DIET AND GENERATION Z PERSONALITY: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF YULIA BALTSCHUN'S YOUTUBE CONTENT

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the diet failure of Generation Z through the lens of Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis using Yulia Baltschun's YouTube content as a case study. The purpose of this study is to identify the meanings shown through the symbols contained in Yulia Baltschun's YouTube account. The research method used is Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis. The results obtained show that the meaning of the denotation displayed on Yulia Baltschun's YouTube account is through diet, exercise patterns, and daily habits. The meaning of the connotation that can be explored from Yulia Baltschun's YouTube account is that a person's attitude in living life determines the success of their diet. In conclusion, revealing the symbols revealed on Yulia Baltschun's account give insight to those who want to have an ideal body with healthy habits. The study also highlights the importance of semiotic analysis in understanding the implicit messages conveyed by influencers on social media. Additionally, the study emphasizes that the interpretation of the meaning of these symbols can vary depending on the cultural background and personal experiences of the audience.

Keywords: Diet, Gen Z, Semiotic, Roland Barthes, YouTube

DIET DAN KEPRIBADIAN GENERASI Z: ANALISIS SEMIOTIKA KONTEN YOUTUBE YULIA BALTSCHUN

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis kegagalan diet Generasi Z melalui analisis semiotika Roland Barthes dengan menggunakan konten YouTube Yulia Baltschun sebagai studi kasus. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi makna yang ditunjukkan melalui simbol-simbol yang terdapat dalam akun YouTube Yulia Baltschun. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah analisis semiotika Roland Barthes. Hasil yang diperoleh menunjukkan bahwa makna denotasi yang ditampilkan pada akun YouTube Yulia Baltschun adalah melalui pola makan, pola olahraga, dan kebiasaan sehari-hari. Makna konotasi yang dapat dieksplorasi dari akun YouTube Yulia Baltschun adalah bahwa sikap seseorang dalam menjalani hidup menentukan keberhasilan dietnya. Kesimpulannya, mengungkap simbol-simbol yang terungkap pada akun Yulia Baltschun memberikan wawasan bagi mereka yang ingin memiliki tubuh ideal dengan kebiasaan sehat. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti pentingnya analisis semiotika dalam memahami pesan tersirat yang disampaikan oleh para influencer di media sosial. Selain itu, penelitian ini menekankan bahwa penafsiran makna simbol-simbol tersebut dapat bervariasi tergantung pada latar belakang budaya dan pengalaman pribadi audiens.

Kata kunci: Diet, Gen Z, Semiotika, Roland Barthes, YouTube

INTRODUCTION

The word "diet" comes from the Greek word δίαιτα (diatia), which means mental and physical health. Dieting is more than a personal endeavor; it is deeply embedded in cultural and historical contexts. Since ancient Greece, the concept of "diet" has evolved from a balanced way of life to its modern interpretation, often focused on weight management (Khawandanah & Tewfik, 2016). Despite its ubiquity, the global failure rate for diets remains alarmingly high, with 65% of dieters regaining lost weight within three years (Engber, 2019). These figures suggest a disconnect between the messaging around diet and its practical application, particularly among younger generations.

According to the World Health Organization (Ahmed & Konje, 2023), more than 1.9 billion adults worldwide were overweight in 2016, including 650 million who were obese. WHO also reported that the prevalence of obesity worldwide nearly tripled between 1975 and 2016, and obesity is now recognized as one of the most important public health problems facing the world today. Furthermore, The World Health Organization, estimates that in 2020 approximately 770 million adults worldwide are obese, and this figure is expected to exceed one billion by 2030 if urgent action is not taken. Childhood obesity is also a growing concern, with an estimated 41 million children under the age of 5 years being overweight or obese in 2016 (Organization, 2016). According to (Jamil et al., 2023), diet is the leading cause of obesity. Generation Z born between 1997 and 2012 is uniquely positioned at the intersection of digital connectivity and evolving social norms. This demographic is heavily influenced by media consumption, with platforms like YouTube serving as primary sources of information and inspiration. Research shows that 96% of Gen Z individuals are active YouTube users, making the platform an essential tool for engaging this audience (Jain & Arakkal, 2022).

Dieting among Gen Z is particularly challenging due to specific personality traits, such as a preference for instant gratification and a tendency toward social conformity (Moreno et al., 2023). As digital natives, this cohort seeks content that combines authenticity, accessibility, and actionable advice—characteristics embodied by influencers like Yulia Baltschun.

