenon can be viewed as a system of signs that represent certain values, ideologies, and identities. According to Susanti and Ikaputra (2024), semiotics functions as a scientific study that explores how signs work in society, where social and cultural phenomena are understood as symbols that contain hidden meanings and messages. Meanwhile, Nur Aini and Khaerunnisa (2024) emphasize that semiotics makes codes and signs the main objects of analysis, because it is through the combination and relationship between signs that meaning can be constructed and

communicated. In this context, semiotics not only highlights the relationship between signifier and signified, but also examines how meaning is influenced by social, historical, and ideological factors. Thus, semiotics becomes an important tool for understanding the representation of reality in texts, media, architecture, advertising, and other popular cultural products. This approach allows researchers to uncover layers of meaning that are not immediately apparent, while simultaneously understanding how symbols play a role in shaping the worldview of modern society. In his work *Mythologies* (1957), Roland Barthes introduced a semiotic theory that distinguishes three main layers of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation is understood as the basic or literal meaning of a sign, while connotation includes additional meanings formed through social context, culture, and the collective experiences of society. Barthes views myth as a second-level system of meaning that functions to reproduce dominant values and ideologies so that they appear natural in everyday life. Through this semiotic approach, Barthes explores how signs in popular culture contain ideological messages hidden behind their surface meanings. In the context of this research, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is used to interpret the symbolic meaning of sustainability contained in the cover and opening narrative of PT Pertamina's 2023 sustainability report. Through an analysis of visual and narrative signs, this research seeks to uncover the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings that shape the company's sustainability image.

## **2.2 Legitimacy Theory**

Legitimacy theory explains that the sustainability of an organization depends on its ability to act in accordance with societal values, norms, and expectations. According to Gray (2006), legitimacy is a psychological state that arises when an organization operates within the boundaries of generally accepted social norms and values, thereby gaining public support for its activities. In the context of sustainability reporting, this theory explains that disclosing social, environmental, and governance information is carried out not only to fulfill transparency obligations but also to demonstrate the company's responsibility towards public issues and maintain a positive image in the eyes of stakeholders. Gray emphasizes that non-financial reporting serves as a strategic tool that companies can use to shape public perception, strengthen their reputation, and reduce the potential for social conflict resulting from their operational activities. In line with this, research by Akhter et al. (2023) shows that companies use sustainability reporting to gain and maintain social legitimacy amidst increasing public and regulatory pressure. In the context of this research, legitimacy theory is used to examine how PT Pertamina seeks to gain and maintain social acceptance through the presentation of information in its 2023 Sustainability Report. Through this perspective, the research focuses on how visual and narrative disclosures in the report are used as a corporate communication strategy to demonstrate the company's alignment with societal values, norms, and expectations.

## **2.3 Sustainability Reporting(Sustainability Report)**

A sustainability report is a form of non-financial reporting that affirms an organization's commitment to the principles of transparency, accountability, and social responsibility. Through this report, a company not only presents information on its economic performance but also explains the social and environmental impacts of its operations. According to the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI, 2021), sustainability reporting is an organization's commitment to disclosing its contribution to sustainable development through ethical, transparent, and accountable business practices. The GRI emphasizes that the report serves as a means of communication between the organization and its stakeholders regarding the positive and negative impacts of its business activities. In line with this view, Limarwati et al. (2024) stated that sustainability reports include integrated and accountable disclosure of economic, social, environmental, and governance activities. This reporting plays a crucial role in demonstrating corporate responsibility towards society and the environment and serves as a measure of the extent to which business practices align with global sustainability goals (Sustainable Development Goals). Meanwhile, Nugrahani (2023) emphasized that the primary objective of sustainability reports is to increase an organization's transparency and accountability to stakeholders, both internal and external, by providing relevant information regarding strategies, policies, and sustainable performance results. In the context of corporate communications, the cover of a sustainability report serves as a visual representation of a company's commitment to sustainability. Visual elements such as colors, images, and symbols convey meaning that reflect the company's sustainability identity and values. Therefore, the cover plays a crucial role in shaping public perception of the company's sustainability image and message.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative approach with Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method. The qualitative approach was chosen because the primary objective of this study was to understand the symbolic meanings contained in the visual and narrative representations on the cover and opening narrative of PT Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability

