

## VISUAL COMMODIFICATION: SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF MATERIALITY AND AESTHETICS IN CONTEMPORARY COFFEE CULTURE (A CASE STUDY OF PURWOKERTO, CENTRAL JAVA)

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Alfian Ihsan<sup>1</sup>, Arizal Mutahir<sup>2</sup>, Hariyadi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Jenderal Soedirman University

alfian.91@unsoed.ac.id<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This research investigated the socio-cultural phenomenon of the cappuccino conquest in Purwokerto by exploring how specific aesthetic elements facilitate the raise of modern coffee shop. Utilizing Roland Barthes' semiotic approach and Fredric Jameson's concept of commodity aestheticization, the study identified serving equipment (ceramic cups) and visual appearance (latte art) as the two primary factors constructing the image of cappuccino as a luxurious, aesthetic, and modern commodity. These elements are the "myths" that shifted consumer interest from the beverage's use value to its sign value. Contemporary coffee consumption becomes a tool for expressing modern identity, knowledge, and social status. Consequently, this aestheticization has marginalized the local coffee craft, kopi clebek, and led to the neglect of local Banyumas robusta beans in favor of standardized beans from outside regions like Temanggung or Malang. It was concluded that the cappuccino conquest in Purwokerto is a realized cultural shift. Highlighting an urgent need for local government intervention to protect and promote indigenous coffee heritage.

**Keywords:** Aesthetics, Cappuccino, Culture, Luxury, Modern

### ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini mengkaji fenomena sosial-budaya berupa "penaklukan" cappuccino di Purwokerto dengan menelusuri bagaimana elemen estetika mendorong pertumbuhan kedai kopi modern. Menggunakan pendekatan semiotika Roland Barthes dan konsep estetikasi komoditas Fredric Jameson, studi ini mengidentifikasi bahwa peralatan saji (cangkir keramik) dan tampilan visual (latte art) merupakan dua faktor utama yang membentuk citra cappuccino sebagai komoditas mewah, estetis, dan modern. Elemen-elemen ini menjadi "mitos" yang menggeser minat konsumen dari yang semula fokus pada nilai guna minuman, menjadi fokus pada nilai simbolik. Di masa kini, konsumsi kopi telah menjadi alat untuk menunjukkan identitas modern, wawasan, serta status sosial seseorang. Fenomena estetikasi kopi modern membuat sajian kopi lokal Banyumas yaitu kopi clebek mulai terlupakan. Biji kopi robusta asli Banyumas juga terabaikan oleh kedai kopi modern karena mereka lebih suka menggunakan biji kopi dari luar daerah seperti Temanggung atau Malang. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa fenomena "penaklukan" cappuccino melalui kedai kopi modern di Purwokerto adalah bentuk nyata dari pergeseran budaya. Hal ini merupakan sinyal peringatan bagi pemerintah daerah untuk melindungi dan mempromosikan kerajinan kopi dan komoditas biji kopi lokal.*

**Kata kunci:** Estetik, Cappuccino, Budaya, Mewah, Modern

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<sup>2,3</sup> Jenderal Soedirman University, arizal.mutahir@unsoed.ac.id, hariyadi\_sosiologi@unsoed.ac.id

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of modern coffee shops across Indonesia over the last decade marks a significant shift in urban consumption patterns. Data compiled by Toffin (2020) showed more than double increase in the number of coffee shops in 4 years. There were 1083 coffee shops in 2016, and 2937 shops in 2019. The use of espresso coffee machine is the main characteristic of coffee shop (Purnomo et al., 2021). It was the main distinction between coffee stall and coffee shop. Coffee stall sells instant coffee sachet, it needs only brew by hot water and ready to serve (Sudiyarto et al., 2012). Coffee shop has distinguished from coffee stall by using espresso machine and providing various menu of coffee mixed with other substances (Nurhasanah & Dewi, 2019). Coffee shop also provides attractive facilities such as sofa, trendy room, air conditioner, and internet.

The development of coffee shops can even be found in semi-medium city which were previously never imagined. It was also found in the city of Purwokerto. As an administrative capital of Banyumas Regency, Purwokerto is experiencing economic growth. Economic growth was marked by the increase of new consumption spaces, one of them being coffee shop (Mutahir et al., 2021). According to Wardhianna et al., there are more than 100 coffee shops in Purwokerto (2021). In Purwokerto, this growth is not merely an economic indicator but a manifestation of "new consumption spaces". However, these spaces are more than just venues for caffeine intake. They are embedded elements of urban development and sociality (Pozos-Brewer, 2015).

Consumption activity in coffee shop is a recent phenomenon of consumer culture. It is a tool for self-expression and the assertion of social existence (Ferreira et al., 2021). Starbucks has been a pioneer to promote new coffee culture as a symbol of social status (Purnomo et al., 2021). Starbucks has been a role model for another coffee shop, regarding the variety of coffee and the attractive facilities (Nurhasanah & Dewi, 2019). Cappuccino and latte, added with flavoured syrup or sprinkles by choice, are the signature menu of Starbucks to promote a new culture of coffee (Morris, 2019). Recently, the variety menu of Starbucks was a standard menu for any coffee shop. Mainly, cappuccino and latte.

