journal homepage: http://ranahkomunikasi.fisip.unand.ac.id/
JURNAL RANAH KOMUNIKASI
E-ISSN :**2656-4718**
P-ISSN : **2302-8106**

READING MINANGKABAU HERITAGE THROUGH GESTURE, ATTIRE, AND NARRATIVE: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF SILAT HARIMAU ON INSTAGRAM

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

Submitted: May, 14. 2025
Review: June, 17. 2025
Accepted: June, 30. 2025
Published: June, 30. 2025
Keywords: Silat Harimau; Minangkabau heritage; cultural communication; Instagram; Peircean semiotics

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ABSTRACT

Traditional martial arts communicate cultural meanings through movement, attire, settings, and narratives. This study examines how these elements articulate Minangkabau heritage on the Instagram account @silatharimau_minangkabau. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics, it analyzes visual and textual signs through observation, documentation, and interviews with silat practitioners. The findings identify cultural meanings embedded in movements inspired by tigers, traditional clothing, collective practice, and religious references in captions. These signs connect martial practice with learning from nature, customary continuity, religiosity, and communal belonging. Cultural identity emerges through the interplay between bodily expression, visual presentation, and accompanying narratives. The study contributes to cultural communication scholarship by explaining how Silat Harimau communicates Minangkabau heritage through digital signs. Its conclusions remain limited to meanings interpreted in the selected content, providing a basis for further investigation of audience interpretations and the relationship between online cultural representation and efforts to sustain traditional practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

Minangkabau cultural heritage encompasses customary practices, philosophical principles, and artistic traditions through which communities express their collective identity. Its matrilineal kinship system, respect for inherited knowledge, and emphasis on the relationship between humans and nature provide important contexts for understanding these cultural expressions. Among them is *Silat Harimau*, a traditional martial art whose movements draw inspiration from the tiger. Beyond its function as a form of self-defense, Silat Harimau offers a space for expressing cultural identity and communicating values associated with Minangkabau life.

The growing use of digital media has introduced new settings in which cultural traditions are presented and interpreted. Instagram, with its emphasis on visual content and interaction, enables cultural practitioners to share their activities with audiences across geographical boundaries. For communities engaged in Silat Harimau, the platform provides opportunities to introduce their practices to wider audiences, including younger users. Bringing this martial tradition into a digital environment also raises questions about how its meanings are communicated through images, videos, and accompanying text.

Cultural representation on Instagram involves choices about what to display and how to present it. Camera angles, visual composition, captions, and hashtags can draw attention to particular movements, objects, and cultural attributes. These choices shape the meanings made available to viewers, potentially emphasizing some dimensions of Silat Harimau while leaving others less visible. Its digital presentation therefore needs to be examined as a process of selecting and framing cultural meanings, rather than simply documenting an existing practice.

Within discussions of digital cultural communication, the representation of specific martial traditions warrants closer examination. In the case of Silat Harimau, an important question concerns how visual and textual signs are used to communicate Minangkabau cultural values on Instagram. A semiotic approach can help explain how recognizable cultural elements acquire meaning within individual posts and how their arrangement contributes to the account's presentation of cultural identity.

This study examines the representation of Minangkabau cultural values on the Instagram account of Silat Harimau Minangkabau. Drawing on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework, it analyzes icons, indexes, and symbols in the account's visual and textual content. Attention is directed toward how these signs refer to cultural practices and how their relationships support particular interpretations of Silat Harimau. Through this analysis, the study seeks to clarify how a traditional martial art is presented as an expression of Minangkabau identity in a digital setting. The study is guided by two questions: How are Minangkabau cultural values represented through visual and textual signs on the Instagram account of Silat Harimau Minangkabau? What meanings of cultural identity are constructed through these representations?

2. METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative study using semiotic analysis. The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to describe and understand the meaning of Minangkabau cultural representation on social media, particularly in content related to *Silat Harimau Minang*. A qualitative approach is used to analyze the phenomenon in depth, while the semiotic method helps interpret the cultural signs and symbols that appear in the related social media content.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This The analysis of Instagram content published by @silatharimau_minangkabau indicates that Minangkabau cultural values are communicated through the relationship between martial movements, traditional clothing, performance settings, and accompanying captions. These elements provide a basis for examining how Silat Harimau is presented as both a martial practice and an expression of cultural identity. Using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework, the analysis interprets these representations through icons, indexes, and symbols.

