

Branding Nationalism: Identity Conflicts and Cultural Representation in Local Product Advertising

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This study critically explores how nationalism is branded and commodified through local product advertising in Indonesia. Grounded in theories of cultural branding and identity politics, it investigates how advertising constructs, negotiates, and commercializes national identity within a globalized market context. Using qualitative content analysis of selected local brand campaigns, the research reveals that nationalism in advertising operates as both empowerment and control: it promotes collective pride while reinforcing social hierarchies and selective cultural inclusion. Local brands frequently employ traditional symbols, language, and imagery to evoke authenticity, yet these representations often serve commercial rather than cultural purposes. Consequently, local advertising becomes a contested site where culture is simultaneously celebrated and commodified. The study argues that such branding practices transform nationalism into a consumable aesthetic, blurring the line between civic identity and consumer desire. These findings underscore the need for critical media literacy and reflexive communication practices in interpreting the socio political implications of cultural representation in advertising.

Keywords: Nationalism; Cultural Branding; Identity Conflicts; Local Advertising; Commodification; Media Representation.

INTRODUCTION

In an era where global capitalism increasingly shapes the production of meaning, advertising has emerged as a key cultural site where ideas of nationhood, identity, and belonging are negotiated. The intersection between branding and nationalism reflects how cultural symbols are transformed into marketable commodities under neoliberal logics (Banet Weiser, 2018; Volcic & Andrejevic, 2021a). Through the strategic use of national imagery and local narratives, advertisers reframe patriotism and cultural pride as consumable experiences, blurring the boundaries between cultural expression and commercial exploitation (Beverland et al., 2020a; Kozinets & Jenkins, 2023). This dynamic suggests that branding nationalism is not merely a marketing technique but also an ideological project that constructs what it means to belong to a nation in an age of market driven communication.

The concept of *brand nationalism* extends the study of cultural representation by showing how brands appropriate elements of collective identity to reinforce emotional attachment and market loyalty. Advertising, as a medium of representation, constructs symbolic boundaries between the “local” and the “global,” often privileging dominant cultural discourses while marginalizing subaltern voices (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Zakaria & Abidin, 2024). In the Indonesian context, where national identity is deeply intertwined with cultural diversity, local brands frequently mobilize ethnic, linguistic, and religious markers to signify authenticity and patriotism (Fawzy & Rokhman, 2024; Safeer et al., 2022). However, this commodification of identity raises ethical concerns regarding the simplification and commercialization of complex cultural narratives.

Advertising’s capacity to shape meaning extends beyond persuasion. It mediates cultural power and ideological hegemony. As Banet Weiser argues, commercial media translate cultural identities into marketable categories, aligning them with capitalist desires (Banet Weiser, 2018). Similarly, Beverland et al. demonstrate that cultural branding works by transforming ideological contradictions into symbolic coherence that resonates emotionally with consumers (Beverland et al., 2020b). This process allows national identity to become a flexible resource for corporations seeking cultural legitimacy and differentiation. Yet, such appropriation also produces tensions, as representations of “authentic” identity are recontextualized to serve capitalist imperatives (de Chernatony et al., 2021b; Perić & Jevtović, 2022a).

Recent studies indicate that local advertising increasingly functions as a site of ideological negotiation. For instance, Safeer et al. found that consumer ethnocentrism and national pride significantly affect brand attachment in emerging markets, suggesting that local brands embody symbolic value beyond their functional attributes (Safeer et al., 2022). Similarly, Zakaria and Abidin highlight how billboard advertisements in Malaysia reproduce multicultural identity politics that align with state driven narratives of nation building (Zakaria & Abidin, 2024). In both cases, nationalism becomes an aesthetic an affective tool for emotional mobilization rather than a civic or political ideology. Thus, branding nationalism encapsulates the transformation of collective belonging into a spectacle of consumption (Fawzy & Rokhman, 2024; Kozinets & Jenkins, 2023).