The growth of coffee shop in Purwokerto meant the raise of cappuccino's popularity. Regarding the term of Morris & Baldoli (2006), those phenomena called of "cappuccino conquests". Cappuccino conquests is an impact of globalization, a process of import and export a culture (Jameson & Miyoshi, 1998). Cappuccino, and also latte, now become the word refer to a beverage made from mixture of coffee and milk. It replaces the old style Indonesian mixture of instant coffee and condensed milk, called *keopi susu* (Rahma, 2016). It can be said that cappuccino being the symbol of modern coffee.

Cappuccino has been offered as a modern life style of coffee. It was covered by various image to build a sign value of commodity. The sign value has become an important constituent of commodities and consumption activities in consumer society (Baudrillard, 1981). Consumer society is organized around the consumption and display of commodities. The consumption activities of consumer society tend to

be triggered by the visual appearance of an object. It was called by Jameson as a process of “aestheticization”, by adding beautiful (aesthetic) values to an object (1997). Visual appearance of coffee shop menu is one of the factors that attract consumer interest (Pramelani, 2020). Cappuccino and latte offering a sign value to emphasize coffee shop as a symbol of the modern lifestyle.

There were several previous research on coffee shop menu. A research conducted by Hija (2020) found that many coffee shops in Indonesia use English to name their food and beverage. Similar research has also been conducted by Tiara (2022) analyzing consumer attitudes towards the use of English in naming coffee shops and the various menus offered. Both of the studies focus to the coffee shop menu, but not in the perspective of image construction on coffee shop menu. There was also research by Ranindyasa et al. (2022) talking about the meaning of consumer towards coffee consumption. However, Ranindyasa's research also does not involve image construction on coffee shop menu.

The previous studies have documented the linguistic choices in naming coffee menus or the general meanings consumers attribute to coffee, there is a significant conceptual gap regarding how the physical and visual presentation of the product actively constructs its "modern" image. Current literature acknowledges that visual appearance attracts interest, yet it fails to deconstruct the semiotic relationship between the material serving equipment and the resulting "commodity aesthetic." This research addresses this gap by moving beyond descriptive accounts of coffee shop growth or linguistic naming conventions. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the "image construction" of the cappuccino as a symbol of contemporary lifestyle. By applying Jameson's concept of commodity aestheticization and Baudrillard's sign value theory, this study critically examines how serving equipment and visual aesthetics are not just secondary traits, but primary tools in the production of cultural meaning. Specifically, it seeks to answer: How do serving equipment and visual appearance contribute to the image construction of cappuccino as a sign of modern urban identity?

## RESEARCH METHOD

The study utilized an interpretive qualitative research design, which focused on understanding the world through the perspectives and experiences of individuals. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), this approach is designed to develop subjective meanings toward an object rather than seeking a single objective truth. Cappuccino as a main menu in coffee shop will be a main object of this study.

The Roland Barthes' semiotic approach was chosen as a research strategy to explore the cappuccino as a tool for capital expansion coffee shop. Semiotic approach is a conceptual framework and set of methods for reading signification practices in everyday life (Chandler, 1994). Semiotic approach is a guidance to understand the contribution of humans and signs in building social structures (Chandler, 2007).

Regarding Roland Barthes' semiotic, cappuccino treated not only as a beverage but as a “mythical” statue of consumption. There are three level of analysis by Barthes (1972): denotative, connotative, and myth. Denotative level analysed physical or literal object. Connotative level analysed the “sign” value

constructed; the meaning attached to the object. The last is Myth, it is a concept used to build belief or understanding (Piliang & Jaelani, 2018). The myth in a sign able to convince people to do or not do something. Myth was obtained by tracing the relationship between a sign and certain social, cultural, or ideological values. By the existence of myth in a sign, something that is constructed will appear to occur naturally.

**Table 1. Roland Barthes' Semiotic Mythical Signification Structure**

|             |                  |           |
|-------------|------------------|-----------|
| Denotation  | signifier        | signified |
|             | Connotative sign |           |
| Connotation | signifier        | signified |
|             | Myth             |           |

Source: (Barthes, 2006)

Analysis begun at the denotative level by examining the material "aestheticization" of the cappuccino, including its visual appearance and specialized serving equipment. This physical object then functions at the connotative level, where it produces a "sign value" that replaces traditional kopi susu with symbols of "modernity" and "social status". Finally, these connotations solidify into a myth that naturalizes the cappuccino as an essential marker of urban identity, effectively driving capital expansion by justifying the proliferation of new consumption spaces across cities like Purwokerto. By framing the beverage as a "commodity aesthetic," capital is able to expand rapidly, as evidenced by the doubling of coffee shops to meet the demands of a consumer society organized around the display of such signs.

