



Asia Pacific Public Relations Research and Education Network  
Symposium &  
International Cross-Cultural Communication Conference

# ABSTRACTS

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### **Identity on Private Universities' Billboards in Yogyakarta (iCCCC)**

Irene Santika Vidiadari, Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta, Faculty of Social and Political Science

As one of the educational destinations in Indonesia, it is only natural that Yogyakarta City is renowned as the City of Students. Each year, students from all around Indonesia come to the city to pursue higher education at State Universities (Perguruan Tinggi Negeri/PTN) or Private Universities (Perguruan Tinggi Swasta/PTS). Referring to the data of the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education or Ristekdikti (2018), the number of active university students in Yogyakarta reached 170,000. The report of Putsanra (2017) disclosed that the number of new university students of PTS stretched to 50,000. No fewer than 107 PTS in Yogyakarta, which offer various study programs, are ready to accommodate the students.

The growing competition to attract students has made the private universities intensify their promotion, either through conventional media or via electronic media. One of the most popular promotional media is the billboard which is put on strategic locations. As a twodimensional promotional media, the billboard can potentially strengthen the ideas concerning a product, including the educational service of private universities, within the mind of the audience.

This research discusses the identity which becomes the visual mode of the private universities to attract prospective students. Identity, referring to Gardiner and Kosmitzki (in Samovar, 2012, p. 2015), is the definition of one's self as an individual who is different and detached from the others, including the character, belief, and behavior. Identity is a reflective self-concept acquired by an individual from his/her environment. In the visual context, the identity is shown through visual mode: physical character, fashion style,



attribute, etc. The identity discussed in this research is the one that appears visually which is employed by the educational institution as promotional materials.

Applying the multimodal analysis of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, this study examines the billboard text to understand the visual and linguistic aspects as well as the relation between them to construct the commodification of education discourses. The object of this research is four private university billboards in Yogyakarta, namely that of Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta, and Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta. All of which are positioned on jalan protokol (major arterial road). This research has found that identity becomes a highlighted aspect of the billboards of private universities. The visualization of the identity appears as on physical characters and attributes wore by the students or the models. There are three identities generally appearing:

(1) University identity, through the alma mater jacket; (2) tribal/ethnic identity, through the physical appearance of the models; and (2) religious identity, through the fashion style. The Billboards of Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta and Universitas Sanata Dharma feature diversity and cultural issues. The tribal/ethnic (regional) and religious identities appear on the models' diverse physical characters and attributes—Eastern Indonesia, Javanese, and Chinese-faced models as well as hijab-wearing models showing Islamic religious identity.

As the symbol of the majority religion in Indonesia, namely Islam, hijab appears on the billboard of all of the four universities, namely Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta, Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta, Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, dan Universitas Sanata Dharma. The hijab-wearing models on the billboards of Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta and Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa—both of which are universities without any religious affiliation—illustrate the reality of their students' diverse identity. For Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta and Universitas Sanata Dharma, both Catholic universities, the hijab-wearing model is an appeal as non-exclusive educational institutions, which do not only accept students of a certain religion but also that of

various, different religions. It gives both universities an air of inclusiveness, an added value which is hoped to attract prospective students.

The slogans written on the billboards, from the perspective of linguistic, represent the ideology of the educational institutions. This research has found that among the four universities, only two of which that use slogan to promote their educational service, namely Universitas Sanata Dharma and Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta. The slogans on Universitas Sanata Dharma's billboards are: (1) "Selamat Datang Generasi Cerdas Humanis" ("Welcome, Intellect, Humanist Generation"). The phrase "Selamat Datang" (welcome) is used as an interpersonal approach by the advertiser to the audience; and (2) "Cerdas, Humanis, Cinta Kebenaran" (Intellect, Humanist, Truth-Loving). Meanwhile, the billboard of Universitas Atma Jaya features "Inklusif, Humanis, Berintegritas" (Inclusive, Humanist, Having-Integrity) which is also the slogan of the university. The slogan is not only an enhancer but also a means to build and modify the meaning of the advertisement. Furthermore, it also becomes the representation of what kind of higher-education service offered by the institution.

It is concluded that although there are many issues which can potentially be featured on the billboard, diversity and cultural issue, which presented as visual and linguistic modes, become promising marketing materials for the university. As a commodity, the cultural issues can potentially widen the market of the university as it can reach out for a wider scope of prospective students from various backgrounds.

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