Yulia Baltschun, a certified nutritionist and fitness influencer, has amassed over 2.4 million subscribers on YouTube. Her content emphasizes a holistic approach to dieting, integrating physical health with psychological well-being. By blending evidence-based nutritional advice with relatable anecdotes, Yulia positions herself as an authority figure capable of bridging the gap between expert knowledge and everyday challenges.

In the scope of diet YouTubers in Indonesia, Yulia Baltschun leads and is superior compared to her competitors. The great influence she has in fulfilling the healthy diet information needs of her viewers shows that her content is very useful and trustworthy for her audience (Fajriani et al., 2021). Yulia Baltschun's strengths include her ability to combine the cooking knowledge she gained as a graduate of the Masterchef Season 4 cooking contest with health sciences, creating a channel that not only presents nutritious healthy diet menus but also does not torture her followers. In addition, Yulia discusses facts and myths about diets, helping her viewers understand the correct information about healthy diets. On the other hand, there are several competitors of Yulia

Baltschun, such as SKWAD Fitness which focuses on sports and health, providing workout tutorials and tips to make dieting more enjoyable. Gita VBPR discusses healthy diets and healthy lifestyles, providing tips and advice on how to live a healthy diet. Shiely Venessa provides inspiration for those who want to live a healthy lifestyle on a budget through tips on healthy and economical menus for boarding house residents, as well as a fitness guide for beginners.

The research question in this study is how semiotic messages from Yulia Baltschun on YouTube shape perceptions of dieting among Gen Z? Employing Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, the research investigates the denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings embedded in her videos.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Previous research has discussed "Personal Branding of Yulia Baltschun as a Diet Influencer through Youtube" (Silaban et al., 2019). This research aims to explain Yulia Baltschun's personal branding as a diet influencer on YouTube, in line with her competencies, standards, and style. The method used is a descriptive method with qualitative data, relying on interviews, literature studies, and observation as data collection techniques. The results of the study show that Yulia's competencies in her personal branding include her roles as a chef, certified nutritionist, and fitness model. Yulia uses YouTube with the aim of changing public perception of diets which are often considered difficult and expensive.

The standards in her personal branding are divided into technical standards, related to YouTube account management, and practical standards, which include maximizing social media interactions with the audience. Yulia's personal branding style can be categorized into two aspects, namely personality and appearance. Yulia's appearance characterizes a casual and attractive impression, while her uniqueness lies in the diet method which is explained in an easy and fun way. Research suggestions include highlighting Yulia's ability in diet variations, increasing interaction with the audience, and expanding the diet information network through collaboration with diet influencers and other professionals. In addition to highlighting the uniqueness of the appearance, interaction with the audience also needs to be enriched with special uniqueness. This research became the basis for dissecting it through Roland Batthes' semiotic analysis.

Semiotics and Roland Barthes

Semiotics, derived from the Greek word "semeion" (sign), is the study of symbols and their interpretations (Matus, 2018). Roland Barthes expanded on Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic model to analyze cultural phenomena, introducing the concepts of denotation, connotation, and mythology as key components of meaning-making.

1. Denotation refers to the literal or surface meaning of a sign.
2. Connotation involves the cultural and emotional associations connected to the sign.
3. Mythology represents the broader ideological narratives that shape collective understanding.

Myths can be considered as a type of conversation, where anything can become a myth if it is conveyed through discourse. Myths are part of the semiological system, so myths are

inseparable from the process of meaning and become the starting point in the development of semiotic science. Barthes argues that myths have the purpose of giving meaning to history or natural justification, making uncertainty seem eternal. Barthes' view describes myths as a topic of conversation that refers to uncertainty, becoming a discourse that continues to emerge in society. Myths also carry ideologies that shape people's mindsets and create contexts of meaning related to culture (Prasetya, 2019). Myths can be considered a product of a social class that has a certain dominance (Vera, 2014). Barthes' framework is particularly useful for analyzing media content, where symbols are often layered with implicit meanings that reinforce societal norms or challenge them.

Application to Digital Media

In the context of YouTube, semiotics can reveal how influencers construct narratives that resonate with diverse audiences. Visual elements, language choices, and symbolic representations in videos contribute to shaping viewers' perceptions and behaviors. Yulia Baltschun's content serves as a case study for examining these dynamics, particularly in the realm of dieting and personality.

Lifestyle and Generation Z

Lifestyle refers to a person's pattern of living, including their behaviors, habits, and activities they engage in daily. This concept can be interpreted in various situations, such as in the context of healthy-lifestyle, lifestyle-based medicine, and lifestyle adjustments for former athletes. Healthy lifestyle describes habits that support physical and mental health, such as regular exercise, healthy eating, and stress management (Petraitis, 2019).