Data collection was carried out by observation, documentation, and interview. Primary data of this study is a cappuccino served in several coffee shops. Purposive sampling was used to determine the coffee shop visited. Purposive sampling selected based on specific consideration and objective (Sugiyono, 2013). The primary consideration used in this study is the tagging feature on Google Maps. Digital technology, specifically Google Maps, has become a primary method for navigating to new location such as coffee shops. Coffee shops in Purwokerto mark their presence on Google Maps using the keyword "coffee shop". By applying this "coffee shop" keyword in a Google Maps search, three modern coffee shops were identified as the top search results. They were Society Coffee House, Praketa Kopi, and Singgah Coffee & Book.

Their appearance at the top three of search position in line with their emergence in Purwokerto. They were established in 2015, the year of modern coffee shop era began in Purwokerto (regarding the interview with Adhi Iman, a Purwokerto coffee crafter). With an age of a decade, they already had regular customers and the ability to maintain a business. They has also good rating and good comments appeared in Google Maps' review.

Secondary data is the information collected from the owner of coffee shop or the barista. The information was used to enrich the analysis of cappuccino existence. There are five informants on this study, two are the coffee shop owner, one is a barista, and two customers. The initial of two coffee shop owner are I (owner of Praketa Kopi), and M (owner of Singgah Coffee & Book). The initial of barista is K (barista in Society Coffee House), and two customers are L (native of purwokerto) and A (non-native, 9 years living in purwokerto). The two customers randomly selected while the researcher visited the coffee shop.

To ensure the validity of the interpretive qualitative approach, this study employs data triangulation. By cross-referencing the material aesthetics of the menu (the signifiers) with digital search data (the social context) and a dual-theoretical framework (Jameson and Baudrillard), the research moves beyond a singular interpretation to a robust deconstruction of how coffee culture functions as a tool for capital expansion. The interview results was also used to avoid subjective meaning, move to rigorous academic analysis.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This article explains the process of aestheticization of cappuccino by utilizing the serving equipment and visual appearance. Those elements analyzed by using Jameson's aestheticization commodity concept. This is used to explain how serving equipment and visual appearance contribute to the image construction of cappuccino. In order to achieve this goal, this article opens by the tracing of the creation a sign value in a cappuccino for consumer society. This explanation is used as a background to understand the contribution of serving equipment and visual appearance for image construction of cappuccino Purwokerto City. Those are primary cause of myth attached in cappuccino and thrown down the local coffee creation, *kopi clebek*.

### Aestheticization of Cappuccino

A commodity is not just about fulfilling daily practical needs. The important role of commodity for consumer society are constructing and communicating a subject's identity (Bakti et al., 2019). Consumer society displays and appreciates a commodity according to the value of the surrounding sign. The sign value phenomenon has become an important constituent of commodities and consumption activities of consumer society (Baudrillard, 1981). Sign value also pervades cappuccino and latte as a main element of modern coffee shop menu.

As the main element in a modern coffee shop, cappuccino has become a "sign" that was traded off. Baudrillard called it as a sign value. In the consumption activities of consumer society, a commodity is produced as a commodified sign (Baudrillard, 1981). The sign value replaces the use value of a commodity. The sign value in a commodity is used to articulate personal identity (Sari et al., 2023). In modern coffee shop, a cup of cappuccino is not considered only to relieve sleepiness. Cappuccino has a role as a modern coffee, a higher-level coffee than ordinary coffee milk in a coffee stall.

A food and beverage has various meanings depending on the perspective used. Roland Barthes

called it as a myth, a modern myth. A myth of the modern world related to the banality of modern life (Piliang & Jaelani, 2018). The work of myth is by hijacking language and leading a society to a distorted meaning. It was shown by Barthes in "Mythology" (1972) talking about chips, steak, and wine as a food and beverage containing modern myth. Chips related to nostalgic and patriotic. Steak covered by a myth about something natural and moral. Meanwhile, wine has several connection with power, social, and nationality.

This research followed Barthes' path in exploring the modern myth of cappuccino. Fredric Jameson's perspective was adopted as an analytical tool to read the symbolic value of cappuccino. Cappuccino is a main beverage in coffee shop menus originally from Italy. It was a Western cultural product to stimulate people's consumption activities. Consumption did as an effort to satisfy the subject. Subject identity and satisfaction offered as the main commodities in various cultural products of the postmodern era (Jameson, 1997). It is also including to the culture of enjoying coffee. According to Jameson, the postmodern era is the era of the emergence of various cultural expressions. However, cultural expressions and reality have an aestheticization process and commodified by capitalists to gain profits (Jameson, 1998).

