

## The Role of Index, Icon, and Symbol in the Official Rebrand Introduction Video for Burger King

Ela Risnawati<sup>1</sup>, R. Myrna Nur Sakinah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung – West Java Indonesia

Email: <sup>1</sup>[elarismawati3553@gmail.com](mailto:elarismawati3553@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[myrnaasakinah@gmail.com](mailto:myrnaasakinah@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

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Advertising plays a vital role in brand communication by employing various semiotic elements to convey messages effectively. However, the use of Charles S. Peirce's semiotic framework in analyzing rebranding strategies remains underexplored. This study examines the application of semiotic elements index, icon, and symbol in Burger King's official rebrand introduction video to highlight its message of modernization and innovation. Using qualitative methods, the research identifies 10 distinct signs within the video: 3 icons, 1 index, and 6 symbols. The visual transformation of the brand identity, serving as an index, signifies Burger King's commitment to innovation and customer focus. Icons, such as mouthwatering depictions of burgers and fries, represent the brand's core products, while symbols, including the new logo and textual elements, convey cultural meanings tied to the brand's identity. Findings reveal that these signs effectively combine to project Burger King as a modern, innovative, and customer-oriented brand, addressing competitive market demands. This semiotic analysis underscores the importance of blending visual and symbolic elements in branding to shape consumer perceptions and reinforce brand identity. Future research should explore similar strategies in other industries to expand understanding of semiotic applications in advertising.

#### Kata Kunci:

*Semiotika, Indeks,*

*Ikon, Simbol,*

*Burger King.*

#### Abstrak

Iklan memainkan peran penting dalam komunikasi merek dengan menggunakan berbagai elemen semiotik untuk menyampaikan pesan secara efektif. Namun, penggunaan kerangka semiotika Charles S. Peirce dalam menganalisis strategi rebranding masih belum banyak diteliti. Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan elemen-elemen semiotika - indeks, ikon, dan simbol - dalam video pengenalan rebranding resmi Burger King untuk menyoroti pesan

modernisasi dan inovasinya. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi 10 tanda yang berbeda dalam video tersebut: 3 ikon, 1 indeks, dan 6 simbol. Transformasi visual dari identitas merek, yang berfungsi sebagai indeks, menandakan komitmen Burger King terhadap inovasi dan fokus pada pelanggan. Ikon, seperti penggambaran burger dan kentang goreng yang menggugah selera, mewakili produk inti merek, sementara simbol, termasuk logo baru dan elemen tekstual, menyampaikan makna budaya yang terkait dengan identitas merek. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa tanda-tanda ini secara efektif digabungkan untuk memproyeksikan Burger King sebagai merek yang modern, inovatif, dan berorientasi pada pelanggan, untuk memenuhi permintaan pasar yang kompetitif. Analisis semiotik ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya memadukan elemen visual dan simbolik dalam branding untuk membentuk persepsi konsumen dan memperkuat identitas merek. Penelitian di masa depan harus mengeksplorasi strategi serupa di industri lain untuk memperluas pemahaman tentang aplikasi semiotika dalam periklanan.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Advertising is one of the most important marketing communication tools to build brand image and attract customer attention. According to (Ariwibowo & Priaditya, n.d.) as a medium for communication that contains signs, in order to increase sales, companies will usually create advertisements for their products. These signs are essential in advertising to establish a link between the product and the customer. Just like other fields, such as logic and philosophy, semiotics covers a wide range of disciplines. Scholars in the field of semiotics study signs because they are part of social life. As such, a semiotic approach can be used to analyze the signs that experts have studied (Ghenani & Sakinah, 2024).

According to Kaelan in (Ariwibowo & Priaditya, n.d.) In semiotics, two figures are often recognized as pioneers: Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles S. Peirce. Although they lived in different regions-Peirce in the United States and Saussure in Europe-both developed foundational principles of semiotics with distinct focuses. While they lived in the same era, they were unaware of each

other, and each built their theories on different foundations. Peirce based his theory on logic, whereas Saussure used linguistic models. This study adopts Peirce's semiotic theory, which emphasizes logic as its foundation, as logic examines how individuals reason, and according to Peirce, reasoning occurs through signs.