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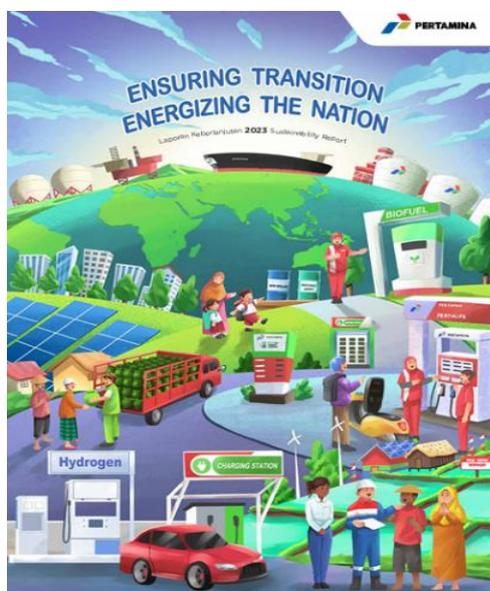
Report, not to quantitatively measure the frequency or intensity of messages. Roland Barthes' semiotic method was used to interpret three levels of sign meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. At the denotation stage, researchers identified the literal or direct meanings apparent in the visual elements and text narrative. The connotation stage was then used to examine the cultural and emotional meanings inherent in these signs, such as associations of color, shape, or diction that represent certain values. Meanwhile, the myth stage was used to uncover ideological meanings naturalized in the text and visuals, for example, how the concept of "sustainability" is positioned as a natural and universal truth in corporate imagery. This research is descriptive and analytical in nature, attempting to describe and interpret the hidden meanings behind the symbols, colors, and narratives used by PT Pertamina in constructing its sustainability image. The research object includes the cover of the sustainability report (as the primary visual representation). Data were obtained through documentation and document observation techniques, by downloading and reviewing PT Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report accessed through the company's official website (<https://www.pertamina.com>). The analysis was conducted by interpreting visual cues such as colors, images, icons, and layouts, as well as examining the linguistic messages in the opening narrative. Furthermore, the results of the analysis were interpreted based on Barthes' framework to examine the relationship between signs, meanings (signified), and ideology (myth) that form the symbolic message of sustainability in the report.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

PT Pertamina (Persero) is a national energy company engaged in the exploration, production, processing, distribution, and marketing of oil, natural gas, and renewable energy. As a State-Owned Enterprise (BUMN), Pertamina plays a strategic role in providing energy for national needs and is a driving force behind Indonesia's energy independence. Established on December 10, 1957, Pertamina has grown into one of the largest energy companies in Southeast Asia with various business lines, including upstream oil and gas, processing and petrochemicals, trading, renewable energy, and shipping and energy infrastructure (Pertamina, 2023). Throughout its journey, Pertamina continues to transform its business through digitalization, operational efficiency, and clean energy development to support the transition to sustainable energy. Through the Pertamina Sustainable Energy Program (Pertamina Sustainable Energy Program), the company is committed to achieving the Net Zero Emission (NZE) target by 2060, in line with the Indonesian government's agenda. This program focuses on three main pillars: Environmental, Social, and Governance, known as the ESG principles.

### 4.1 Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis of the Cover of PT Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report

The cover of PT Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report features a combination of green and blue with visuals of wind turbines, energy refineries, and human silhouettes. The overarching theme, "Ensuring Transition, Energizing the Nation," reflects the company's commitment to supporting a sustainable national energy transition. This cover was chosen as the focus of this research because it serves as the first visual text to convey the ideological message of sustainability to the public.



#### **4.1.1 Denotative Meaning**

At the denotative level, the visual elements on the cover of PT Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report present a literal image of the world of energy, the environment, and technological advancement. The cover features illustrations of wind turbines, solar panels, and Pertamina's energy facilities, symbolizing the company's involvement in the development of new and renewable energy (NRE). This visual representation concretely demonstrates the company's transformation from dependence on fossil fuels to the use of cleaner and more sustainable energy sources. By highlighting modern energy infrastructure, Pertamina communicates its commitment to being an active part of the national energy system transformation process. The dominance of blue and green emphasizes the visual message being conveyed. Blue is literally associated with the sky and water, reflecting stability, depth, and serenity—characteristics that align with the image of a reliable and high-tech corporation. Meanwhile, green symbolizes freshness, life, and ecological balance, becoming a universal symbol for sustainability and environmental awareness. The combination of these two colors is not merely an aesthetic element, but also creates a visual meaning that combines two important worlds: rational industrial technology and sustainable nature, in line with the main message being emphasized through the report.

