

Research Article

Phenomenon Analysis of the Anomalous AI *Tung Tung Sahur* Meme

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the content of AI meme images, showing how these images construct patterns of thinking through AI meme images. The unit of analysis in this article is the AI meme *Tung Tung Sahur*, one of many memes featuring a humanoid monster made of wood that resembles a *kentongan* (traditional Indonesian percussion instrument) that can move and talk. This character is associated with the tradition of waking people up for sahur during Ramadan. Using John Fiske's semiotics, three levels have been identified: at the level of reality, this meme aims to create a comedic and nostalgic effect. However, at the level of representation, it is found to be a signifier indicating the absurdity of thought patterns that can impact younger generations, particularly Generation Alpha, and there is a violation of visual codes that do not align with the *sahur* tradition during Ramadan. Furthermore, at the ideological level, this meme creates a sense of community among audiences who share similar memories of the *sahur* tradition. However, it also serves as a small *alarm bell* indicating a larger underlying issue that significantly influences societal thought patterns and manipulates audiences into consuming the ideology behind the meme.

Keywords: Semiotics Analysis of John Fiske; Subversive culture; Anomalous meme; *Tung Tung Sahur* unit analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of Artificial Intelligence (hereinafter referred to as AI) technology continues to rapidly advance, permeating almost all sectors of life, including creative industries such as film, animation, video, performing arts, and visual communication design. Generative AI has dominated as the main technology trend of 2025, reshaping the industry through its ability to create highly sophisticated and human-like content, ranging from text and images to audio and complex simulations. The impact of using AI-based applications cannot be ignored either (Im et al., 2025). AI, on one hand, can help advance film technology, but on the other hand, it also poses a serious threat. For example, what is happening with the latest animation innovations. The phenomenon of anomalous character memes has become a serious challenge in the digital era because it can lead to disinformation, misinformation, hoaxes, hate speech, and other harmful content. The existence of social media and digital platforms has accelerated the spread of this anomalous content, which can influence individuals' perspectives, especially among younger generations, in understanding the world, forming their opinions, and engaging in social interactions. Research on this phenomenon is crucial to understanding its characteristics, dissemination mechanisms, and psychological, social, and even political impacts on different generations.

An anomaly is a deviation from something that is usual or normal and has become a common or majority condition in a particular environment (Apriliani, 2025). From this definition, this general anomaly has two dimensions, namely the physical and behavioral dimensions. From the physical dimension, for example, an anomaly is described as a deviation that can affect the entire body or only one part or organ of the human body (Albantani, 2018). The phenomenon of anomalous content is a complex issue with a significant impact on young people psychology (Ramadhan, 2025). In-depth, multidisciplinary research is essential to understand what it is and how it impacts, as well as to develop useful plans to protect and empower future generations to become critical, responsible, and resilient digital citizens. This complex phenomenon is the impact of AI-generated anomalous memes on Generation Alpha, born between 2010 and 2025. While artificial intelligence facilitates learning and skill development (Gill & Mathur, 2023). Mark McCrindler predicts that Generation Alpha will be overly reliant on gadgets, less socially engaged, less creative, and more individualistic. Generation Alpha desires instant gratification and undervalues the process. Their obsession with gadgets leads to social alienation (Fadlurrohman et al., 2019).