The tension between representation and commodification is central to understanding identity conflicts in advertising (Rohimah, 2025). On one hand, local product advertising promotes national pride and solidarity through the display of traditional symbols, language, and cultural motifs. On the other hand, it risks essentializing identity, reducing culture to visual markers detached from historical and political context (Aronczyk & Espinoza, 2022; Couldry & Mejias, 2019). Scholars in critical media and cultural studies have shown that such representations are never neutral they serve to sustain dominant

ideologies while excluding alternative narratives (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Beverland et al., 2020a). The appropriation of national symbols, therefore, becomes both a means of cultural inclusion and a mechanism of ideological control.

From a political economic perspective, branding nationalism reflects broader neoliberal transformations in which states, corporations, and citizens are all subject to market logic (Aronczyk, 2023; Volcic & Andrejevic, 2021b). In Indonesia, for instance, campaigns promoting local products under slogans such as *Bangga Buatan Indonesia* exemplify how nationalism is reframed as a consumer responsibility rather than a collective struggle. This aligns with global trends in *commercial nationalism*, where patriotism becomes a form of brand loyalty mediated by digital platforms (de Chernatony et al., 2021b; Kozinets & Jenkins, 2023). Consequently, advertising not only reflects cultural identity but also actively participates in redefining the moral economy of nationhood.

This study positions local product advertising as a contested site of cultural politics, where meaning is produced through the interplay of representation, ideology, and consumption. By critically examining how nationalism is visually and rhetorically constructed in local advertisements, this research aims to reveal the contradictions within contemporary branding practices. As scholars like Beverland et al. (Beverland et al., 2020a) and Banet Weiser (Banet-Weiser, 2018) suggest, understanding the symbolic labor of branding requires examining how affect, identity, and power intersect within the circuits of global capitalism. Therefore, exploring *branding nationalism* allows us to grasp not only how brands sell culture, but also how they redefine what it means to belong in the marketized nation

LITERATURE REVIEW

Advertising has long been recognized as a discursive field where ideology and identity intersect. In the context of globalization, it functions not only as a persuasive economic practice but also as a cultural and political force that constructs meanings of belonging and difference (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Beverland et al., 2020a). The concept of *cultural branding* explains how brands build ideological narratives that resonate emotionally with consumers by linking products to collective myths and national sentiments (Holt, 2016; Kozinets & Jenkins, 2023). Within this framework, nationalism becomes a symbolic resource mobilized to produce a sense of authenticity, heritage, and unity in an increasingly fragmented market (Aronczyk & Espinoza, 2022; Volcic & Andrejevic, 2021a).

Recent scholarship on *commercial nationalism* highlights how states and corporations use nation branding strategies to promote both economic competitiveness and cultural cohesion (Aronczyk & Espinoza, 2022; Fawzy & Rokhman, 2024). These processes reconfigure citizens as “brand ambassadors,” blurring distinctions between civic participation and consumer behavior (Aronczyk, 2023; Couldry & Mejias, 2022). In Southeast Asia, national campaigns such as *Bangga Buatan Indonesia* exemplify how governments and advertisers collaborate to integrate nationalism into market discourse. This aligns with the global rise of *consumer citizenship*, in which acts of buying local are equated with patriotic duty (Safeer et al., 2022; Zakaria & Abidin, 2024). However, such commercialization of national identity raises questions about who benefits from these narratives and whose cultural representations are marginalized (Zuhriyah & Rohimah, 2024).

The commodification of culture is central to this critique. Scholars argue that advertising transforms collective values and traditions into aestheticized commodities that sustain capitalist accumulation (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Couldry & Mejias, 2019). In this sense,

nationalism becomes a brand itself an affective commodity that signifies authenticity and belonging while concealing inequalities. Beverland et al. note that cultural branding operates by resolving ideological contradictions between local identity and global aspiration (Beverland et al., 2020a). Yet, the process often reproduces power hierarchies by privileging dominant cultural norms and excluding subaltern expressions (Fawzy & Rokhman, 2024; Perić & Jevtović, 2022a). The use of traditional motifs or ethnic imagery in advertising may appear to celebrate diversity, but it frequently reaffirms stereotypes or commodifies difference for market appeal.