The process of aestheticizing coffee culture has become one of the characteristics of coffee shop. Various coffee shop menu certainly require raw materials. The need for raw materials is utilized by large industries to create any kind of products. Coffee machine, coffee beans, sugar, milk and flavour syrup are the ingredients that coffee shop buy from big companies. According to Jameson & Miyoshi, the process of infiltration of economic interest into various cultural products is an inevitability in the postmodern era (1998). It has strengthened Martyn Lee's thesis (1993) which stated that society's daily cultural life was built within the embrace of big companies. In the context of coffee, it can be seen through cappuccino. Cappuccino was displayed by using a ceramic cup completed with a saucer and sugar spoon. Cappuccino was served with an aesthetic pattern on the surface called latte art. That kind of appearance differentiates cappuccino from ordinary coffee milk. The difference acclaimed cappuccino as a symbol of modern coffee. "Modern coffee" is a sign value as an abstraction to provoke a commodity fetishism (Marx, 1887). Commodity fetishism not only assumes that an object is a material object, but also has meaningful value (Jameson, 2016). In consumer society, the meaning value of an object was built through a process of aestheticization. The aestheticization process was carried out by adding aesthetic value to an object (Jameson, 1998). Aesthetic value was added to increase selling value. A cup of cappuccino with an aesthetic appearance will be priced more expensively than just an ordinary coffee milk. The commodity fetishism of modern coffee shop menus is carried out by beautifying the visual appearance of cappuccino. The visual appearance has been established by two main elements, serving equipment and aesthetic pattern.

### **Luxurious Meaning in Serving Equipment of Cappuccino**

The exploration of three modern coffee shops in Purwokerto, Society Coffee House, Praketa Kopi,

Singgah Coffee & Book, showed that the cappuccino is served by using ceramic cup. It was common for coffee shops to use ceramic cup to serve hot drink. The ceramic cup is equipped with a saucer and sugar spoon. There is a single handle on the outside of the cup to prevent fingers from being exposed to heat from beverages. The spoon is used to stir added-sugar or taste the beverage. Those three elements were a set of equipment to serve cappuccino in those three coffee shops.

Functionality was the main contribution of ceramic cup for coffee. Ceramic cup able to maintain the temperature of drinks longer than metal or glass cup (Juliadi et al., 2021). The thicker the ceramic cup, the longer it will retain heat. It was so important in serving coffee and tea which are often enjoyed slowly. Ceramic cup also have a handle on one side. The handle is used to lift the cup with the thumb and index finger when drinking cappuccino. The handle also functions so that your fingers are not exposed to the heat coming from the drink. The appearance of cappuccino in a ceramic cup from three coffee shops can be seen below.




Figure 1. Cappuccino from Society Coffee House, Praketa Kopi, and Singgah Coffee & Book (from left to right)

Source: Primary Data 2023

The role of ceramic cup in coffee shops is not only to retain heat, but also to construct the sign value of a drink. Sign value of ceramic cup established by various elements such as colour and design. Those three cappuccino served with a ceramic cup. All the cups have colour and design elements. These two elements contribute to the visual appearance that influences the perspective to the ceramic cup. The contribution of these two elements can be seen in the semiotic map below. The semiotic map used only a cappuccino picture as an object of analysis because those three had similar elements.

Table 2. Semiotic table of cappuccino's serving equipment

| Signifier   | Signified  |
|---|--|
|    | <p>A variant of coffee name cappuccino. The coffee is served in a ceramic cup with a handle on one side. The cup is thick and has red colour. The coffee has a brown colour with a white contrast pattern in the surface. The pattern is a tulips latte art. The cappuccino in the cup is placed on a red saucer. On the right side of the coaster, there is a small spoon.</p>    |
| <b>Denotative Sign</b>  |  |
| <p>Cappuccino is served by using ceramic cup. The cappuccino has a tulip latte art pattern on the surface. The ceramic cup is on the saucer, equipped with a sugar spoon.</p>   |  |
| Connotative Signifier   | Connotative Signified  |
| <p>The ceramic cup has red colour. Red is a kind of bright colour. The cup has curve design and handle on one side provides visual aesthetics. The thick ceramic material shows that it is a good quality cup. The thick red ceramic cup with an aesthetic design gives a luxurious impression. This luxury combined with coffee aesthetically presented. In fact, the red ceramic cup emphasize the luxury of cappuccino served in modern coffee shop.</p> | <p>The colour, curved design, cup handle, combined to build a visual narrative for the ceramic cup. Visual narratives are useful for presenting imagination in people's minds. The imagination presented through a thick red ceramic cup with aesthetic curve is luxurious. So the beverage served in the cup is a luxurious beverage. It is for the upper middle class group.</p> |
| <b>Myth</b>   |  |
| <p>Cappuccino in a ceramic cup with aesthetic design is served as a luxurious beverage.</p>   |  |

The denotative meaning of the sign above is a coffee served in a ceramic cup. The coffee is cappuccino. This type of coffee is a combination between espresso and milk. The milk is frothed to create foamed milk. Foamed milk is slowly poured into a cup filled with espresso. The pouring process ended with a certain pattern. As in the picture above, the milk foam poured in a "tulips" pattern.