One of the latest anomalous contents that is very popular among Generation Alpha is the content themed "*Tung tung sahur*," cappuccina, and their friends. The phenomenon of the viral meme character "*Tung Tung Tung Sahur*" on TikTok features a humanoid wooden monster resembling a traditional drum that can move and talk. This character is associated with the tradition of waking people for *sahur* during the month of Ramadan. The phenomenon of "*Tung Tung Tung Sahur*" is very popular among the younger generation, especially Generation Alpha (children who are familiar with gadgets from birth). However, this content trend has the potential to increase exposure to brainrot content, thereby fostering absurd thinking in the brain development of Generation Alpha. The increasingly absurd thinking of Generation Alpha can lead to behavioral changes in the future. The consequences of this absurd thinking in children can have negative impacts on cognitive behavior, difficulties in thinking logically, systematically, and critically, as well as a decrease in empathy, which can affect the growth of the generation in the long term. This article aims to analyze how exposure to "*Tung Tung Sahur*" content affects the development of logical, systematic, and critical thinking abilities in Generation Alpha, as well as its impact on their empathy and social behavior. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a promising technology for overcoming challenges (Arnadi; Aslan; Vandika, 2024). phenomena that defy logic, are unnatural, or violate the normal rules we are accustomed to seeing, but are still displayed in visual form. A phenomenon that defies logic, is unusual, or violates the normal rules we are accustomed to seeing, yet is still presented in a visual form. This trend of anomalies is emphasized as an absurd FYP spectacle for Gen Alpha (Yuniasri, 2025).

This article explores various aspects of Indonesian culture and society. Tiktok is a social media app that went viral quickly after being blocked for a while due to negative content, and is now a new trend and popular culture that is quite popular among people of all ages (Albahroyni; Sazali, 2023). Several studies collectively demonstrate that these research works provide insights into Islamic ethics and literary analysis, offering diverse perspectives on the cultural and intellectual landscape of the country. Recent research on content analysis in Indonesian media has explored various aspects of communication and representation. By comparing the degree of adoption to renewal or reform, innovation is defined as an idea, work, or item that is experienced and felt by members of a social system. This includes factors like relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (Puspasari & Amizah, 2012). Studies have examined opinion columns in newspapers, analyzing both text and context to understand how messages are conveyed (Rahmawati, 2022). Advertising content has been examined to identify anomalies in message delivery, particularly concerning ethical considerations and societal norms (Wulandari et al., 2023). Media bias has been studied in the coverage of international conflicts, with findings indicating that news outlets often present information from a particular perspective, which has the potential to influence public perception (Ramadani & Fuadin, 2024). Additionally, the structure and content of popular YouTube channels have been analyzed, revealing complex narrative structures and diverse topics in journalist-style content (Aziza, 2022). These studies collectively highlight the importance of critical content analysis in understanding media messages and their potential impact on audiences across various platforms and contexts. This *Tung Tung Sahur* meme cartoon features a main character in the form of a stick with a human body, accompanied by a character of a woman with a cappuccino cup for a head, whose storyline is often nonsensical, with visual elements that are absurd and difficult to understand (Affandi, 2025). A wide range of information technologies, including hardware, software and communication networks, have expanded access to information (Windasari & Dheasari, 2024).

The application of Fiske's theory in this article aims to understand how meaning is produced, consumed, and debated thru visual representation. Many researchers use Fiske's theory to examine how photographs in the news media not only record reality but also represent it thru certain cultural codes. Fiske emphasizes that the audience is not passive; they interpret this photo based on their own cultural and ideological backgrounds. Referring to semiotics in the view of John Fiske, advertisements are also one of the media most frequently analyzed using Fiske's semiotics due to their clear purpose of selling products thru visual persuasion. As found in the workpaper of (Alyani, 2021), *The Ideological Construction of Beauty in Magazine Advertisements: A Fiskean Reading*, which analyzes magazine advertisements for beauty products, it shows how these images construct the ideal concept of beauty. The analysis of its reality level on the model, product, and setting. Its representation level on visual codes (bright colors, perfect model poses, enticing text) that represent beauty as something that can be bought. Models are often represented as unattainable icons, creating desire in the audience. And at the ideological level, this article reveals how the advertisement not only sells a product but also disseminates the ideologies of capitalism and patriarchy. The advertisement imposes the idea that a woman's worth is determined by her appearance, and the solution to insecurity is to buy the advertized product. This shows how advertisements manipulate the audience to consume the ideology behind the product. By analyzing this meme, we can raise the awareness of the younger generation about the importance of preserving Indonesian cultural values, because of times may change, technology may evolve, but we must not forget the Eastern values that have been upheld by the Indonesian people for so long (Puspasari et al., 2017).