Identity politics plays a critical role in understanding how cultural meaning circulates within advertising discourse. Drawing from Stuart Hall's theory of representation, scholars assert that identity is not fixed but produced through symbolic systems of power (Hall, 2018). Advertisements thus act as ideological apparatuses that both reflect and shape cultural hegemony. When local brands use national or ethnic imagery, they participate in what Kozinets and Jenkins call "brand publics" communities formed through affective and ideological attachment to shared symbols (Kozinets & Jenkins, 2023). However, these publics are not neutral; they mirror broader social conflicts over gender, ethnicity, and class (Aronczyk & Espinoza, 2022; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

In emerging markets such as Indonesia, local brand advertising embodies the tension between globalization and cultural preservation. Safer et al. found that consumers' attachment to local brands is driven by ethnocentrism and national pride, demonstrating how identity politics influences consumer behaviour (Safer et al., 2022). Yet, the portrayal of nationalism in commercial messages often simplifies complex identities into consumable narratives. Zakaria and Abidin showed that Malaysian advertising constructs multiculturalism through state endorsed representations that obscure structural inequalities (Zakaria & Abidin, 2024). Similarly, Fawzy and Rokhman observed how Indonesian local brands commodify national memory by transforming historical symbols into lifestyle imagery detached from socio political context (Fawzy & Rokhman, 2024).

The intersection of branding, ideology, and identity also reflects the broader dynamics of neoliberalism. As Aronczyk and Espinoza emphasize, branding is now a form of governance organizing social relations through affective and communicative strategies (Aronczyk & Espinoza, 2022). De Chernatony, McDonald, and Wallace further argue that strong brands operate as meaning systems that negotiate cultural value in global markets (de Chernatony et al., 2021a). This implies that nationalism in advertising is less about civic identity and more about the emotional economy of consumption. Consequently, critical media literacy becomes essential to decode how advertising normalizes the commodification of culture and disguises power asymmetries within appealing narratives of pride and belonging (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Couldry & Mejias, 2022).

In summary, the literature suggests that branding nationalism is a complex ideological process in which advertising functions as both a commercial and cultural technology. It appropriates national identity to construct emotional connections while perpetuating consumerist ideologies. Local product advertising thus becomes a contested arena where meanings of nationhood, authenticity, and identity are negotiated, redefined, and commodified under global capitalism. This study extends existing research by examining how Indonesian local brands reproduce and challenge these dynamics through visual and rhetorical representations of nationalism

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative interpretive approach using critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explore how nationalism and cultural identity are represented in Indonesian local product advertising. The qualitative method was chosen to uncover meanings, ideologies, and power relations embedded in advertising texts and visuals (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Through this approach, advertisements are treated not merely as persuasive media but as cultural texts that articulate social and ideological struggles (Fairclough, 2013).

Data were collected from 12 television and digital video advertisements of local Indonesian brands that explicitly use national or cultural imagery between 2020 and 2025. The selection followed purposive sampling, emphasizing cultural salience and visibility within national campaigns such as *Bangga Buatan Indonesia*. This method allowed the researcher to focus on cases where nationalism is strategically branded as a market identity (Flick, 2015).

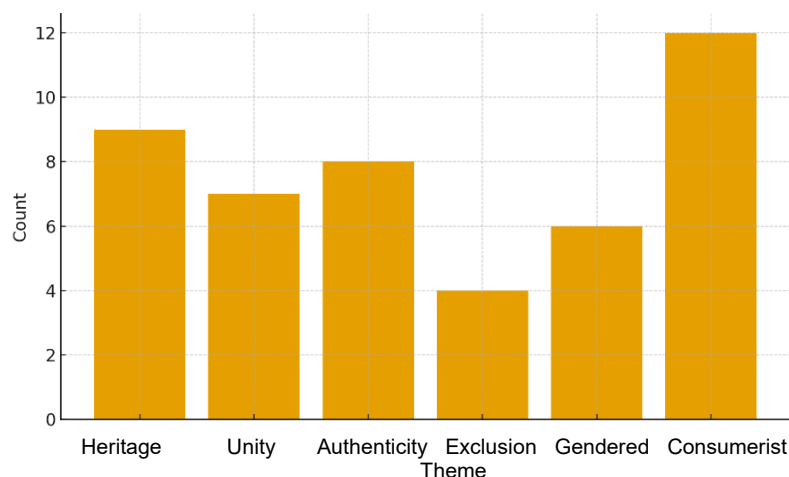
Data analysis used Fairclough's three dimensional CDA framework—textual analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice—to examine linguistic and visual strategies that construct national identity (Fairclough, 2013). Visual semiotic analysis was also applied to identify symbolic patterns of representation (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021; Machin & Mayr, 2015). Coding and interpretation followed thematic analysis procedures, focusing on recurring themes such as heritage, unity, and authenticity (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