Ceramic cup holds on the cappuccino temperature, maintaining the warmth longer. Ceramic cup able to maintain the high temperature of drinks longer than metal or glass cup (Juliadi et al., 2021). Ceramic cups have a handle on one side. The purpose of cup handle to avoid the fingers don't feel hot when lifting the cup. The cup handle prevents the thumb and index finger from being exposed to hot temperatures from the surface of the cup. The cup handle is created to make it easier for someone to lift a cup while talking, taste a little coffee, and return the cup to the table. Some people don't even need to take their eyes off the person they are talking to when raising a cup. Simply feel the surface of the cup closest to your hand and find the handle, then lift the cup to your lips.

Cappuccino in a red ceramic cup is served on a red ceramic saucer with a white colour border. The colour of the saucer is similar to the colour of the cup. The cup and saucer have identical character, they were made as a pair. As a complement, there is a sugar spoon made from stainless steel on the right. Spoon are used to taste drinks or stir the sugar if needed.

Ceramic cup have been used to serve hot coffee since the era of the Ottoman Empire (Morris, 2019). Coffee house, a common name at that time, began to grow as a public space. A cup of hot coffee accompanies various conversations in the coffee house. Starting from political conversation to gossip about the residents of the empire palace. When coffee was introduced to Europe, ceramic cups were also chosen as a main serving equipment. In the book "Coffee, A Global History", Morris displayed a painting by Jean-Etienne Liotard in 1756 (2019). The painting portrayed a European bourgeois girl sitting at a table containing a set of ceramic coffee equipment. On the table there was a golden teapot, a cup, a sugar container and a small milk jug. The painting showed that a ceramic cup is an object attached to a luxurious lifestyle.

Ceramic cup is a serving equipment with a luxurious and aesthetic image. Luxurious and aesthetic are the connotative meaning of the cappuccino as shown in the picture above. Ferguson stated that ceramic was considered as a cultural artefact of the upper social class (2016). European-style ceramic coffee equipment entered the Indonesian archipelago during the colonial occupation (Rahma, 2016). Rahma stated that only the Dutch and the Javanese royal elite used ceramic cup at that time. Meanwhile, native people drink coffee from a cup made from glass or enamel. The native people' cup have lower quality material and simpler design than those of the elite.

The luxurious meaning of ceramic cup is strengthened by a combination of colour and design. The cup is served with a saucer. Cup and saucer have a similar combination of colour. Red and white are a bright colour combination. The use of bright colour is a characteristic of contemporary design (Mujiyono et al., 2019). Contemporary refers to the present, modern or recent (Zulaiha, 2017). It can be interpreted that cup and saucer with a combination of red and white colour are described as serving equipment that symbolize modern luxury.

Ceramic cup design with curve and handle on a side are also part of contemporary aesthetic design (Irawan & Indraprasti, 2017). Curve represent complexity. Curve can also be read as something dynamic, not a straight line. Ceramic cup with curved design create an aesthetic, complex and dynamic impression. A ceramic cup with a combination of red-white colour and curved is an aesthetic and luxurious cup. In fact, cappuccino in a ceramic cup is presented as a luxurious and aesthetic drink.

The luxurious and aesthetic meaning showed a shift from the original purpose of using ceramic cups. Slowing the decrease of temperature is the main purpose of serving cappuccino in a ceramic cup. However, the symbolic value of ceramic cup as an upper class cultural artefact is shown to be more dominant than the use value of ceramic cup. The aesthetic design of the ceramic cup equipped the construction of the symbolic value.


Ceramic cup have become a symbolic value of consumption activities in modern coffee shops (Oktaviani, 2018). Any beverage served in a ceramic cup will be wrapped in a luxurious and aesthetic image. Symbolic values in the form of aesthetic and luxury are consumer society' favourite (Jameson, 1997). Visual aesthetic is a major consideration in consumption activities. The aesthetic and luxurious appearance of a cappuccino in a ceramic cup are beyond the taste of cappuccino itself. The appearance is an offering of beauty to the sense of sight before being tasted by the sense of taste. In fact, the appearance of a beverage is the main selling point rather than the taste of cappuccino.

Aestheticization of cultural products is an inevitability in the postmodern era (Jameson, 1997). Jameson called the postmodern era as a final stage of the modernization process. The final stage of modernization was described by a natural acceptance of society in the fact that various cultural products were sold as commodities. The popular culture industry controlled people's taste by determining the rhythm, style and aesthetic pattern of a cultural product (Piliang & Jaelani, 2018). Public tastes were regulated and controlled by an elite group of producers. They produce various products with appeal, charm and attract people's attention. Cultural product with aesthetic appearance ignite people's desire to consume or own them. The main purpose of the ignition to consume aesthetic commodities is the accumulation of profit. As a Jameson's statement that various cultural products of the postmodern era are an operation mode of late capitalism (1997).