Fiske's approach is also highly relevant for analyzing memes, which are one of the most dynamic forms of popular culture. The research published in the article "*Revolution by other memes: on the playful subcultures of r/Political Compass Memes*" analyzes political memes circulating on social media, with an analysis of the reality level on images or videos of political figures (Tuters & Mueller, 2024). Meanwhile, at the level of representation, it was found that memes represent political figures in ways that deviate from official representations (for example, by altering their faces into cartoons or adding humorous text). This is intertextuality, where images of political figures are combined with other texts

or images to produce comedic or satirical meanings. Next, at the ideological level, this article argues that political memes are a form of resistance from the audience. Instead of accepting often serious media representations, the audience uses memes to mock power, challenge authority, and create their own narratives. This is an example of how the audience actively creates meaning, rather than being passive recipients of the dominant ideology. The research results show that the memes on the forum are a form of "playful subversion" used by young people to explore and challenge the dominant political ideology. They show how these memes transform serious political images into jokes, thereby creating a space for symbolic opposition to mainstream political norms. Their analysis aligns well with Fiske's framework, which sees how audiences actively use popular media (in this case, memes) to create new meanings that challenge and subvert the meanings given by power or dominant media. This article supports the analysis of the absurdity of memes as a form of subverse cultural (Subculture).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This article is researched using semiotic analysis techniques according to John Fiske. According to Peirce, the "correct effect of the sign," or the creation of meaning based on the movement itself, is the interpretant rather than the sign user (Prasetyo & Everlyn, 2023). Thru this semiotic analysis by John Fiske, it is evident that the article not only conveys information about the "*Tung Tung Sahur*" meme phenomenon but also actively shapes readers' perceptions of the dangers of AI, the vulnerability of Generation Alpha, and the urgency of researching this issue. This article employs semiotic techniques according to John Fiske (Figure 1.) to take the issue seriously and is crucial for understanding its characteristics, dissemination mechanisms, and psychological, social, and even political impacts on various generations to demonstrate a strong scientific study.

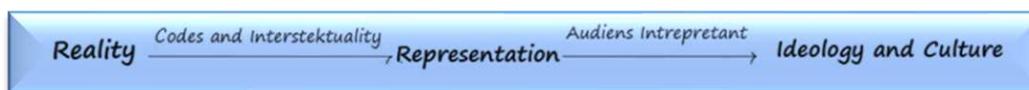


Figure 1. Semiotic Analysis of John Fiske Flowchart

Overall, John Fiske's semiotics can be used to analyze images with an emphasis on the fact that every visual is not neutral. Because images have become cultural texts represented thru codes, and they possess ideological meanings that can be deconstructed, debated, and even subverted by the audience. While the term 'subculture' is often used in recent discussions about the production of reactive digital culture (Lewis, R., Marwick, A. E., & Partin, 2021) this term is generally based on a common understanding of it as communities outside mainstream culture. However, subcultures also have a long and diverse history as specific objects of scientific analysis. Early works on this topic emerged from the field of criminology and focused on juvenile delinquency. The sound and images in film/content are a form of output that contains elements of entertainment, culture, and information as well as the existence itself, which can be used as a means of political, cultural, educational and religious socialization (Puspasari et al., 2019) .

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To begin our discussion, it is important to acknowledge that the results of this article's research found three levels analyzed in semiotics according to John Fiske regarding the AI *Tung Tung Sahur* anomaly meme (Figure 2).

3.1 Result Data Semiotic of the *Tung tung Sahur* Meme



Figure 2. Anomalous of Tung tung sahur Meme
(Source: www.mldspot.com)

3.1.1 Level of Reality

The *tung tung sahur* meme usually combines the distinctive sound of a wooden drum with visuals or text that are out of place, creating a comedic and nostalgic effect. At the level of reality, real objects that form the basis of the *tung tung sahur* meme can be identified (See [Table 1](#)).

