Semiotic Analysis Found in COVID-19 Advertisements by National Institutes of Health Websites

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Abstracts: This study concerns with the signifier and signified of verbal and visual signs in COVID-19 advertisements, also concern with denotative and connotative meaning in COVID-19 advertisements. This study has two objectives of the study they are: 1) to find out the signifier and signified of verbal and visual signs presented in COVID-19 advertisements by National Institutes of Health. 2) to analyze the meaning of denotative and connotative meaning in COVID-19 advertisements. The data used in this study were taken from the National of Institutes of Health Websites using the observation method. This study uses a qualitative method to conduct a clear analysis. The theory used in this study is the theory of semiotics by Saussure (1916), theory of meaning by Barthes (1967), and also the supporting theory of the theory of color terms by Cerrato (2012). The analysis was presented by informal method. The result of this study concluded that every advertisements have signifier and signified of verbal and visual signs. Where, the signifier and signified of verbal and visual signs will support each other to convey a meaning or message contained in an advertisement. In this analysis, denotative meaning often appears in verbal signs (word, sentence, or phrase), meanwhile connotative meaning often appears in visual signs (picture and color).
Keywords : Semiotics, Signifier and Signified, Denotative and Connotative, COVID-19 Advertisements

INTRODUCTION

Semiotic is a study of how signs make a meaning. Fiske (2010) states that semiotic is a study of signs and how it works. According to Saussure (2011), also known as the "Father of Modern Linguistics", we look forward to any science that deals with the lives of signs in societies. He named it semiology from the Greek semion "sign".

Signs are classified into 2, namely verbal signs and visual signs. A sign can also be understood as signifier (what do you see/hear), and signified (what do you think). A sign that refers to an image or sound is called a signifier. Meanwhile, a sign that refers to the concept of the image or sound is called signified. Signifier and signified can be combined into a signification (Saussure, 2011). The meaning of signification proposed by Saussure and Barthes is vastly different. According to Barthes (1967), a signification is divided into two kinds, there are denotation (denotative) and connotation (connotative). A literal meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence is referred to as denotation. Meanwhile, the connotation is a secondary meaning of a word, phrase, and sentence. The color are also used to catch people attention. According to Cerrato (2012), color is the most appealing thing and is a form of visual communication. Color can signify or convey a greater than unusual feeling in order to make what is given or promoted by the advertisement more evident and to attract the reader to read the message.

In terms of communication, the use of signs usually can be used by any kind of media, one of them is advertising media. Dyer (2008 : 2) states that "advertising means drawing attention to something, or notifying or informing somebody of something". In addition, advertising can also encourage or increase awareness of health and other social issues. Advertisements can be formed from various types, such as films, posters, magazines, etc. Nowadays, advertisement plays an critical function, spesifically in this COVID-19 pandemic to spread positivity that can encourage human beings on this difficult time. The existence of this COVID-19 advertisements are aimed to attract people's attention so that they are attenttive of the information and messages contained the advertisements. In general, advertisements are presented in a unique and very attractive. There are two kinds of advertisements, which are commercial advertisements and non-commercial advertisements. A commercial advertisement is one that promotes the sale of a product or service. Meanwhile, a non-commercial advertisement is a public service advertisement used to inform something or not sell a product or service. COVID-19 advertisements are one example of non-commercial advertising.

COVID-19 takes a huge toll on the whole world requiring governments and non-governments to be more alert to the deadly coronavirus. The Indonesian government also sought to break the covid-19 spread chain with work from home, study from home, and still use health protocols such as keeping a social distance (about 1 meter), washing your hands with soap, and wearing masks (covering your nose and mouth). The Covid-19 virus represents the greatest public health disaster of the last hundred years. We will see that mobilizing the medical network and committing major resources is the most effectivee way to make sure that the death toll is dropped significantly and the situation returns to normal (Mosley, 2020 : 6-7).

Based on the explanation above, this study aims to analyze the signifier and signified of verbal and visual signs in COVID-19 advertisements. After analyzing the signifier and signified, this study can discover the denotative and connotative meaning in COVID-19 advertisements. A semiotic approach can be used to answer research questions. The researcher chooses this advertisement to be analyzed in this study, because there are some factors. First factor, COVID-19 is the popular phenomenon in the world, most of COVID-19advertisements illustrate the current situation as well as the responsibilities that must be carried out during COVID-19 pandemic. Second factor, the Covid-19 advertisements by NIH (National Institutes of Health) presented many kind of message in the form of texts and pictures in order to emit and help the readers understand how to protect their health throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on those case, the researcher found that the signs should to be analyzed and observed using a semiotic approach. This study related to verbal and visual signs that show in COVID-19 advertisements.