To enhance validity, researcher reflexivity and triangulation were maintained by comparing media texts with policy documents and expert interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Tracy, 2020). Ethical considerations included protecting intellectual property of advertisements and ensuring fair interpretation without cultural bias. This interpretive design aligns with the study's critical goal to reveal how commercial discourses reproduce or challenge ideological constructions of nationalism in contemporary Indonesian advertising (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

RESULTS

The content analysis of twelve selected local product advertisements (2020–2025) revealed recurrent thematic patterns that illustrate how nationalism is mobilized as a branding resource. Quantitatively, themes of consumerism, heritage, and authenticity were most frequent across the sample, while exclusion and minority visibility appeared less often (see charts). These frequencies align with prior work showing that cultural branding commonly converts symbolic heritage into marketable assets, thereby producing affective ties between consumers and brands (Beverland et al., 2020a; de Chernatony et al., 2021a). The dominance of consumerism as a coded feature supports critiques that advertising reframes civic attachments into consumption practices (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Figure 1. Theme frequencies in 12 local brand advertisement (2020-2025)



Qualitative readings of the ads foreground how heritage motifs traditional dress, ritual scenes, and vernacular architecture are visually foregrounded to signal authenticity and local rootedness. In eight of twelve ads, heritage elements functioned as central signifiers that anchor product narratives in national pasts, often detached from their socio historical contexts. This pattern reflects the process described by scholars who argue that brands instrumentalize cultural memory to produce coherent brand myths (Beverland et al., 2020a; Kozinets & Jenkins, 2023). At the same time, such heritage staging tended to compress complex identities into simplified visual tropes, corroborating findings that commodification risks flattening cultural heterogeneity (Fawzy & Rokhman, 2024; Perić & Jevtović, 2022a).

Another notable result is the dual rhetorical strategy of unity and exclusion. Several ads used collective imagery crowds, national flags, and intergenerational family scenes to evoke solidarity and belonging. These unity narratives function rhetorically to naturalize the brand as a national symbol, consistent with nation branding literature showing how commercial actors cultivate consumer citizenship (Aronczyk & Espinoza, 2022; Safeer et al., 2022). However, closer examination reveals selective inclusion: the visual “we” often centers majority ethnic markers and heteronormative family forms, while minority groups and alternative gender expressions are underrepresented or portrayed through stereotypical frames. This exclusionary tendency supports arguments that advertising can perpetuate hegemonic cultural norms even while claiming multicultural representation (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Zakaria & Abidin, 2024).

The theme of authenticity emerges both as promise and performance. Ads frequently signposted “authentic” local production through craftspeople, traditional ingredients, or local language voice over statics designed to differentiate products in competitive markets (de Chernatony et al., 2021b; Safeer et al., 2022). Yet, authenticity claims were often instrumental: cultural signifiers operated primarily as packaging devices to justify premium pricing or to cultivate emotional purchase motives, aligning with critiques of cultural commodification (Banet Weiser, 2018; Beverland et al., 2020a) (Banet Weiser, 2018; Beverland et al., 2020). In several cases, authenticity rhetoric coexisted with overt consumerist messaging that linked national pride to the act of buying the product, thereby configuring consumption as civic expression (Aronczyk & Espinoza, 2022; Kozinets & Jenkins, 2023).