**Visual Appearance of Cappuccino as a Symbol of Knowledge, Modernity, and Art.**

Cappuccino is a beverage made from espresso and frothed hot milk with foam. The amount of espresso for one cup of cappuccino is 60 ml. foamed milk are slowly poured into a ceramic cup that already contains espresso. There are two techniques for pouring milk. First, pour the milk slowly and end with milk foam. This technique makes the entire surface of the cappuccino covered in soft white milk foam with a brown border from the espresso. The second technique, pouring milk and foam together, ended by making a certain pattern using milk foam. It can be seen from the image in the table below, there is a "heart" shaped pattern that decorates the surface of the cappuccino.

Table 2. Semiotic table of cappuccino's visual appearance

| Signifier   | Signified  |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Cappuccino is served with a surface decorated with a "heart" pattern. Heart pattern made from milk foam. It can be seen from the white colour. The brown colour on the edge of the heart pattern is espresso mixed with milk.</p> <p>Cappuccino is served in a white ceramic glass. The ceramic cup has a curved design with a handle on the right side. The ceramic cup is placed on a white saucer.</p> |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Serving is equipped with a sugar spoon for stirring sugar.  |  |
| <b>Dennotative Sign</b>   |  |
| Cappuccino is served in a ceramic cup with a heart pattern on the surface. The heart pattern is formed from milk foam. The brown colour around the heart pattern is espresso mixed with milk.   |  |
| <b>Connotative Signifier</b>  | <b>Connotative Signified</b>   |
| Technology get involves in cappuccino making process, they are coffee grinders and espresso machines Cappuccino is made by professional coffee makers, called Barista. Barista has specific knowledge about coffee variant, grind size, and milk pouring technique to make proper cappuccino. Milk pouring technique produces a heart pattern on the surface. Drawing patterns on the surface of coffee is an art. Attaching art in a commodity is a trend of postmodern era. | The knowledge of the barista, the coffee machine and the art of pouring milk are summed up in a cup of cappuccino. |
| <b>Myth</b>   |  |
| Cappuccino is a symbol of knowledge, modernity, and art.  |  |

The denotation meaning of the sign above is cappuccino served in a heart pattern. Heart pattern made of milk foam. A white heart pattern dominates the surface of the coffee. Heart pattern surrounded by brown colour. The brown comes from the colour of espresso and has been mixed with milk. Cappuccino is served in a white ceramic cup with a handle on the right side. The ceramic cup is placed on a white saucer. Stainless spoon attached for stirring sugar.

Cappuccino is synonymous with competent barista, expensive espresso machine and technique for pouring milk to produce an aesthetic latte art. Cappuccino has a connotation as a symbol of knowledge, art and modernity. The figure of the barista, a cappuccino maker, is a symbol of knowledge. It is not just anyone able to mix espresso and milk. A barista must have knowledge about coffee beans, the appropriate dosage of coffee beans, and the texture of coffee powder which produces perfect extraction result. Barista also have to know about the right angle when placing the heating steam wand on the surface of the milk. If the barista misplaces the heating wand, the milk will not produce a soft foam for latte art.

The technique of pouring milk foam into espresso produces a pattern on the surface of the cappuccino. There are various patterns that are usually found on the surface of a cappuccino. The easiest pattern is heart-shaped. Other patterns commonly found are tulip, rosette and swan (Swanson, 2023). The pattern on the surface of the cappuccino is an art. The addition of art to a consumption object is called aestheticization (Jameson, 1997). The aestheticization process is carried out to increase the value of a commodity. Commodities that have an aesthetic image have become a preference of consumer society (Jameson, 2019). The aesthetic appearance has a purpose to attract people's interest in buying cappuccino. Even though people are used to seeing hot coffee mixed with milk, cappuccino is more than just that. Cappuccino is coffee with an artistic taste.

An impressive and dashing espresso machine is the important equipment for creating this coffee. This machine is paired with a coffee grinder. They are the two main tools for concocting a typical Italian coffee

drink. Technology is part of modern life (Jameson, 1998). Coffee prepared using such technological tools can be considered as a modern coffee. It is different from ordinary black coffee which is simply brewed with boiling hot water.

The espresso machine becomes a kind of orchestral instrument used by the barista to create a coffee. The sound of a machine extracting coffee ground, the gurgling of espresso drops, the sound of a milk steamer, and the process of pouring milk into a cup, are a series of orchestration that present a cup of cappuccino. The orchestration of serving coffee done skilfully and quickly, those are a preference of contemporary society (Morris, 2019). Fast consumption is the craze of contemporary society.

A combination of the various symbolizations above attached to a cappuccino. Cappuccino as a symbol of knowledge, art and modernity. Someone who enjoys this drink will also be portrayed as a subject who has knowledge, artistic taste, and part of modern society. Jameson stated that the hierarchical order of consumer society is formed by the illusion of ownership of an object (1971). The consumer society measures the subject quality regarding the object consumed. Cappuccino, which is a symbol of knowledge, art and modernity, influences the subject's image.

