


# Representation of Minangkabau Cultural Values in Minangkabau Tiger Martial Art on Instagram: A Semiotic Study Based on Charles Sanders Peirce’s Theory

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b></p> <p>Received Jun, 2025 Revised Jun, 2025 Accepted Jun, 2025</p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p>Cultural Communication; Digital Media; Minangkabau; Representation; Semiotics; Silat Harimau</p>	<p>This study aims to analyze how Minangkabau cultural values are represented through the Minangkabau Tiger Silat account on Instagram. Using a qualitative approach and Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic theory, this research investigates how signs in the form of icons, indexes, and symbols are used to depict cultural meanings. The data were collected through observation, documentation, and interviews with silat practitioners. The results show that Instagram visuals can successfully present philosophical values such as religiosity, reverence for ancestors, harmony with nature, and resilience. This study contributes to the growing field of cultural communication in digital media and suggests future studies to explore audience engagement in cultural preservation efforts online.</p> <p><i>This is an open access article under the <a href="#">CC BY-SA</a> license.</i></p> <div></div>
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Minangkabau culture is one of Indonesia’s most vibrant and well-preserved traditional heritages, rooted deeply in customs, philosophy, and artistic expression. It is known for its unique matrilineal kinship system, its reverence for ancestral wisdom, and its commitment to living in harmony with nature [1], [2]. One of the most iconic forms of cultural expression in Minangkabau is *Silat Harimau*—a traditional martial art inspired by the movements and spirit of the tiger. Silat Harimau is more than a combat technique; it is a performance of identity, spirituality, and social values.

As digital transformation permeates all aspects of life, traditional cultures are now finding new life on social media platforms. Instagram, a highly visual and interactive

medium, has emerged as a powerful tool for cultural communities to share their heritage beyond geographical boundaries. For the Minangkabau community, Instagram offers an opportunity to represent Silat Harimau in a digital space where younger generations are more engaged. The fusion of traditional practices with modern media forms creates a dynamic field of cultural representation, worthy of scholarly attention.

However, representing culture on Instagram is not a neutral act. The medium itself shapes how culture is portrayed and perceived. Filters, hashtags, visual aesthetics, and algorithms influence what aspects of Silat Harimau are highlighted, which symbols are amplified, and how meaning is constructed. These digital representations can both preserve and distort cultural meanings. The challenge lies in maintaining authenticity

while making cultural content accessible and appealing to a global audience [3], [4].

Despite increasing interest in digital cultural communication, there remains a gap in research on how specific cultural practices are reinterpreted in social media contexts—especially through a semiotic lens. Most studies focus on mainstream narratives or institutional efforts in cultural preservation, leaving grassroots digital practices relatively unexplored.

This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing how Minangkabau cultural values are represented through the Instagram account of *Silat Harimau Minangkabau*. Using the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce—who classifies signs into icons, indexes, and symbols—this research decodes the visual and textual elements used in Instagram posts to uncover the cultural meanings embedded within. By understanding how these signs operate in a digital context, we gain insights into the dynamic interaction between tradition and technology, and how identity is negotiated in the virtual world [5].

Ultimately, this study seeks to answer: How are Minangkabau cultural values encoded and represented through Instagram? And how do these representations contribute to the preservation or transformation of traditional identity in the digital age?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Representation Theory

Representation is the process by which meaning is created and communicated through signs, symbols, and images [6]. In media studies, it plays a crucial role in shaping how culture is portrayed and understood. Rather than reflecting reality, media constructs it—selecting certain aspects of culture to highlight while omitting others.

In the digital age, platforms like Instagram serve as powerful tools for cultural representation. They allow communities to visualize identity, tradition, and values in curated, shareable formats. However, these

representations are influenced by aesthetic trends, algorithms, and audience expectations, which may alter the original meaning of cultural symbols. To analyze these representations, this study applies [7] semiotic theory. Peirce proposed a triadic model of signs: the representamen (the sign itself), the object (what it refers to), and the interpretant (the meaning perceived by the viewer). He also categorized signs into:

- a. Icon (visual resemblance),
- b. Index (direct connection),
- c. Symbol (cultural convention).

Using this framework, the study explores how *Silat Harimau Minangkabau* content on Instagram encodes cultural values, and how these are interpreted by digital audiences.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design and Approach of the Study

This study employed a qualitative research design within an interpretive paradigm. It focuses on understanding meaning from the perspective of cultural symbols and digital representation, using semiotic analysis as the main analytical tool [8].

### 3.2 Research Site and Participants

The primary site of data collection was the Instagram account of *Silat Harimau Minangkabau*. Data were gathered from selected posts, captions, and visuals. In addition, interviews were conducted with the account curator and silat practitioners to gain deeper insights into the cultural context behind the content [8].

### 3.3 Data collection and analysis

Data were collected through visual observation, documentation, and semi-structured interviews. The analysis was conducted using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic model, focusing on the identification and interpretation of icons, indexes, and symbols found in the Instagram posts. This method allowed the researcher to uncover how cultural values are encoded, displayed, and interpreted

in a digital space [8].

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Results

The analysis of Instagram content from *Silat Harimau Minangkabau* reveals four dominant cultural values: religiosity, ancestral respect, harmony with nature, and resilience. These values are communicated through visual signs such as traditional attire, natural landscapes, symbolic poses, and spiritual captions.

- a. Icons appear in the form of tiger-like stances, forest settings, and traditional Minangkabau clothing, which visually resemble the cultural origin of Silat Harimau.
- b. Indexes include ritual practices and event documentation, such as ceremonies and group training sessions, which point to the lived traditions of the community.
- c. Symbols emerge through the use of colors (e.g., black uniforms), captions featuring Minangkabau proverbs, and Islamic references that signal deeply rooted cultural and religious meanings.

The posts not only display cultural content but also invite audiences to engage emotionally and intellectually with the values portrayed.

### 4.2 Discussion

The findings support [6] theory that media representations are cultural constructions. Through Instagram, Silat Harimau becomes both a visual archive and a dynamic platform for cultural storytelling. However, representation in digital media is shaped by audience preferences, algorithmic visibility, and aesthetic choices—factors that can shift the authenticity of cultural meanings.

Peirce's semiotic model helps unpack how signs operate on multiple levels in this context. For example, a single image can function simultaneously as an icon (visual resemblance), an index

(cultural activity), and a symbol (learned cultural meaning). Audience interpretations, or interpretants, vary depending on their familiarity with Minangkabau culture—some may see a display of martial arts, while others perceive spiritual heritage.

This dynamic underscores the importance of intentional digital curation in preserving cultural identity, while also recognizing that digital representations are inherently fluid and open to reinterpretation.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study explored how Minangkabau cultural values are represented through the Instagram content of *Silat Harimau Minangkabau*, using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework. The analysis revealed that Instagram functions not only as a medium for documentation, but also as a digital space for cultural negotiation and identity construction.

Cultural values such as religiosity, reverence for ancestors, harmony with nature, and personal resilience are expressed through signs in the form of icons, indexes, and symbols. These representations are carefully crafted to resonate with digital audiences while preserving the authenticity of Minangkabau traditions.

However, the findings also highlight a critical tension: while digital platforms offer new opportunities for cultural preservation, they also expose traditional practices to reinterpretation, aesthetic commodification, and shifting audience expectations. The role of the audience as active interpreters means that meaning is never fixed—it evolves with context and engagement.

This study suggests that cultural practitioners must approach digital representation with both creativity and critical awareness. Future research may expand this investigation by analyzing how audiences interact with cultural posts, and how feedback loops influence the way traditions are continuously reshaped in digital environments.

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