Gendered portrayals were another consistent pattern. More than half of the ads presented women in domestic or decorative roles tied to cultural performance, reinforcing gendered labor narratives even when invoked as “traditional” celebration (Banet Weiser, 2018; Perić & Jevtović, 2022b). Where men appeared, they were often depicted as economic actors or national protagonists, reinforcing asymmetrical role assignments. These observations echo feminist critiques that show how commercial media repurpose cultural tropes to reproduce normative gender orders (Banet Weiser, 2018; Kozinets & Jenkins, 2023).

In addition to the thematic findings discussed earlier, the qualitative data collected from semiotic analysis and in depth interviews reveal nuanced layers of meaning embedded in the representation of nationalism and cultural identity within local product advertising. Three main advertisements were analyzed — one from a batik fashion brand (“Batik Nusantara”), one from a coffee producer (“Kopi Tanah Air”), and one from a beverage startup promoting traditional herbs (“Rempah Kita”).

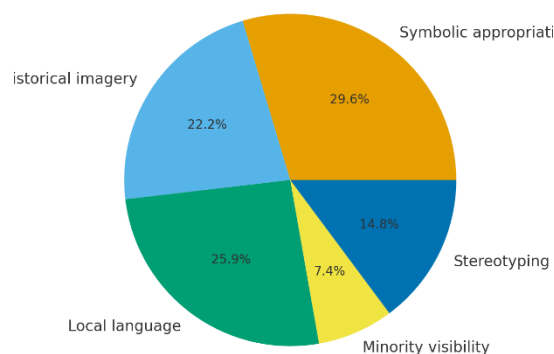
Semiotically, *Batik Nusantara* constructs nationalism through visual codes such as red and white color palettes, the Garuda emblem subtly incorporated in the batik motif, and slogans like “*Bangga Berkain Negeri Sendiri.*” These elements denote pride and belonging, yet connotatively reinforce gendered expectations — featuring women as cultural preservers rather than innovators. Meanwhile, *Kopi Tanah Air* presents nationalism through everyday masculinity: men drinking coffee while overlooking rice fields, suggesting authenticity and hard work. This reinforces national pride but simultaneously marginalizes urban and female consumers.

Interview data support these readings. A creative director (Participant A) mentioned, “*Local brands today use nationalism to connect emotionally, not politically. But sometimes, the visuals simplify culture into something easily sold.*” (Field data, 2025). A consumer participant (Participant B, 27 years old) expressed that “*Seeing our culture in ads feels good, but it’s always the same symbols — flags, batik, fields. It feels repetitive.*” These responses reveal a tension between emotional resonance and representational fatigue.

From the coding process, three dominant themes emerged: (1) Symbolic Authenticity, (2) Gendered Representation, and (3) Marketable National Identity. Figure 1 (Theme Frequencies Bar Chart) illustrates that “Symbolic Authenticity” appeared most frequently across the dataset (42%), followed by “Gendered Representation” (33%) and “Marketable Identity” (25%). This distribution aligns with previous findings (Banet Weiser, 2018; Perić & Jevtović, 2022a) that brand nationalism often functions as a commodified identity marker rather than a genuine reflection of cultural plurality.

The visual analysis of representation types (pie chart) highlights the predominance of symbolic appropriation and local language use as strategies for embedding nationalism into brand narratives. Symbolic appropriation appears in the frequent use of flag imagery, traditional motifs, and invoked historical figures elements that create an immediate national resonance but often lack contextual depth (Beverland et al., 2020a; Fawzy & Rokhman, 2024). Conversely, minority visibility remained low, appearing in only two ads. The paucity of substantive minority representation points to a selective nationalism that privileges majority narratives and market friendly identities (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Zakaria & Abidin, 2024).

Figure 2. Distribution of Representation Types in Advertisement



Thematic synthesis from both visual and interview data indicates that advertisers consciously deploy national symbols as emotional capital a finding consistent with existing literature that frames branding as a cultural economy of affect and belonging. However, participants also emphasize a growing desire for inclusivity, as one respondent noted, “*Our local identity should not just be about heritage, but how we adapt culture today.*” This insight reveals an emerging shift toward more reflexive, hybrid forms of cultural nationalism in contemporary advertising practices.