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Iconic signs are apparent in martial movements that resemble the posture and motion of a tiger. This resemblance connects the visual presentation of Silat Harimau to the animal from which the practice takes its name. The movements can also be interpreted in relation to *Alam Takambang Jadi Guru*, a Minangkabau philosophical principle that positions nature as a source of learning. Within this interpretation, the tiger provides a reference for understanding agility, alertness, and physical strength.

Indexical signs appear in the relationship between the activities depicted and the circumstances of their performance. Images of collective training and participation in cultural events point to the communal settings in which Silat Harimau is practiced and displayed. These representations situate the martial art within social relationships involving practitioners and their communities. Although such images indicate collective participation, they do not, on their own, establish the strength or continuity of communal solidarity beyond the activities shown.

Symbolic meanings are conveyed through traditional black clothing, headgear, ornaments, and verbal references to Minangkabau customs. Their cultural significance depends on shared conventions and knowledge rather than visual resemblance alone. Captions containing religious narratives similarly introduce a verbal dimension through which the practice is associated with religious values. Visual and textual elements therefore work together to frame Silat Harimau within a broader cultural context.

These categories are not mutually exclusive. A martial movement may function iconically through its resemblance to a tiger while also acquiring symbolic meaning through its association with culturally recognized values. Likewise, traditional clothing can operate as a cultural symbol and, within a documented event, provide an indication of the occasion being represented. Interpretation consequently requires attention to the relationship between each sign, its referent, and the context of the post.

Across the analyzed content, four dimensions of cultural representation can be identified. Customs and traditions are expressed through clothing, ornaments, and heritage settings. Religiosity is communicated through religious references in captions. The relationship between humans and nature is articulated through tiger-inspired movements and their interpretation in connection with *Alam Takambang Jadi Guru*. Communal participation is represented through group training and collective involvement in cultural activities. Together, these dimensions present Silat Harimau as a practice through which physical performance and cultural belonging are connected.

Instagram provides a setting in which these cultural expressions can be documented, selected, and presented to audiences beyond the immediate performance setting. However, the availability of content does not by itself demonstrate increased cultural understanding, successful preservation, or stronger engagement among younger audiences. The findings more directly show how the account makes particular aspects of Minangkabau culture visible through its visual and textual choices. Claims about audience responses or the long-term effects of this representation require additional supporting data.

Table 1 Trianggulasi.

Source Triangulation	• Data were collected from various sources, including videos, articles, social media comments, and interviews with Silat Harimau Minang practitioners as well as Minangkabau cultural experts. • Comparing data from these different sources helps ensure that the information analysed is consistent and valid.
Methodological Triangulation	• This study employed a combination of methods including social media observation, interviews, and semiotic analysis. • Observation was used to identify how Silat Harimau Minang is represented on social media. • Interviews were conducted to gain direct insights from cultural practitioners and social media audiences.

	• Semiotic analysis was applied to interpret cultural signs embedded in digital content
Theoretical Triangulation	• This research refers to Peirce's semiotic theory and cultural communication theory to understand how cultural meanings are constructed and perceived on social media. • A social communication theory approach was also used to analyse the impact of digitalization on Minangkabau culture.

4. CONCLUSIONS

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.

This study examines how Minangkabau cultural values are represented in the Instagram content of @silatharimau_minangkabau through Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework. The findings indicate that cultural meanings emerge from relationships among martial movements, traditional clothing, performance settings, and captions. Icons, indexes, and symbols offer complementary ways of interpreting how these elements present Silat Harimau as an expression of Minangkabau cultural identity.

Tiger-inspired movements provide iconic references to nature, while depictions of collective activities point to the social settings of the practice. Traditional clothing, ornaments, and religious references communicate meanings grounded in cultural conventions. Together, these signs represent values associated with customary continuity, religiosity, learning from nature, and communal participation.

The analysis suggests that Instagram serves as a space for presenting and interpreting cultural heritage through selected visual and textual elements. Its contribution to cultural preservation, however, cannot be established solely through an analysis of posts. Further research involving practitioners and audiences could examine how these representations are understood and whether digital engagement supports cultural learning and participation.

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