The top of the cover features the Pertamina logo in its distinctive red, blue, and green color combination. The logo serves as a corporate signifier that emphasizes the company's national identity and modernity. Red symbolizes the spirit of nationalism, courage, and energy, blue depicts professionalism and trust, and green represents responsibility for environmental sustainability. Within Roland Barthes's semiotic framework, the logo functions as a sign with first-order meaning, namely the literal meaning derived from the corporate sign system to strengthen the company's identity as a professional entity committed to sustainability. The main theme, "Ensuring Transition, Energizing the Nation," is centrally placed on the cover layout and becomes the visual focus. Linguistically, this phrase conveys an explicit message about Pertamina's commitment to ensuring a smooth transition to new and renewable energy without neglecting its strategic role as the nation's primary energy provider. The word "ensuring" signifies certainty and responsibility, while "energizing the nation" conveys a dynamic and patriotic spirit that emphasizes the company's contribution to the nation's economic development.

The overall layout is symmetrical and proportional, creating a visual balance between natural and technological elements. This harmonious composition creates an impression of order and professionalism, conveying Pertamina's image as a large, structured and visionary organization. The modern sans-serif typography reinforces the futuristic feel, emphasizing the company's focus on innovation and efficiency in addressing global energy challenges. The denotative meanings contained in all visual and linguistic elements are both informative and representational. Each component reflects the factual reality of Pertamina's position as a national energy company transforming toward sustainable business practices. Within Barthes' (1957) framework, these signs represent literal messages depicting the world as it is: the energy industry adapting to the demands of global sustainability. The imagery presented through the cover visualization not only captures a concrete image of energy infrastructure but also serves as a visual statement of the legitimacy of corporate action in supporting the national energy transition. Pertamina presents itself as a technological, organized, and patriotic entity, committed to the vision of "energy for the nation" and concretely moving toward a sustainable, green energy era.

#### **4.1.2 Connotative Meaning**

At the connotative level, the visual elements on the cover of PT Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report function beyond mere literal representation, becoming a sign system imbued with symbolic, cultural, and ideological meaning. From Roland Barthes' (1957) perspective, the connotation stage is the process by which visual signs transcend the boundaries of surface meaning and produce second-order meaning, meaning formed through interaction with the surrounding social, cultural, and ideological contexts. The blue and green color palette on the cover carries strong and complex connotations. While denotatively representing sky and water, connotatively it is associated with stability, trust, and technological advancement. This color is often used by large corporations to build a professional, rational, and trustworthy image (Sundberg & Trast, 2025). In the context of Pertamina, blue projects technological strength and corporate authority in energy management, while also conveying a message of calm and assurance to stakeholders that the energy transition process is proceeding in a planned and safe direction. Meanwhile, the color green carries connotations of environmental ethics, balance, and sustainable living. Culturally, green is associated with freshness and hope for a sustainable future. The combination of blue and green in balanced proportions creates a symbolic meaning of harmony between technological progress and environmental sustainability. This composition reflects the idea that energy industrialization does not have to conflict with the principles of ecological sustainability. This visualization represents the concept of eco-modernism as explained by Dryzek (2013), namely the view that places technological innovation as the primary solution to environmental

problems without having to fundamentally change the economic structure. The presence of wind turbine and solar panel elements enriches the connotative layer through the representation of green technology icons and clean energy transition symbols. Their juxtaposition with oil refinery infrastructure creates a meaningful relationship that signifies Pertamina's efforts to build a narrative of coexistence between fossil fuels and renewable energy. Within Barthes' semiotic framework, the juxtaposition of these two symbols creates an ideological connotation that old and new energy are not mutually exclusive entities, but rather part of a continuous evolutionary process. This narrative emphasizes Pertamina's position as a corporation that is not simply abandoning its old identity as an oil company, but is constructing a new identity as an energy company that is progressive and adaptive to global change.

The human silhouette featured on the front cover adds a humanistic dimension to the representation of sustainability. Symbolically, the human figure signifies the individual's active involvement in the energy transition process, not merely as a beneficiary but as an agent of change. This representation implies that sustainability is a moral and social issue that demands collective participation, not merely a technological or economic agenda. The presence of the human element also provides an emotional touch that strengthens the relationship between the company and the public, emphasizing the value of humanity in the corporate narrative. Significant connotative meaning also emerges from the use of the linguistic theme "Ensuring Transition, Energizing the Nation." The choice of English as the primary medium signifies Pertamina's affiliation with the discourse of globalization and modernity. Semiotically, foreign languages are often associated with images of prestige, modernity, and connection to the international order. Through this slogan, Pertamina emphasizes its role as part of the global energy community, aligned with the sustainable energy transition agenda as stipulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement. The phrase "ensuring transition" implies the corporation's moral responsibility in ensuring the success of the change, while "energizing the nation" reflects a patriotic and nationalistic spirit that combines global values with local identity.