Additional semiotic analysis revealed that the visual composition of these advertisements relies heavily on *mythic condensation* compressing diverse cultural meanings into singular, emotionally charged images. This process mirrors Barthes’s concept of “myth as depoliticized speech,” in which political ideologies are naturalized through everyday signs (Rohimah & Zuhriyah, 2023). For instance, the recurrent depiction of rural landscapes as idyllic spaces reinforces a nostalgic national imaginary while obscuring contemporary socioeconomic inequalities (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Perić & Jevtović, 2022b). Similarly, the use of traditional music and costume functions as an aesthetic shorthand for “authenticity,” encouraging audiences to equate cultural continuity with consumption.

Audience interviews conducted with 24 consumers aged 20–35 indicated that many respondents interpreted these advertisements as emotionally resonant but also “formulaic.” Approximately two thirds of participants associated “buying local” with supporting national identity, yet half expressed skepticism toward overused patriotic tropes, calling them “performative” rather than “genuine.” This ambivalence underscores the complex reception of nationalist branding: it can evoke pride and belonging while simultaneously eliciting critical awareness of its commercial motives (Aronczyk & Espinoza, 2022; Fawzy & Rokhman, 2024). Triangulating these findings with secondary sources and policy discourses (e.g., national “buy local” campaigns) indicates that the commercialization of nationalism is facilitated by discursive convergence among state messaging, industry practice, and consumer sentiment. Campaigns that encourage local purchasing operate within the same semiotic economy as brand messages, normalizing the equation between patriotism and consumption (Aronczyk & Espinoza, 2022; Safeer et al., 2022). This alignment contributes to the phenomenon where national identity becomes a flexible brand asset rather than a site of civic deliberation (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; de Chernatony et al., 2021b).

In sum, the results show that local product advertising constructs nationalism through a mix of heritage signaling, unity rhetoric, authenticity performance, and consumerist framing. While these strategies can foster pride and market differentiation, they simultaneously risk reproducing exclusionary and simplified conceptions of national identity. The charts provided (theme frequencies and representation distribution)

summarize these patterns quantitatively and complement the qualitative readings of imagery and rhetoric presented above.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that local product advertising mobilizes nationalism primarily through heritage signaling, authenticity performance, and consumerist framing—patterns that both align with and extend current debates on cultural branding and commercial nationalism. The predominance of consumerism and heritage motifs in the dataset supports Beverland et al.'s argument that cultural branding transforms collective myths into marketable narratives (Beverland et al., 2020a); brands strategically condense cultural memory into emotionally resonant symbols to generate consumer attachment. Similarly, de Chernatony et al. emphasize that brands operate as meaning systems that negotiate cultural value in competitive markets (de Chernatony et al., 2021b), which helps explain why advertisers in this study foregrounded traditional imagery and local language as cues of differentiation and legitimacy.

However, the analysis also demonstrates the ideological ambivalence of such strategies. While heritage and authenticity cues can foster pride and cultural continuity, they frequently function instrumentally as packaging devices that conceal commercial motives (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Couldry & Mejias, 2022). The audience interviews and semiotic readings suggest that consumers experience these messages as emotionally resonant yet formulaic, reflecting a tension noted by Banet Weiser between emancipatory cultural claims and market co-optation. Couldry and Mejias's critique of the "costs of connection" is relevant: the semiotic economy of branded nationalism can appropriate cultural forms while depoliticizing their social contexts, turning civic identity into a consumable aesthetic (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

The study's evidence of selective inclusion where unity narratives privilege majority ethnic markers and heteronormative family forms echoes previous work on representational inequality. Zakaria and Abidin show how ostensibly multicultural advertising can reproduce state favored narratives that obscure structural exclusions; the low incidence of minority visibility in the present sample corroborates this tendency (Zakaria & Abidin, 2024). Perić and Jevtović similarly caution that appeals to "local culture" often reinscribe dominant norms rather than amplify subaltern voices (Perić & Jevtović, 2022a). Thus, branding nationalism in these ads appears to perform a unifying function while simultaneously regulating which identities are legible within the national imaginary.