Table 1. Level of Reality of the Tung Tung Sahur Meme

Result Data of Level of Reality	
Object	<i>Kentongan</i> , drum, people patrolling for sahur, mosque.
Event	The tradition of waking up for <i>sahur</i> practiced by the residents, especially during the month of Ramadan.
Sound	The specific sound " <i>tung tung</i> " produced by striking a <i>kentongan</i> or <i>bedug</i> .

3.1.2 Level of Representation

At this level of representation, the results of the analysis of reality are found in symbols and encoded in this *Tung tung sahur* meme (See [Table 2](#)).

Table 2. Level of Representation of Tung Tung Sahur meme

Result Data of Level of Representation	
Sign	The sound "tung tung" and the phrase " <i>Tung Tung Sahur</i> " become markers. (<i>signifier</i>).
Coded	The marker conventionally refers to the activity of waking up for <i>sahur</i> , the arrival of <i>sahur</i> time, and the atmosphere of the month of Ramadan.
Intertextuality	The absurdity of this meme arises when the voice or sentence is combined with contrasting or irrelevant visuals. For example, a video of someone who is shocked because they fell, a scene from a horror movie, or a cartoon character who is shocked. This text refers to other visual texts to create slapstick comedy, which is evident from the violent scenes that are packaged in a humorous way.
Expectation Violation	There is a violation of the visual code. The audience expected visuals that aligned with the <i>sahur</i> tradition, but what appeared were strange, no make senses and funny visuals that triggered laughter.

3.1.3 Level of Ideology

At this ideological level, a deeper meaning is derived from the level of representation to social and cultural meaning (collective identity). This meme creates a sense of togetherness among the audience who share the same memories or understanding of the *sahur* tradition. This meme also aims to spread an ideology that evokes past memories (nostalgia). At this ideological level, the meaning of subversion in this context is an action to change or challenge the meaning, norms, or dominant ideology thru media such as art, humor, or memes. The goal is not to overthrow the state, but to change the way we think about something. In semiotics, subversion often occurs when a sign (such as an image, sound, or word) that has a conventional meaning is used in an inappropriate context. This creates new meanings that are often funny, ironic, or critical. Subversion is challenging the meanings and values that society has already accepted. The sound of "*tung tung*" conventionally serves as a marker of serious and sacred tradition. However, when combined with strange and funny visuals, the meme challenges and "subverts" that serious meaning, turning it into something light and entertaining. Thus, the audience indirectly takes control of the meaning, refusing to be passive in accepting tradition. And this becomes popular culture that shows how local traditions can be transformed into dynamic and interactive pop culture icons.

The sound "*tung tung*" traditionally serves as a marker of serious and sacred tradition. However, when combined with strange and funny visuals, the meme challenges and subverts that serious meaning, transforming it into something lighthearted and entertaining. Thus, the audience indirectly takes control of the meaning, refusing to passively accept tradition. This has become a popular culture phenomenon demonstrating how local traditions can be transformed into innovative and interactive pop culture icons. However, this meme also contributes to the decline of thinking and ethics, as the AI-generated "*tung tung sahur*" anomaly is packaged in slapstick comedy that includes elements of violence, relying on excessive physical actions and absurd events solely to create *humor*.