The choice of modern sans-serif typography conveys visual connotations of efficiency, rationality, and technological innovation. The orderly layout of the text, juxtaposed with the visual elements, creates a symbolic balance between verbal narrative and visual representation, signifying the harmony between logos (rationality) and ethos (corporate morality). The design serves as a rhetorical strategy that articulates Pertamina's commitment to technological, ethical, and social transformation. The overall visual and linguistic construction of the cover creates a symbolic narrative that reinforces the corporate sustainability ideology. Pertamina presents itself as an innovative, nationalistic, and environmentally responsible entity. The image constructed demonstrates a future orientation grounded in national values, while simultaneously demonstrating openness to global dynamics. From Barthes' perspective, these visual signs work to subtly instill the ideology of sustainability through a process of naturalization, so that the ideological message appears natural and is accepted as common truth. The connotative meaning of the cover of PT Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report ultimately indicates a shift in corporate discourse from simply reporting performance to establishing an ideological identity. This identity is built not only on economic efficiency but also on moral legitimacy as a company committed to sustainability and national energy sovereignty.

#### **4.1.3 The Myth of Sustainability**

At the myth level, the signs appearing on the cover of PT Pertamina's 2023 Sustainability Report no longer merely convey factual or symbolic messages, but have transformed into ideological constructs considered "natural" and commonplace in public consciousness. Roland Barthes (1957) explains that myth is the third stage of the sign system, namely when connotative meanings repeatedly presented in social and cultural contexts are then accepted as universal truths. The primary function of myth is to naturalize ideology, transforming certain worldviews into appearing neutral, logical, and irrefutable. In the visual and linguistic context of Pertamina's sustainability report cover, this sign system forms what can be called a "corporate sustainability myth," namely the ideological narrative that fossil-based energy companies can be key agents in the transition to a sustainable future.

The phrase "Energizing the Nation," for example, serves not only as a motivational slogan but also carries a profound ideological connotation. Sustainability is articulated within the framework of economic nationalism, where Pertamina positions itself not merely as a business entity but as a symbol of Indonesia's energy sovereignty. In a Barthesian sense, this reflects a form of patriotic myth of corporate identity, where environmental responsibility is transformed into a form of devotion to the nation. By linking global issues such as the energy transition to the national mission, Pertamina naturalizes the idea that maintaining sustainability is part of national responsibility. This image serves as moral legitimacy for the corporation's existence amidst global pressures on the oil and gas industry. Sustainability is then mythologized as an expression of patriotism: through clean energy, the company "energizes the nation." Semiotically, this myth serves as an ideological bridge that unites the discourse of global sustainability with the values of Indonesian energy nationalism.

Furthermore, the narrative of technology as the savior of sustainability reinforces the second layer of myth. Visualizations of wind turbines, solar panels, and modern energy facilities imply that technological progress is the answer to the energy and environmental crises. In Barthes's view, this myth operates through the simplification of complexity mechanism, reducing structural problems to mere technical issues, thus narrowing sustainability solutions to innovation and efficiency. This narrative intersects with the ideology of eco-modernism, a view that positions technology as the key to saving the earth without the need to change the capitalist economic structure (Dryzek, 2022). In the context of Pertamina's visuals, the presence of an oil refinery alongside wind turbines and solar panels signifies that old and new energy can coexist harmoniously. This myth naturalizes the idea that oil companies can be pioneers of sustainability, even though their economic foundations still depend on the exploitation of fossil resources. Thus, the myth of technology serves to neutralize the contradiction between the extractive economy and the discourse of sustainability. In Barthes's terms, this is a form of depoliticized speech—visual language that erases socio-economic tensions and presents the energy transition as a natural technological process, rather than an arena for conflicting interests or shifting power structures.

The next layer of myth is rooted in the image of harmony between the energy business and nature. The dominance of blue and green on the cover creates a sense of balance between industry and the environment, between exploitation and conservation. Within a Barthesian framework, these colors no longer function simply as signifiers of water and plants, but have become a symbolic form of naturalization, representing the ideal, peaceful relationship between humans, technology, and nature. This visual construction fosters the perception that energy industry activities can proceed without disrupting ecological balance as long as they are packaged within a framework of sustainability. Thus, the paradox between oil production and environmental preservation is softened into a harmonious and socially acceptable moral image. This myth of harmony presents sustainability as a universal, conflict-free value, despite the reality that the energy transition issue harbors tensions between economic, social, and ecological interests. Through its aesthetic visual presentation, Pertamina successfully instills the belief that sustainability is a natural condition inherent in the company's identity—an ideological construct that tames complex realities. These three layers of myth culminate in the primary function of myth in corporate communication: as a means of symbolic legitimacy (Gray, 2006). By framing sustainability issues in the language of nationalism, technological progress, and natural harmony, Pertamina constructs a moral image that its energy business operations are not only legitimate but also ethical. Within the framework of legitimacy theory, the sustainability myth serves to align corporate values with societal values. This process results in what Barthes calls the mythification of ideology, the disguise of capitalist economic ideology behind seemingly neutral moral and natural signs. Through this mechanism, business interests are presented as a social calling, and corporate strategy is interpreted as acting for the collective welfare.

