

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF VERBAL SIGNS FOUND IN FAST FOOD ADVERTISEMENTS

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Abstract

Keywords:

*Semiotic,
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Advertisement is a media platform used by people or companies to promote their products on social media or in public. There are signs in every advertisement. This study is concerned with analyzing the verbal signs found in fast food advertisements. There are two aims of this study: (1) to identify the verbal signs in fast-food advertisements and (2) to analyze the meaning of the verbal signs found in fast-food advertisements. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method. The data were analyzed by using the theory of semiotics by Saussure (1959) and the theory of meaning by Leech (1981). The results of the study show that there are twenty-seven verbal signs in fast food advertisements. The verbal signs are in the form of declarative sentences. Fast food advertisements employ verbal signs to convey a message that will attract consumers to try the product.

Kata Kunci:

*Semiotik,
Iklan,
Tanda Verbal*

Abstrak

Iklan merupakan platform media yang digunakan oleh perusahaan atau masyarakat untuk mempromosikan produknya di media sosial atau di depan umum. Di setiap iklan ada tanda-tanda verbal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tanda-tanda verbal yang ditemukan dalam iklan makanan cepat saji. Ada dua tujuan dari penelitian ini, yaitu: (1) untuk mengidentifikasi tanda-tanda verbal dalam iklan makanan cepat saji, (2) untuk menganalisis makna dari tanda-tanda verbal yang ditemukan dalam iklan makanan cepat saji. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan teori semiotika dari Saussure (1959) dan teori makna dari Leech (1981). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat dua puluh tujuh tanda verbal pada iklan makanan cepat saji. Tanda-tanda verbal tersebut berupa kalimat deklaratif. Iklan makanan cepat saji menggunakan tanda-tanda verbal untuk menyampaikan pesan yang akan menarik konsumen untuk mencoba produk tersebut.

INTRODUCTION

People use language as a media of their communication. Both words and signs are used by people to interact with each other (Andina, 2021). Semiotics studies the sign and symbols. According to Barthes (1967), the term “semiotic” refers to any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits, images, musical sounds, gestures, objects, and the complex connections between all of these, which form the ritual or public entertainment’s content. Wardaugh (1972:3) stated that “everyone could express their opinions and their knowledge through the language.” Images used in advertising are referred to as advertisements (Jha, 2017).

Semiotics is an investigation of how the meaning is created and how the meaning is communicated. It studies the function of signs on images to understand the sign system that is applied on the magazine or anything related to the sign systems, for example, in advertisements or posters (Sena, 2016). Semiotics can be used to find out the meaning behind the advertisements and posters to make the readers understand more easily. Barthes (1967) stated that “these concepts began with the relationships between signifier (expression) and signified.” The other example is when the drivers see the three different colors on a traffic light, the drivers will automatically understand what they will do in each different light. The drivers will understand this without taking a long time to think about it (Keane, 2018).

Sign is available in every place in this world. Even the smallest things in this world have signs and meaning. Saussure (1959) defined a sign as “the composition of a signifier and signified.” A signifier is a form that takes the sign as the concept, and a signified is a form that takes the verbal and nonverbal sign as the concept. According to Suwitri (2021), the signifiers are sound, image, and word. Meanwhile, signified is the concept. Those things are represented both in verbal and visual signs. The verbal signs are used in communication as spoken and written languages linked with words, phrases, and sentences. In advertisements, words, phrases, and sentences are used to add verbal signs that make the content more interesting to read.

Several researchers have carried out studies about semiotics. The difference between this research and the previous research is in the topic discussed. The first research was conducted by Solihatun (2018). The research aims to analyze the denotative and connotative meanings in the Clear shampoo advertisements. The researcher found several verbal and visual signs in the Clear shampoo advertisements. The similarity between the previous research and this research is both analyze verbal signs. The difference between the previous research and this research is in the data source. The previous research used the Clear shampoo advertisements as the data source. Meanwhile, this study discusses the verbal sign of fast food advertisements. The second previous research was written by Sena (2016). The research used Adidas advertisements as the data source. The study aims to analyze the verbal and visual signs found in Adidas Advertisements. The similarity between the second previous research and this research is both analyze verbal signs. The difference between the second previous research and this research is in the theory employed. The previous research used a theory by Dyer (1993); meanwhile, this study used the theory by Barthes (1967). The third previous research was written by Nadia (2022). Her research focuses on the visual and linguistic elements. The similarity between her research and this research is both analyze verbal signs. The difference between Nadia's research and this research is the data source used for the analysis.

The researchers are interested in analyzing fast food advertisements because there are so many advertisements with interesting verbal and visual signs that make people interested in buying the foods (Singh, 2020). This study aims to identify the verbal signs in fast-food advertisements and to analyze the meaning of the verbal signs.

METHOD

The researchers used a qualitative method to analyze the data in this research. The data were taken from fast food advertisements in the USA and Mauritius, especially burgers, french fries, and fried chicken. The advertisements were chosen as the data of the study since there are many unique sentences and

hidden meanings in them. The data were taken from several websites, namely the Media Samosa website (Mediasamosa.com), the Onion website (www.theonion.com), the Sisonj blog (sisonj.blogspot.com), the Coroflot website (www.coroflot.com), the Facebook website (www.facebook.com), the Marketing Magazine website (www.marketingmagazine.com), the House Christmas blog (housechristmasblg.blogspot.com), and the Ispot website (www.ispot.tv).