METHOD

The data was taken from the National Institutes of Health Websites. This research collected the data by observation method. After collected and classified the data, the researcher would analyze by using qualitative method. First, the researcher classified the signifier and signified of verbal and visual signs by the theory of semiotic proposed by Saussure (1916). Second, analyze the denotative and connotative meaning by the theory of meaning proposed by Barthes (1967), and for the supporting theory by the theory of color terms proposed by Cerrato (2012) to analyze the meaning of color. In analyzing the data, this study presented by formal and informal method.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 advertisements were analyzed based on the theory of Saussure (1916), the theory of meaning (1967), also the supporting theory by the theory of color terms by Cerrato (2012). COVID-19 advertisement consists of verbal and visual signs. Some research on semiotics about analyzing the verbal and visual signs carried out by some researchers. The first article written by Prasetya, Erfiani, and Suari (2019) entitled “The Verbal and Visual Signs of Tourist Attraction Found in Bali Best Adventure Magazine”. They found the result that the verbal signs classified into headline, body copy, signature line, and standing detail. Meanwhile, the visual signs consists of the illustration component in those advertisements. As well as they found the meaning such as conceptual, connotative and affective meaning. For the functions, they found three functions such as informational, directive, and expressive functions. Meanwhile the other article is written by Kartika, Sudipa, Resen (2016) that analyze the verbal and visual sign on airlines advertisements. This research found that verbal and visual signs have meaning to attract the viewers and help them to reveal a deeper meaning of the Garuda Indonesia and Singapore Airlines advertising videos. The analysis of these advertisements can be seen as follows :

Advertisement 1



Figure 1: Don't Be A Litterbug Advertisement

Table 1. Verbal and Visual Signs

Types of Sign	**Signifier**	**Signified**
Verbal Signs	Don't be a litterbug!	The condition of self-protection from COVID-19 pandemic
	Stop spreading the germs! Stay healthy!	To invite us to stop any increase of virus and we need to protect ourselves of COVID-19 virus.
Visual Signs	The picture of throwing a mask with gloves	Represents the way to throw our masks after we used
	The picture of gloves washing	To kill germs and bacteria at gloves
	The picture of throwing gloves	To prevent the spreading of germs
	The picture of a prohibition throwing mask carelessly	Represent a caution that we need to throw away the mask carefully
	White and blue color at the background	Represents safety, cleanliness, health, and healing
	The picture of trash bin	The invitation for the people to put the masks and gloves in the trash after we used

The Analysis of Verbal Signs

The first verbal sign that is found in the advertisement above is "Don't be a litterbug". According to Cambridge dictionary (2022), the word "Litterbug" means a person who leaves the rubbish on the ground in public places. This verbal sign aims to invite the readers to always dispose masks and gloves

after using it into the trash bin, because the spread of COVID-19 can be transmitted through the air, droplets, and contaminated surfaces. These verbal signs shown denotative and connotative meaning. In denotative meaning, it is an appeal to the readers to always dispose their masks and gloves after it have been used. Meanwhile, the connotative meaning is important for every society to dispose it in the trash bin wherever they are because this shows that people who refuse to obey lead to the spread of COVID-19.

The second verbal sign is "Stop spreading the germs! Stay healthy!". These imperative sentences signified that the COVID-19 virus is dangerous. By looking at the imperative sentence "Stop spreading the germs! Stay healthy!" aims to ask people to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. They need to keep our conditions during this pandemic to reduce the spread of COVID-19. These imperative sentences have denotative meaning, because it explicitly tells the readers to stop any increase of COVID-19 virus.

The Analysis of Visual Signs

The first image is "The picture of throwing a mask with gloves". This visual sign represents the way to throw our masks after it have been used. It explicitly tells us after they used their masks, they have to put it in the trash bin.

The second image is "The picture of gloves washing". It means that the advertiser wants people to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by washing their gloves after they dispose the mask in the trash bin. The readers need to wash their gloves with the soap and water which is an effective way to kill germs and bacteria at gloves. It implies the readers to always keep their gloves clean to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

The third visual sign is "The picture of throwing gloves". That picture shows how to dispose the gloves in the right place. That picture has connotative meaning, because they need to dispose the gloves after it has been used to avoid the spreading of germs.

The fourth image is "The picture of a prohibition of throwing mask carelessly". It aims to reminds the readers not to dispose a mask carelessly. During this pandemic, the COVID-19 virus can be transmitted through the air and droplets of people. Therefore, they should dispose the mask after it have been used in the trash bin for their safety. Based on the explanation above, those picture has connotative meaning.

The fifth visual sign is "White and blue color at the background". Color is the important things in advertisements. According to Cerrato (2012 : 12), blue and light blue is color that used to describe health, seriousness, and healing. Cerrato (2012 : 14-15) also states white color is a color that used to describe safety, and cleanliness. The combination of those color represents the way that they can be safety, healthy, and clean after they are used masks and gloves.

The last image is "The picture of trash bin". It implicitly tells the readers to put their masks and gloves in the trash bin after it is used. People should catch the attention to disposal of masks and gloves to avoid the viruses that attached when the masks and gloves are disposed of.