A medical approach that uses lifestyle changes, including diet, physical activity, stress management, and sleep, to prevent and treat chronic diseases (Guthrie, 2018). Former athletes' lifestyle can undergo significant transformations after retiring from sports, often involving changes in identity and adjustment to new routines (Yao et al., 2020). Thus, lifestyle encompasses various aspects that reflect how each individual lives their daily lives.

Generational theory explains that a person's perspective and behavior are shaped by the era in which they were born. This creates variations in lifestyle and preferences between different generations, sometimes triggering intergenerational conflicts (Simonyan, 2023). For example, Generation Z, born in the digital technology era, show significant differences in their consumption concepts and shopping habits compared to previous generations. They pay close attention to product personalization and uniqueness and tend to prioritize sustainable products. In addition, they have a high concern for racial equality and are firm opponents of brands that support racism (Wang, 2021). These changes reflect the ever-changing social and cultural dynamics, shaping the uniqueness of the current generation's identity and behavior.

Gen Z tends to have unique personalities, mainly due to their different life experiences and technologies. According to (Simonyan, 2023), this often conflicts with the personalities of previous generations, creating tension and disagreement. This incompatibility can appear in approaches to technology, political views, cultural values, and ways of communicating.

Diet and Personality

A diet is, in essence, an individual's eating pattern. However, there is often a misunderstanding surrounding what a diet really means. Dieting is not just about trying to lose weight, although that can be one of the goals. Baltschun in her book stated a diet is a specific pattern of eating that is followed routinely or becomes a habit (Baltschun, 2021). This eating pattern can be tailored to an individual's needs, including weight loss, managing a medical condition, gaining weight, or improving overall health.

When choosing a healthy diet, it is important to avoid some common misconceptions. Weight loss surgery is not a quick fix for obesity, but rather a serious medical procedure that requires significant lifestyle changes (van Etten & Grimaldi, 2011).

Additionally, it is important to understand the role of fat and carbohydrates in the diet. Low-fat foods are not always a healthy choice, as they often contain sugar or other unhealthy ingredients. On the other hand, carbohydrates, a vital source of energy, should not be considered the enemy in weight loss, as long as they are chosen from complex carbohydrate sources such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables (Hans, 2022).

Personality refers to a unique set of characteristics, traits, behaviors, and thought patterns that define a person (Taradanov et al., 2019). It encompasses various aspects, including emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. The goal of studying personality is to understand differences between individuals and how these differences influence their behavior, thoughts, and emotions (Sacco, 2022). Personality can be studied in a variety of contexts, such as socioeconomics, personality disorders, customer satisfaction, and individual and group social interactions (Krüger, 2016). Although it tends to be stable, recent research has revealed the potential for using digital applications to guide people in changing their personality and trigger the change process (Allemand & Flückiger, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

This qualitative study analyzes selected videos from Yulia Baltschun's YouTube channel, focusing on themes of diet and personality. The primary data includes video clips, viewer comments, and interviews with subscribers. Secondary data consists of scholarly articles, books, and online resources related to semiotics, dieting, and Generation Z.

The two videos selected as sources of analysis in this study are "5 Reasons Why Beginners Often Fail Diets Even Though They Are Actively Dieting & Exercising" and "2 Tips for Consistent Dieting". These two videos are considered to cover all explanations about the role of personality in the success or failure of a diet. In addition, Yulia Baltschun also calls both videos motivational videos, which further emphasizes the importance of personality aspects in an effective diet program.

Analytical Approach

In this study, the analysis uses Roland Barthes' semiotic method to understand Yulia Baltschun's YouTube content on Gen Z diet and personality. This qualitative approach involves analyzing written and spoken content to understand meaning in a social context.

The research examines:

1. Denotative Meanings: Practical advice and explicit messages conveyed in Yulia's videos.
2. Connotative Meanings: Implicit cultural associations and emotional appeals.
3. Mythological Meanings: Overarching narratives about dieting and self-improvement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Denotative and Connotative Meanings

The signs discussed here can be considered as a way to find answers within humans. Therefore, researchers analyze the signs found in Yulia Baltschun's YouTube content related to diet and personality. YouTube has objects and signs that function as a means of communication between messages that Yulia Baltschun will convey to viewers besides just providing information.