Advertisements not only provide information about the product, but their signs subtly influence the perception and feelings of the audience. According to (Nabila et al., 2023) There are advertisements everywhere, in all shapes and sizes. Every firm, brand, store, etc. has at least one advertisement to introduce its new product or service. Advertisements typically include images, text, and the names of products being marketed, along with subliminal messages. Signs, signifiers, and items signified using this manner can be found in advertisements. Every advertisement must have a hidden meaning, through the relationship between the sign (Sign), signifier, and signified will lead us towards the hidden meaning of these cigarette advertisements ((Husna & Hero, n.d.). Advertising communication is a unique genre with a distinct set of language rules that use several mechanisms to attract the attention of the target audience ((Jonathan & Gunawan, n.d.). One famous fast-food brand, Burger King, uses various advertising strategies to attract customers. The official rebrand introduction video for Burger King, showcasing the company's fresh identity and updated look, is one of the most interesting ones.

The company's new identity and appearance are highlighted in the captivating Burger King rebrand introduction video. By showcasing modifications to the logo, store layout, and menu selections, the advertisement highlights the brand's development while promoting modernization and innovation. Burger King positions itself as a company that adjusts to changing consumer tastes and trends by deftly fusing its extensive history with a modern, customer-focused strategy.

The Burger King rebranding film uses symbols, indices, and images to communicate meaning, according to semiotics. The updated design and logo serve as symbols of change and advancement. The shifts in visual aesthetics, which indicate a renewed emphasis on sustainability, quality, and customer experience, serve as the index. Last but not least, the sign is Burger King itself, which has

rebranded to reflect its dedication to modernization while maintaining its essential essence. This collection of graphic components effectively conveys the brand's innovative concept and entices viewers to try the "new" Burger King.

The first previous study, conducted by Tina Merlina (2020), investigates verbal and visual signs in the logo designs of fast-food brands, focusing on advertisements available online. Using Ekman's semiotics framework, the study explores how logos such as McDonald's, Burger King, Subway, KFC, and Wendy's convey meanings like joy, professionalism, freshness, and passion through verbal and non-verbal signs. While offering valuable insights into the symbolic representation of brand identity in static logos, the research does not consider the dynamic elements involved in rebranding campaigns or the semiotic interplay of visual transformations in motion media. This limitation highlights the need for further exploration of how evolving semiotic elements can shape brand narratives and modernization efforts.

The second previous study, authored by Tiara Bayu Sekaruthami and Nia Kurnia Sofiah (2024), analyzes the meanings conveyed in advertisements for vodka produced outside Russia. Employing Peirce's semiotics and Kress and Leeuwen's multimodal theory, the study examines how text and visuals integrate to reflect Russian cultural characteristics in five advertisements. While the research provides a nuanced understanding of the cultural and multimodal aspects of advertising, its focus remains on the cultural representation of a product rather than the branding or rebranding processes. The findings underscore the importance of semiotic elements in creating a unified message, but the study does not explore how these elements can contribute to broader branding strategies or market competitiveness.

The current study bridges the gaps left by these previous works by focusing on the application of Peirce's semiotic framework to analyze rebranding strategies, specifically in Burger King's official rebrand introduction video. Unlike the first study, which limits its analysis to static logos, this research delves into the dynamic semiotics of a video medium, exploring how visual transformations and symbolic elements communicate innovation and

modernization. In contrast to the second study, which centers on cultural representations in advertisements, this study directly addresses how semiotic elements such as icons, indexes, and symbols function within a rebranding strategy to reshape brand identity and appeal to consumers in a competitive market. By integrating the analysis of dynamic advertising content with branding strategies, this research expands the understanding of semiotic applications in modern advertising.

In particular, this article's analysis of the Burger King rebrand introductory film will examine how icons, indexes, and symbols are employed to communicate the advertising message and shape the audience's perspective. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research question: How are icons, indexes, and symbols utilized and interpreted to convey the advertising message and influence the audience's understanding of the rebrand?

## **METHOD**

This study applies a qualitative research design, which is characterized by its naturalistic and interpretive approach, as described by Creswell (in Ishtiaq, 2019). Qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena within their context-specific settings, allowing for an in-depth examination of meanings and interpretations attached to behaviors, events, or objects (Hennink et al., 2020). The primary focus of this research is the analysis of signs—icons, indexes, and symbols—used in Burger King's rebrand introduction video on YouTube.