Advertisement 2

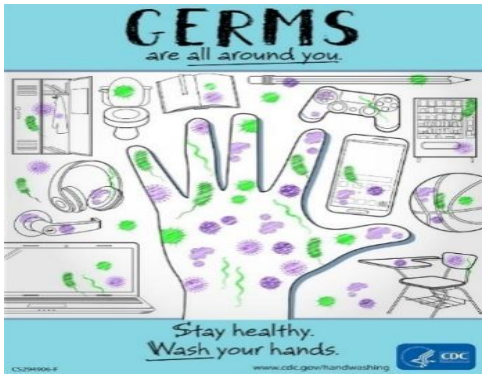


Figure 2 : Germs are all around you Advertisement

Table 2 Verbal and Visual Signs

Types of Signs	Signifier	Signified
Verbal Signs	Germs are all around you	To inform us that the COVID-19 virus is high risks
	Stay healthy	To protect ourselves and others from COVID-19
	Wash your hands	To invite us to kill the bacteria and germs
Visual Signs	The picture of some viruses with green and purple color	Refers to COVID-19 is new and mystery virus
	The picture of hand with some attached viruses	Inviting us to clean and wash our hands after we touched the objects or surfaces to avoid the spread of COVID-19
	The picture of some frequently touched objects such as : wardrobe, toilet, book, pencil, joystick, bookcase, handphone, ball, chair, laptop, doorknobs, and earphone	Illustrate that some frequently touched objects can also transmit the virus
	Light blue and white color at the background	Represents cleanliness and health

The Analysis of Verbal Signs

The first statement is "Germs are all around you". This statement signified that germs are present on all surfaces and objects we touch in every single day (such as laptops, handphones, pencils, doorknobs, earphones, joysticks, etc.). In denotative meaning, this sign has literal meaning because it tells the readers to always protect themselves from the virus that have stuck to their hands. Meanwhile, the connotative meaning is coming from the tagline that the advertiser put "all are around you". Through this word, the advertiser wants people to be aware of the environment around them, since the virus spreads by droplets, air, or touch.

The second statement is "Stay healthy". It means to announces the readers keep to be healthy by washing the hands. As we know, COVID-19 virus is high risk. It explicitly tells the readers to prevent themselves and the other people from the spread of COVID-19 virus by keeping their hands to be healthy.

The other verbal sign is "Wash your hands". During this pandemic, they always should wash their hands with soap and running water to prevent the spread of COVID-19. They should also catch the attention to cleanliness around them to avoid the spread of COVID-19 virus. This statement has denotative meaning, since the messages are explicit.

The Analysis of Visual Signs

The first image of this advertisement is "The picture of some viruses with green and purple color". This sign represents to COVID-19 virus. As we know, COVID-19 is one of the disease outbreaks caused by the newly variant, Coronavirus. The image of virus use green and purple color. According to Cerrato (2012 : 10), the green color represent something new and fresh. Cerrato (2012 : 13), also states that purple associated with wisdom, mystery, and dignity. Therefore, the meaning of green and purple

color in the COVID-19 virus use in this advertisements is closely related with new, fresh, and mystery, because the focus of these advertisements is the COVID-19 virus, which is a new and latest kinds of disease. COVID-19 is also a mystery since people who are infected with the virus do not show any symptoms. That is why we must be extra attentive. Based on the explanation above, this sign has connotative meaning.

The second image is "The picture of hand with some attached viruses". It means they need to prevent the virus that entering the body through their hands. One of the effective ways to kill the virus that attached on their hands is by washing their hands. Based on the explanation above, this image has connotative meaning.

The third image is "The picture of some freuently touched objects such as, wardrobe, toilet, book, pencil, joystick, bookcase, handphone, ball, chair, laptop, doorknobs, and earphone". It represents the illustrate that some frequently touched objects can also transmit the virus. This virus is easily transmitted by touched, air, and droplets. They must keep their hands clean to protect themselves from the virus. If their hands clean, the virus cannot enter into their body.

The last visual sign is "light blue and white color at the background". White color associated with safety, goodness, and cleanliness (Cerrato, 2012 : 14). Meanwhile, light blue associated with health and healing (Cerrato, 2012 : 12). The combination of these two colors may shows them how to be healthy and clean after we touched the objects and surfaces. It represent a messages of this advertisements that inspire the readers to spread of goodness.

CONCLUSIONS

The result of this study found that all advertisements have a signifier and signified of verbal and visual signs. The signifier shows the text of the advertisements. The researcher found the verbal signs in those COVID-19 advertisements in a written form that contains words, phrases, and sentences to catch people's attention.

In the visual signs, the researcher found the pictures and the colors that use in those advertisements. The ten visual signs in those advertisements mostly used the picture of masks to save lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Aside from that, those advertisements mostly used the blue color at the background.

The signified shows the meaning of the verbal and visual signs in these COVID-19 advertisements. This research only focus on denotative and connotative meaning. The signified of the verbal signs show the meaning of the text or sentence that use in those advertisements. Meanwhile, the signified of the visual signs show the meaning of the picture, and color that use in those advertisements. The meaning that mostly appears in the verbal signs is denotative meaning. However, the researcher also found the connotative meaning in the verbal signs. Meanwhile, the meaning that mostly appears in the visual signs is connotative meaning.

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