Denotation refers to the direct and literal meaning given to a word, phrase, symbol, or concept (Zuhair Ahmed Saleh, 2022). Representing the objective and factual aspects of language use, in contrast to connotation, which involves emotional, cultural, or social implications that are related beyond the basic definition. In Yulia Baltschun's YouTube content, denotation meaning is the things that are shown in the form of illustrations and dialogues.

Yulia Baltschun's prominence in terms of body gestures is shown with a medium shot of her body position facing forward. Showing Yulia's hand gestures. This is done to clarify Yulia Baltschun's words. According to Hamdany & Damanhuri, (2017) people who like casual clothes speak casually and in a friendly manner. They tend to use an informal and open style of speech, even in work situations. Their communication

skills help build a culture of generosity (Mohd Noor et al., 2021). So it can be concluded that Yulia Baltschun has a relaxed, friendly, and open style of speech.

In her speech, Yulia Baltschun said that many of her followers told or commented on their diet efforts that did not produce results, even though all efforts had been made starting from maintaining a diet, exercising, and so on. The term "diet failure" is often used to describe a situation where someone fails to lose weight or improve their health through changes in diet. Seen from the image of a woman who is stressed in the visual (Annesi, 2024).

The word "we" used by Yulia refers to Yulia and the Athletic Woman in the visual. Explaining that they have similarities in nature in dieting such as being dedicated, tough, and disciplined. The word tough here means being firm or not tolerating any reasons not to commit to a diet. Yulia emphasizes that achieving the dream body that "we" have comes from hard work, not from luck factors such as genetics.

The first mistake that kills motivation is your lack of logic. The word refers to the audience who feels that they have tried various types of diet efforts but still fail. Yulia said that to achieve a result, a process is needed. Results can be interpreted as achievements or output obtained from an activity or process. "... try using your logic, how many days does it take you to walk from here to Bandung? The body needs a long time to adjust to get to a certain point." said Yulia Baltschun. "So once again, use your logic, don't let a lack of logic kill your motivation." "Come on, one month is like a little bit, so don't panic first, do it for 3 months..." Yulia Baltschun used the analogy of "walking from Jakarta to Bandung".

Likewise, the body needs time to adjust to achieve a certain target.

Yulia Baltschun explains that dedication is the main key to achieving dreams. The meaning of dedication is devotion or strong commitment to one's goals or dreams. Knowing what you want and setting goals are important first steps. She suggests allocating time, money, and energy wisely, prioritizing useful things. The meaning of allocating is organizing and using these resources effectively and efficiently to achieve goals. For example, instead of spending money on unnecessary items such as lipstick, it is better to allocate it for necessities such as food containers or drinking bottles that can support success and achieve the goals set. In addition, Yulia also emphasized the importance of utilizing time by doing useful things, such as doing research to achieve the desired results, rather than just spending it on unproductive activities such as surfing Instagram. In the context of thinking, she suggests focusing on yourself and how to improve yourself, not thinking about irrelevant things or other people.

Yulia's videos provide a rich tapestry of symbols that convey practical and psychological dimensions of dieting.

1. Visual Representations of Discipline

   Yulia frequently uses imagery such as neatly arranged meal plans, exercise routines, and time-lapse videos of food preparation. These visuals denote the importance of planning and consistency in achieving dietary goals. Connotatively, they evoke a sense of order and control, appealing to viewers who associate discipline with success.

2. Language and Emotional Resonance

   Yulia employs relatable language, often sharing personal anecdotes to demystify the dieting process. For example, in her video titled "5 Reasons BEGINNERS OFTEN FAIL DIETS," she uses phrases like "semua orang punya titik lemah" ("everyone has a weak point") to normalize failure and encourage resilience. The connotative meaning here is empowerment, suggesting that setbacks are part of the journey.

3. Generational Alignment
   Her use of memes, slang, and pop culture references aligns with Gen Z's communication style. This approach not only makes her content accessible but also establishes a sense of community among viewers.

The Role of Personality in Dieting

Generation Z's unique personality traits significantly influence their approach to dieting. Research highlights several barriers, including: Distraction and Lack of Focus: Gen Z often struggles with maintaining long-term goals due to their preference for instant gratification (Moreno et al., 2023). Social Influences: Peer pressure to conform in social settings can undermine dietary commitments (Mahasuweerachai et al., 2023).