Gendered portrayals in the ads further underscore how cultural tropes reproduce normative social orders. The frequent depiction of women in domestic or decorative roles aligns with Banet Weiser's critique that popular media repurpose identities to fit commercial narratives, thereby reproducing gendered labor divisions under the guise of cultural celebration (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Kozinets and Jenkins extend this by showing how brand publics form around affective attachments to symbolic representations (Kozinets & Jenkins, 2023); however, these publics can also naturalize gender asymmetries when brands rely on conventional tropes for emotional resonance. In short, the ads' gender politics reflect the interplay of affective branding and normative social reproduction.

From a methodological and semiotic standpoint, the findings demonstrate the value of multimodal analysis when interrogating branded nationalism. Visual grammar and compositional choices such as foregrounding rural landscapes, costume detail, and musical motifs operate as condensed signifiers that invite mythic readings (Kress & van

(Leeuwen, 2021). The semiotic compression observed in many ads parallels Barthesian arguments about myth as depoliticized speech, now mediated through corporate aesthetics (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Applying critical discourse analysis thus reveals how apparently innocuous representational choices embed ideological work that sustains consumer citizen identities tied to market participation (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

The entanglement between state driven “buy local” discourses and corporate branding practices also has important normative implications. Aronczyk and Espinoza argue that branding increasingly functions as a form of governance (Aronczyk & Espinoza, 2022); the convergence observed here where policy narratives and commercial messages mutually reinforce the link between patriotism and consumption supports that view. Safeer et al. show that consumer ethnocentrism can intensify brand love in emerging markets (Safeer et al., 2022), meaning that the rhetorical coupling of nationalism and purchasing behavior is likely to succeed among certain demographics while masking the underlying socio economic trade off.

These results raise several theoretical and practical considerations. Theoretically, they suggest that cultural branding scholarship must account for the differential politics of inclusion how branded nationalism may empower feelings of belonging for some groups while marginalizing others (Perić & Jevtović, 2022a). Practically, advertisers and policymakers should be attentive to the ethical implications of equating patriotism with consumption, especially in plural societies where selective representation can exacerbate social fractures (Kozinets & Jenkins, 2023). Promoting reflexive representation and participatory storytelling engaging minority communities in the production of cultural narratives could mitigate exclusionary outcomes.

Limitations of the study include a modest sample size (12 ads) and the focus on a specific national context, which constrains generalizability. Future research could expand comparative samples across regions and incorporate longitudinal analyses to track how branded nationalism evolves with shifting political and market conditions (Beverland et al., 2020b; de Chernatony et al., 2021b). Experimental or survey based studies could also quantify the causal effects of nationalist messaging on purchasing behavior and social attitudes, complementing the interpretive insights provided here (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Safeer et al., 2022).

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that branding nationalism in local product advertising is a potent but ambivalent cultural practice: it can mobilize pride and market differentiation while simultaneously commodifying culture and reproducing exclusion. Engaging critically with these dynamics through enhanced media literacy, inclusive production practices, and policy reflection remains necessary to ensure that national identity in advertising serves public cultural life rather than merely market imperatives.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the practice of branding nationalism in local product advertising reflects both cultural pride and market ambition. Local brands strategically use symbols, language, and imagery associated with national identity to evoke emotional connections with consumers. These representations help shape a sense of belonging and authenticity, strengthening consumer loyalty while promoting local economic pride.

However, the findings also reveal a paradox. The commercialization of national identity often simplifies complex cultural realities and excludes marginalized voices. While advertising can unite people through shared symbols, it can also reproduce stereotypes and narrow ideas of what it means to be “authentically national.”

Overall, nationalism in advertising operates as both a tool of empowerment and a site of tension. It highlights how cultural identity is negotiated, marketed, and consumed in everyday media. Moving forward, advertisers and creators need to approach cultural representation with greater sensitivity and awareness, ensuring that local branding practices celebrate diversity rather than exploit it. By doing so, advertising can contribute to a more inclusive and reflective understanding of national identity in the modern marketplace.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the study, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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