3.2 Discussion Analysis

The main challenge in learning history in the current digital era is the lack of understanding and knowledge (Shobariyah & Darmawan, 2025). The “*Tung Tung Sahur*” meme is specifically linked to narratives about the dangers of AI through semiotic analysis that interprets how articles present it. This meme is not only seen as a mere entertainment phenomenon, but as a manifestation or symptom of larger AI issues, particularly regarding its potential negative impact on Generation Alpha. Although the “*Tung Tung Sahur*” meme itself may seem harmless, the article likely analyzes it as an example of how content generated or disseminated by AI (or at least with the help of AI algorithms) can infiltrate popular culture. Semiotics analysis will look for phrases that imply that memes are not just spontaneous human creations. This article highlights how the virality of this meme is driven by the movement of social media platform recommendation algorithms, which are themselves AI products. This builds a narrative that AI has the power to accelerate the spread of content, even content that has the potential for hidden impacts. The *Tung tung Sahur* meme also has the potential to manipulate perceptions. While this meme is humorous, this AI-generated content can be used to manipulate attention, emotions, or even worldviews, particularly among vulnerable groups like Generation Alpha, thereby subtly influencing cognition and behavior. In the Islamic perspective, understanding is in line with the principles of *fiqh* in the field of *mu'amalah*, which states that everything is considered permissible until there is clear evidence that prohibits it. In the context of social media content, this permissibility can be seen from the perspective of Islamic law as a manifestation of freedom of communication and interaction between individuals, which is human nature and supports the creation of healthy and productive social relationship (Hastharita, 2024).

Subtle psychological and social impacts, this article focuses not only on the content of memes, but also on how interactions with memes, driven by AI, can have broader impacts. This can include digital addiction to repetitive patterns in memes and short videos, which can be linked to AI algorithms designed to maximize screen time. Furthermore, changes in thinking patterns due to constant exposure to fast-paced and viral content can be linked to shorter attention spans or difficulties in processing complex information, all of which are indirectly related to how AI curates and presents content. Thus, there is a formation of reality perception, where memes can so easily go viral and influence culture, and AI in the future could spread misinformation or shape reality perception among a generation heavily reliant on digital platforms. This seemingly trivial phenomenon serves as a “wake-up call,” indicating a larger underlying issue regarding how AI significantly influences society. Thus, “*Tung Tung Sahur*” is not just a meme in the analysis of the article. It is a symbol and symptom of deeper concerns about how AI subtly shapes digital reality and influences the development of Generation Alpha, justifying calls for more serious research.

Generation Z is known to have characteristics that are greatly influenced by technological advances, such as openness to information, a fast-paced lifestyle, and a preference for practical things, which also has an impact on the next generation, especially Generation Alpha (Puspasari, 2025). The impact on the younger generation, especially Generation Alpha, who are the most exposed to digital content, is significant. Some of the visible impacts include cognitive, psychological, and social effects that are absurd. Cognitive impacts include a decline in critical thinking skills, which can blur the boundaries of logic, making it difficult for Generation Alpha to distinguish between reality and fantasy. As a result, this generation may believe in strange things that are portrayed as possible, which can harm their aesthetic sensibilities. They may no longer understand what constitutes good or beautiful visuals, as the stranger something is, the better it becomes. Social impacts include instantly capturing attention, causing people to stop scrolling out of curiosity, and provoking funny, surprised, or even fearful reactions. Impacts on religiosity include this generation perceiving the “*tung tung sahur*” sound as an icon of justification for remembering *sahur* during the Ramadan fasting month.

4. CONCLUSION

This study uses John Fiske's semiotic analysis to examine the phenomenon of the “*Tung Tung Sahur*” meme. Although this meme appears to be ordinary entertainment, the analysis shows that it has deeper meanings and significant implications. At the levels of reality, representation, and ideology, it has had an impact on Generation Alpha. This study does not merely view the meme as a cultural phenomenon but also as a symptom of a larger AI-related issue. The meme's virality was driven by AI algorithms on social media, illustrating how AI can accelerate the spread of content. This article argues that the “*Tung Tung Sahur*” meme serves as an example of how content generated or disseminated by AI, despite appearing harmless, can manipulate perception and attention. From the perspective of reality, the ease with which this meme went viral highlights the potential dangers in the future, where AI could spread and shape the perception of reality for a generation heavily reliant on digital platforms. Thus, the “*Tung Tung Sahur*” meme is not merely a joke but a symptom reflecting deeper concerns about how AI subtly shapes digital reality and influences the development of Generation Alpha.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research may encourage further studies on the impact of AI anomalies on society and their research findings to other researchers in the future, especially in literate semiotics of John Fiske.

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