## 4.2 Discussion

A semiotic analysis of the cover of PT Pertamina (Persero)'s 2023 Sustainability Report shows that the visual elements displayed are not only aesthetic but also serve as a medium for ideological communication. Through Roland Barthes's sign system of denotation, connotation, and myth, Pertamina builds a modern, nationalistic, and sustainable corporate image. At the denotative level, the images of wind turbines, solar panels, and energy facilities represent Pertamina's efforts toward clean energy, while the dominant colors blue and green represent stability, technological progress, and ecological balance. The three-color logo (red, blue, and green) emphasizes national identity and the spirit of sustainability. This visual explicitly demonstrates Pertamina's transformation from a fossil fuel company to an entity that adapts to environmental challenges.

At the connotative level, these symbols convey deeper ideological meaning. The combination of blue and green signifies harmony between industry and nature, aligning with the eco-modernist notion (Dryzek, 2022) that technological innovation can provide solutions to environmental crises without halting economic growth. Visual elements such as wind turbines and solar panels adjacent to oil refineries emphasize the continuity between old and new energy sources, while human silhouettes symbolize the human dimension of the energy transition process. The main theme, "Ensuring Transition, Energizing the Nation," emphasizes Pertamina's dual identity as a global corporation and a national symbol. The use of English reflects engagement in the international sustainability discourse, while the phrase "energizing the nation" conveys a spirit of patriotism and responsibility to the nation. Semiotically, the combination of visuals and text creates a narrative that the energy transition is both a form of national service and part of global progress. At the mythical level, this visualization constructs a "corporate sustainability myth," the belief that fossil-based energy companies can be key agents of environmental conservation. Through symbols of nationalism, technology, and natural harmony, Pertamina naturalizes the idea that sustainability is an inherent part of its identity. In line with legitimacy theory (Gray, 2006), this visual construction serves to

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strengthen the company's social acceptance and affirm its moral standing before the public. These findings align with the legitimacy theory proposed by Gray (2006), which states that companies use sustainability reporting as a means of gaining social acceptance and strengthening their legitimacy. Pertamina, through its report cover, attempts to demonstrate alignment between economic interests, social values, and environmental commitment. These findings also align with research by De Villiers et al. (2022), who found that companies in the global energy sector frequently employ sustainability communication strategies to build a positive reputation and address pressures over carbon emissions. Nationally, these findings echo those of Rusli et al. (2025), who demonstrated that Indonesian state-owned enterprises frequently utilize nationalist narratives in sustainability reporting to strengthen their corporate image as an integral part of national development.

## CONCLUSION

A semiotic analysis of the cover of PT Pertamina (Persero)'s 2023 Sustainability Report shows that the report's visual and linguistic elements not only function aesthetically but also contain strong ideological meanings. The combination of blue and green, the symbols of wind turbines and solar panels, and the theme "Ensuring Transition, Energizing the Nation" form a narrative that emphasizes Pertamina's identity as a national energy company undergoing a transformation towards sustainability. Through a system of signs analyzed based on Roland Barthes' framework, denotative meanings develop into connotative meanings and ultimately produce a corporate sustainability myth, namely the belief that oil companies can be moral agents in the energy transition. These visual meanings demonstrate how Pertamina builds its image as an entity that is not solely profit-oriented but also committed to social and environmental responsibility. Within the context of legitimacy theory, the sustainability report cover serves as a symbolic tool to strengthen social acceptance and emphasize the alignment between corporate and societal values. By showcasing the harmony between technology, nature, and nationalism, Pertamina seeks to instill the perception that sustainability is a natural part of the company's identity and mission. Practically, this research confirms that sustainability report covers play a crucial role in corporate communication strategies. Purposeful and meaningful visual design can be an effective means of building a company's reputation and strengthening its credibility in the public eye. Therefore, a semiotic approach can be utilized by other companies to understand how report visualization contributes to the formation of meaning, image, and legitimacy in the sustainability arena.

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