The second mistake that causes diet failure is acting like a human, instead they act like a photocopier that just "click click". "Click click" here means imitating the sound of a photocopier or the sound of taking pictures. There is a picture of a brain appearing in the visual when Yulia says "We are not machines, we are humans

who are blessed with a brain to think." A machine is a mechanical or electronic device designed to perform certain tasks in a pre-programmed manner (Nasrullah & Choifin, 2021). Machines do not have the ability to learn or think like the human brain, but operate based on instructions that have been programmed into them. Many people just copy someone's diet pattern like a photocopier that only copies and pastes without learning what suits them. Often leading someone into an extreme diet that is dangerous. The sentence we are not machines means that we humans are blessed with a brain to think, do research on what diet pattern suits us and what diet makes sense for us to do. Many people also force someone's food menu and do not adjust it to their shopping budget.

Yulia explained that most people when they see someone else who has a body fit, people will question their diet, exercise, or supplements without observing their personality. Yulia Baltschun said "... that's all, but many people forget to observe and observe their personality." The phrase "body fit" is often used to describe a person's physical appearance, especially their body shape or physique. It is usually used as a compliment and indicates that the person has a body that is considered attractive or aesthetically pleasing. Diet refers to how a person consumes food on a regular basis, including the types of foods they eat, the frequency of eating, and the timing of eating (Melisse et al., 2022).

According to Yulia Baltschun, personality factors are the ones that influence the success of diet. Yulia said "Many people forget to observe and check the person's personality, because diet knowledge is already widely spread on internet and in personal trainer programs at the gym". With the same knowledge, some fail and some succeed, what makes the difference is the person's personality, whether he/she is disciplined and dedicated.

Yulia emphasized that achieving ideal body weight is not solely the result of external factors beyond a person's control, but rather the result of hard work and strong character. This conveys the message that everyone can achieve the same health goals if they have enough dedication and commitment. There are two types of groups that respond differently when someone is mentally weak. The first group is people with mental weakness who tend to complain and give up easily. They will strengthen each other by giving reasons to continue to feel weak. The second group is people who succeed in any situation. They have a strong, healthy, and fit mentality. When they hear people who often complain and lack motivation, they don't actually feel pity, but rather annoyance and ridicule. The message conveyed is the importance of having a positive mindset, being persistent, and never giving up in facing life's challenges.

Mythological Narratives in Yulia's Content

Yulia's channel perpetuates the myth of "self-mastery" as a pathway to success. This narrative aligns with broader societal ideals that valorize discipline and individual responsibility. However, it also challenges myths of quick fixes, advocating for sustainable lifestyle changes over temporary solutions.

The myth that occurs is that many people think that following popular diets or trends directly without consideration is an effective way to achieve the desired diet results. They are tempted by what others share on social media and immediately follow. In fact, following popular diets or trends without proper

consideration can lead to ineffective or even potentially dangerous results (Vyalov & Giluk, 2022). It is important to understand a particular diet and its potential benefits and risks before implementing it. This includes considering individual health conditions, nutritional needs, and lifestyle factors.

Baltschun also underlines the importance of self-awareness and focusing on personal progress towards achieving set goals, while rejecting unhealthy social comparisons. To achieve success in various aspects of life such as school, career, household, and health, a person needs to follow the applicable rules. For example, in the context of school, a person must wake up early, do homework, and go to school regularly. Likewise, to achieve success at work, a person needs to respect supervisors, follow deadlines, and so on. In the context of achieving ideal body weight, a person must follow a healthy diet, exercise, rest, and other lifestyle habits.

In achieving ideal weight to achieve ideal weight, you also have to follow rules. What should the diet be like, basically what should the exercise pattern. Basically, rest patterns, drinking patterns, sleeping patterns, thought patterns, all kinds of things must be a strong foundation first.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study demonstrates how semiotic analysis can uncover the layered meanings in media content, offering insights into the complex relationship between diet, personality, and digital communication. Yulia Baltschun's YouTube channel effectively engages Generation Z by combining practical advice with psychological insights, leveraging symbols and narratives that resonate with their values and experiences.

Practical Applications

1. **For Influencers**: Content creators should prioritize authenticity and relatability, tailoring messages to their audience's unique traits and challenges.
2. **For Educators**: Media literacy programs can equip young audiences with critical tools to navigate health-related messages in digital spaces.
3. **For Researchers**: Further studies could explore cross-cultural differences in interpreting health content or compare the efficacy of different platforms.

Future Research Directions

While this study focuses on a single influencer, comparative analyses involving multiple content creators could provide a broader understanding of how media shapes dietary behaviors. Additionally, exploring the long-term impact of such content on health outcomes would be valuable.

Research limitations

The research is limited to Yulia Baltschun's YouTube account and does not include analysis of other social media accounts or platforms. The analysis method used is Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis and does not involve other methods.

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