The meaning of cappuccino as a symbol of knowledge, art and modernity shifted the initial meaning of the emergence of coffee mixed with milk in Europe. The forerunner of cappuccino was a drink made from a mixture of coffee, milk and sugar in 1697 (Morris, 2019). Morris argued that it was an effort to differentiate the black coffee typical of Muslim from the sweet coffee of Christian style. The presence of black coffee in Europe was brought from Ottoman Turkey, an empire based on Islamic values. The differentiation effort was also emphasized by giving the name *kapuziner*. The name was taken from the colour of coffee mixed with milk and sugar which is in harmony with the colour of the robes of Catholic priests from the Capuchin order.

*Kapuziner* became part of the coffee shop development in Europe, without leaving behind a cup of black coffee. A cup of coffee is a witness to the rise of intellectual and philosophical movements in Europe in the 16th century (Cowan, 2005). Political discussions also do not escape the coffee shop conversation. The memorable thing was the French revolution started from a conversation in a coffee shop (Gilpin, 2020). The French Revolution was a people's movement against the monarchy. This movement gave birth to a new form of government, a republic.

Getting into the 20th century, coffee shops became increasingly democratic with diverse visitors. Serious intellectual and philosophical discussions began to be marginalized. Replaced with political news, business deals, or cheap gossip (Cowan, 2005). In Europe, coffee is on the same level as wine as an accompaniment to social conversation (Barthes, 2006). In the chapter "Wine and Milk", Barthes outlines the role of wine as part of society's tradition and collective ritual. Wine is always present at informal events such as group chatting in cafes or formal events such as gala dinner parties. Wine is an element that strengthens togetherness and social interaction. Wine served as a social bridge to connect intellectual and proletarian. At this point, coffee also played a role similar to wine in shaping the social order. A cup of coffee acts as

a facilitator for interaction between social classes of society.

The role of coffee as a liaison between social classes increasingly ruined with the development of coffee shops after World War II. Modern coffee shop appear as new public spaces for the upper-middle class (Morris, 2019). A mixture between espresso and milk is still a favourite menu item at coffee shops. There were various menu variants of espresso mixed with milk. The different names only depend on the differences in the level of coffee and milk in each serving. Even so, cappuccino is still the most important item on the menu. Coffee has become an icon of modern coffee and loved by the consumer society. The term for a group of people who assert their existence through consumption activities.

As a coffee loved by the consumer community, cappuccino is increasingly easy to find in all over the world. Morris & Baldoli (2006) called the global phenomenon of Italian coffee as the cappuccino conquest. The existence of cappuccino in an area can be read as an attempt to conquer local coffee culture. Purwokerto is part of Banyumas Regency which has its own local coffee culture. The local Banyumas coffee brew is called *kopi clebek* (Dadan, 2019). Clebek coffee is made from dark black coffee powder which contains more coffee than sugar. The coffee grounds are then brewed with boiling hot water. *Kopi clebek* can also be served with palm sugar (Alfi, 2016). The way to enjoy *kopi clebek* is to taste the coffee and then bite a little palm sugar.

The existence of global coffee variant, cappuccino, had an impact on the existence of *kopi clebek* in Purwokerto. There is no *kopi clebek* on the menu of the three modern coffee shops I have visited. Based on a short interview with one of the consumers at Society named L (a native of Purwokerto), she did not know what *kopi clebek* was. She also didn't know that Banyumas had local coffee creations. It was similar to the answer of A (an internet marketer, native of Borneo Island), a consumer in Praketa Kopi. He never heard about *kopi clebek* during his 9 years staying in Purwokerto. This phenomenon can be read as the ruining popularity of *kopi clebek* in its homeland.

The absence of the typical *kopi clebek* Banyumas in three modern coffee shops contradicted Dadan's statement (2019) that *kopi clebek* has been included as a menu item in coffee shops. Dadan mentioned that *kopi clebek* is the main choice in several coffee shop. To clarify the information, it was asked to M (the owner of Singgah Coffee & Book). He said that *kopi clebek* is not part of the modern coffee shop menu segmentation. "*When people go to the cafe, they're definitely looking for cappuccino, latte or contemporary coffee trend-based such as milk coffee with palm sugar. No one asked for kopi clebek.*" said M.

The image construction of cappuccino and various types of modern coffee was built through a series of word, object, sign and experience. All of these series formed a discourse of cappuccino as a modern coffee. The discussion of cappuccino as a symbol of modern coffee is a mechanism of false consciousness in the era of mass culture (Jameson, 1979). False consciousness involves the process of aestheticization of a commodity. The cult of aesthetic commodity is a practice of reification. Reification of a mass cultural product emphasized the aesthetic aspect rather than the product's usefulness. The reification of cappuccino and other modern coffees created a false consciousness in the consumer society.