The observation method was used to collect the data by searching, downloading, and reading the data. In analyzing the data, the researchers used the theory of semiotics by Saussure (1959) and the theory of meaning by Leech (1981). The verbal signs found in the advertisements were analyzed by explaining the meaning of the sentence in each advertisement.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In this research, the researchers analysed eight fast food advertisements containing verbal signs. According to Barthes (1967), every sign has a signifier as the form of the sign itself and signified as well as what means as the concept behind the form. The table below shows the findings of the research.

Table 1: The Occurrences of Verbal Signs in the Fast Food Advertisements

No	Data	Verbal Signs
1.	McDonald's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Mc Flamed • Deliciously Flame-Grilled • Grill • Burger King Wishes You A Happy Fool's Day • Flame Grilled Since 1954
2.	McDonald's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You Can't Run From Us Forever
3.	McDonald's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm Lovin it • Before • After • Right After

4.	Burger King	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry Whopper • Not A Simple Burger • Angry Onions • Jalapeno • Pepper jack Cheese • Burger King
5.	Burger King	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Whopper Has A New Home • Now Open in Mauritius at Bagatelle Mall
6.	KFC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KfC zinger Double Down • All Meat No Bun • <i>Diyakini Halal</i>
7.	KFC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KFC \$20 Any Fill Up • Crispy Tenders • Colonel Sanders Secret Recipe • Extra Crispy • Boneless Breasts
8.	Wendy's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$1 Wendy's Double Stack

Table 1 presents the results of the verbal signs found in eight fast food advertisements. From those eight data, the researchers found twenty-seven verbal signs. It shows that the fast food advertisements contain a lot of verbal signs. The verbal signs are found in the written text.

Discussion

Verbal Signs of McDonald's Advertisements

Data 1



Figure 1. McDonalds Advertisements taken from
<https://mediasamosa.com/2020/01/15/burger-king-vs-mcdonalds-ads-fried-in-a-flaming-feud/>

The advertisement shown in data 1 shows McDonald's new product. The advertisement contains several verbal signs. The first verbal sign is "New Mc Flamed," which is the signifier of the advertisement. It aims to show the customers that this product is a new dish that they can try. Mc Flamed is one of the grilled burgers. Usually, the other burger meat is fried; meanwhile, this burger meat is grilled. The second verbal sign is "Deliciously Flame-Grilled," which is the signifier of the advertisement. The sentence means that the meat of the burger is grilled by fire so that it has a great smoked taste when the customer eats it. The third verbal sign is "Grill," which is the signifier of the advertisement. The sentence means they emphasize that the meat they use is grilled and not fried, which is totally different from the other burger. Therefore, it offers a new taste and experience for the customers.

Furthermore, the fourth verbal sign is "Burger King Wishes You A Happy Fool's Day," which is the signifier of the advertisement. The sentence means that McDonald's collaborate with Burger King in making this menu. Burger King wishes a happy Fool's day because this menu was launched on the 1st of April, which is the day of practicing jokes and hoaxes. The last verbal sign is "Flame Grilled Since 1954," which is the signifier of the advertisement. The sentence means that they have been making the dish since 1954. McDonald's was founded in 1940, so they had a different menu before they created the flame-grilled dish.

Data 2



Figure 2. Mc Donalds Advertisements taken from
<https://www.theonion.com/mcdonald-s-appealing-to-health-conscious-consumers-with-1838181744>

The McDonald's advertisement shown in data 2 contains several verbal signs. The first verbal sign is "You Can't Run from Us Forever," which is the signifier of the advertisement. The sentence means that the consumers cannot avoid trying McDonald's products because of the great taste of their dishes. Besides, when we are on travel, on a road trip, or busy with our daily activities, we have limited time, so we cannot prepare our food. Therefore, McDonald's offers their dish as an eating option. These reasons explain the sentence in the advertisement which says, "You Can't Run from Us Forever."

Data 3



Figure 3. Mc Donalds Advertisements taken from <http://sisonj.blogspot.com/2015/08/print-ad-blog.html>

The advertisement shown in data 3 shows several verbal signs. The first verbal sign is "I'm lovin it," which is the signifier of the advertisement. It is the slogan or tagline for McDonald's fast food restaurant. It also means "I'm" to represent that customers would love their food. The second verbal sign is "before," which is the signifier of the advertisement. The word refers to the raw potato that is not yet peeled, sliced, and fried. The third verbal sign is "after," which is the signifier of the advertisement. The word means continuing the first verbal sign, which is that the raw potato has now been peeled, sliced, fried, and ready to be served to the customer. The last verbal sign is "Right After," which is the signifier of the advertisement. The word means after the french fries were served, the people would eat the french fries so that almost nothing was left.