False consciousness also involved social illusion about whoever enjoyed a cappuccino is a part of modern society. Those who have not enjoyed cappuccino do not belong to modern society. The social illusion ignited people's interest and desire for consumption in order to acclaim themselves as subjects who are knowledgeable, have an artistic taste and are modern. The interest and desire for aesthetic and modern coffee has thrown down the popularity of *kopi clebek* as a local Banyumas coffee creation.

*Kopi clebek* is not the only one losing popularity, but also local coffee bean in Banyumas. Banyumas has a coffee farming area on the western slope of Slamet Mountain (Nuhdijati et al., 2020). The area includes three villages, they are Sokawera, Sunyalangu, and Baseh. The coffee variant grown in the three villages is robusta coffee. Robusta has a bitter taste and high caffeine. This local robusta coffee is the raw material for creating *kopi clebek* (Pamungkas, 2022). Pamungkas mentioned that the processing of coffee cherries into ready-to-brew powder is carried out by home industry. There were two ways of coffee powder marketing, direct selling in traditional markets and can be purchased online through marketplaces.

Local Banyumas robusta coffee was promoted to food stalls, restaurants and coffee shop spread across the Banyumas area (Mahway & Al Fajri, 2022). Praketa Kopi had experience in accommodating local robusta coffee. I (owner of Praketa Kopi) said that local robusta coffee stock is not always available at all times. It is a reason why Praketa Kopi rarely provides local robusta coffee. If available, it was only in a small amount. It is available only for manual brewing such as traditional direct brew, Vietnam drip or French press. It is not available for making espresso.

I also explained the reason why he no longer provides local Robusta coffee. It was because the farmers keep together ripe fruit with half-ripe fruit in the harvesting process. Below is his explanation.

*"The problem with local Robusta beans is not only the stock, but also the quality. So at harvest time, the farmers didn't differentiate between red cherries and green cherries. Just pick them all, make them into one, then process them together. Because the mixed qualities were washed together, the quality of green beans was below average. If the green beans are not high quality, the roasted beans have inconsistent taste."*

Coffee shops in Purwokerto prefer to use coffee bean produced from the outside area of Banyumas. According to K (Barista of Society Coffee House), the Robusta coffee bean usually used by coffee shop in Purwokerto originally taken from Temanggung or Malang. It has been known that coffee beans from these two areas have good and consistent quality. It was because they have strict processing standard. Starting from cherries selection into coffee bean processing. *"Only good quality coffee will produce good quality espresso"*, K said. Espresso is the main extraction coffee for cappuccino, latte, mocha, and any ice coffee milk variants.

The demand for good quality coffee in cappuccino and other modern coffee variants means that local Banyumas coffee bean did not have a place at coffee shops in Purwokerto. The reification of cappuccino as a modern coffee with an aesthetic art has also thrown down the existence of clebek coffee. It can be concluded that cappuccino as an icon of knowledge, art and modernity has succeeded in conquering Purwokerto.

## CONCLUSION

The semiotic interpretation of cappuccino in Purwokerto reveals that its image construction is anchored in two primary elements: serving equipment and visual appearance. Ceramic cup is a cultural artifact historically associated with the daily life of the upper class. The curved design of the ceramic cup works in tandem with "latte art" to establish a luxurious, aesthetic, and modern identity. These elements serve as the essential differentiators that elevate cappuccino above ordinary milk coffee. It was marked as a definitive symbol of modern coffee culture facilitated by the espresso machine.

This study contributes to the conceptual understanding of commodity aestheticization by demonstrating that the value of coffee in a consumer society is no longer derived from its caffeine content, but from its "sign value". By applying the theories of Jameson and Baudrillard, this research proves that in semi-medium cities like Purwokerto, visual and material signifiers (serving tools and foam patterns) are the primary drivers of cultural meaning. This bridges a gap in previous literature by showing that "image construction" is a material process, where the equipment itself acts as a linguistic tool to communicate status and modernity.

The rise of the "cappuccino conquest" in Purwokerto represents a significant tension between globalization and local identity. As coffee shops increasingly prioritize globalized, espresso-based menus to accommodate modern lifestyles, local specialties like kopi clebek are systematically marginalized. This shift suggests that the "aestheticization" of coffee serves as a tool for capital expansion that often erases indigenous culinary heritage. Consequently, there is an urgent need for critical intervention. Local governments and stakeholders must recognize that protecting local coffee creations is not merely an economic issue, but a necessary act of cultural preservation against the homogenizing force of global consumer culture.

To deepen the understanding of contemporary coffee culture, the transition study from image construction to consumer reception can be possible future study. By exploring how individuals internalize these signs to "assert their existence" or if they operate under a "false consciousness." Furthermore, there is a need to investigate the digital semiotics of social media in driving "aestheticization". Finally, scholars should examine the political economy of local coffee, seeking ways to "re-aestheticize" traditional brews like *kopi clebek* to compete with globalized espresso-based menus and mitigate the "cappuccino conquest".

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