Verbal Signs of Burger King Advertisements

Data 4



Figure 4. Burger King Advertisements taken from
<https://www.coroflot.com/elenagullace/Art-Direction-creative-advertising-for-Burger-King>

The advertisement shown in data 4 contains several verbal signs. The first verbal sign is “Angry Whopper,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. It is the name of a dish served at Burger King. “Angry Whopper” means something big and spicy that represents their big and spicy burger. The second verbal sign is “Not A Simple Burger,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The expression means that their burger is not simple like the other burger. They add more ingredients that make the burger look bigger than the usual burger. Then the third verbal sign is “Angry Onions,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The phrase means that they use a lot of fried onion so that when the customers eat the burger, they can taste the crunchy fried onion. The other burger usually uses a fresh and raw onion in their burger.

Moreover, the fourth verbal sign is “Jalapeno,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The word means that they add jalapeno for the spicy taste of their burger. The fifth verbal sign is “Pepperjack Cheese,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The phrase means that they use American cow’s milk as the ingredient of their cheese. The buttery flavor of pepperjack cheese is combined

with the intensity of spicy peppers, particularly jalapeno. The last verbal sign in the advertisement is “Burger King,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The phrase refers to the name of the fast food restaurant. Burger King is one of the world’s most famous fast food restaurants.

Data 5



Figure 5. Burger King Advertisements taken from
<https://business.facebook.com/pg/burgerkingmauritiusofficial/posts/>

The first verbal sign is “The Whopper Has A New Home,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. “The Whopper” refers to the name of the burger served at Burger King. “Has a new home” means that Burger King has opened a new restaurant. The second verbal sign is “Now Open in Mauritius at Bagatelle Mall,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The sentence means that Burger King has a new restaurant which is located in Bagatelle Mall, Mauritius.

Verbal Signs of KFC Advertisements

Data 6



Figure 6. KFC Advertisements taken from <https://marketingmagazine.com.my/appies-2018-winning-campaign-kfcs-made-for-the-bold-wins-gold/>

KFC is one of the most famous fast food restaurants in the world. The first KFC restaurant was built in Corbin street, Kentucky. Besides selling fried chicken, KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) also sells burgers, but they have a unique burger with a different taste from the other burger. The advertisement shown in data 6 contains several verbal signs. The first verbal sign is “KFC Zinger Double Down,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The verbal sign refers to the name of the new dish. The KFC Zinger Double Down comes with cheese, bacon, and sandwiched among two deep-fried chicken fillets.

The second verbal sign is “All Meat No Bun,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The expression means that the burger is entirely made from meat. They use two pieces of chicken as the bun of the burger to replace the buns that are usually from bread. This made the KFC burger different from the other burger. The last verbal sign is “*Diyakini Halal*,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The expression means that the dish is trusted to be halal. The expression is intended for Muslim customers who do not consume non-halal foods or foods with no halal labels.

Data 7



Figure 7. KFC Advertisements taken from <https://housechristmasblg.blogspot.com/2020/01/kfc-5-dollar-fill-up-christmas.html>

The first verbal sign is “KFC \$20 Any Fill Up,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The sentence above means that for every menu they have (Crispy Tenders, Secret Recipe, Extra Crispy, and Boneless Breasts), if the customer wants to refill their bucket, they only have to pay \$20 per menu. The second verbal sign is “Crispy Tenders,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The phrase refers to the name of their dish. Crispy tenders mean that they have a chicken tender that has a soft and juicy taste inside but still has a crispy sensation outside. The third verbal sign is “Colonel Sanders Secret Recipe,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. It refers to one of their secret recipes from Colonel Harland Sanders, the founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC).

Furthermore, the fourth verbal sign is “Extra Crispy,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The phrase means that one of their dishes has an extra crispy fried chicken, which is different from the other dish. Nowadays, the usual fried chicken has an average crispy sensation. But KFC creates a new dish with an extra crispy taste that is above average. The fifth verbal sign is “Boneless Breasts,”

which is the signifier of the advertisement. The phrase means that they serve a chicken breast without the chicken bones inside the meat. Nowadays, many people do not like eating chicken with the bones inside because it can be messy when they eat it. Due to this reason, KFC created boneless chicken breasts.

Verbal Sign of Wendy's Advertisements

Data 8



Figure 8. Wendy's Advertisements taken from <https://www.ispot.tv/ad/w8IS/wendys-double-stack-get-it-for-a-dollar>

Wendy's is one of the American international fast food restaurants that was founded by Dave Thomas. The first restaurant was built in Columbus, Ohio, United States of America. The advertisement shown in data 8 only has one verbal sign, which is "\$1 Wendy's Double Stack." It refers to the name of one of their dishes. The double stack means that they use two pieces of meat on the dish, and the customers can buy it by paying one dollar (\$1) only.

CONCLUSION

From the eight advertisements the researchers analyzed, twenty-seven verbal signs were found. The verbal signs were found in the form of text using a declarative sentence. All of those signs are combined to convey the messages of the advertisements that are being advertised. Fast food advertisements employ

verbal signs to convey the message that will stimulate consumers' interest in trying the product. This study is limited to the semiotic analysis of verbal signs in fast food advertisements. The researchers suggest the other researchers to conduct further research about semiotic analysis in other types of advertisements.

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