The data collection process in this study involves sourcing materials from literature and analyzing the visual elements which the analysis will include examining color palettes, camera angles, editing techniques, and the use of CGI and textual elements which the analysis will involve scrutinizing slogans, brand narratives, and on-screen text elements in the video. As the primary instrument of data collection, the researcher observes, interprets, and documents relevant signs within the video. Data analysis employs Charles S. Peirce's semiotic framework, which categorizes signs into icons, indexes, and symbols. Icons represent resemblance, such as realistic images of food; indexes suggest direct connections,

like visual transformations indicating innovation; and symbols carry cultural or arbitrary meanings, such as the new logo and textual elements.

This method enables a deeper understanding of the meanings behind these signs, particularly in the context of advertising and branding. Semiotic analysis is a suitable approach for this study, as it uncovers both explicit and implicit messages conveyed by the signs in the rebrand introduction video. Within the semiotic framework, this analysis will focus on identifying and interpreting the various types of signs, such as symbols, icons, and indexes, present in the video. The process involves examining the visual, auditory, and textual elements to reveal how these signs function individually and collectively to communicate meaning. By deconstructing these elements, the study aims to provide insights into how the rebranding message is framed and its potential impact on the audience. While Peirce's system of sign classification is sometimes considered cumbersome by scholars (Ding, 2016), it remains a valuable framework for exploring contextual and user-dependent meanings in advertising.

Through this qualitative approach, the study aims to describe and evaluate how Burger King uses semiotic elements to communicate modernization and innovation in its rebranding efforts, providing insights into the effectiveness of visual and symbolic strategies in shaping consumer perceptions.




## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Findings***

Advertising has long played an important role in the world economy, including Indonesia, by influencing consumer behavior and public opinion. According to (Hanifah et al., n.d.), Mass media plays an important role in conveying information, shaping people's perspectives, and creating images through advertisements, which often contain hidden meanings. Advertising is widespread through print media, such as newspapers, posters, pamphlets and brochures, as well as television, radio and the internet. Signs, signifiers, and signifieds have a relationship that enables the understanding of hidden messages in advertisements. According to (van Niekerk, 2018) Advertisements use

persuasive messages that consist of both visual and lexical signs. This research aims to uncover the hidden meanings conveyed by analysing these elements in the Burger King rebrand introduction video. This study examines the use of icons, indices, and symbols in advertisements based on Charles S. Peirce's semiotic theory.

Results show that the new Burger King logo serves as a modern icon, attracting viewers' attention with its fresh design. The visual transformation of the brand identity serves as an indicator, representing the company's shift towards innovation and a more customer-focused approach. Burger King symbolizes quality and modernization, showing that this rebrand has the ability to redefine the customer experience and maintain relevance in a competitive market.

Datum	Picture	Description
Datum 1		<p>This sign is an example of an <b>icon</b>. The close-up of a burger in the advertisement serves as a visual representation of the actual product.</p>
Datum 2		<p>This sign is a member of the <b>symbol</b> type. 'Cheesy Bacon' and 'Plant-based' are used on burger wrappers in the promo to denote distinct menu options.</p>
Datum 3		<p>This sign belongs to the type of <b>icon</b> sign. The tomatoes in the ad look like real tomatoes, making them an icon that represents the ingredients used in the product.</p>

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**Datum 4**



This sign is an example of an **icon**. The visual representation of a hand holding an ice cream cone is very similar to the actual objects it symbolizes. It is considered an icon because it visually resembles the hand and ice cream, which are the objects it represents.

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**Datum 5**



This sign is a member of the **symbol** type. In the advertisement, the word "CRAVEABLE" appears on the image. "CRAVEABLE" is a word that does not visually resemble any item and is based on a conventional understanding of language, where its meaning is accepted by the audience.

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**Datum 6**



This sign is a **symbol**. The Burger King logo doesn't look like the food or the restaurant it represents. It works because people recognize its meaning through cultural agreement, not because of how it looks.

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**Datum 7**



This sign is also a **symbol**. The words 'true king' doesn't directly represent any object but rely on cultural understanding and interpretation to convey meaning.

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**Datum 8**



This sign is an **index**. The girl holding cucumber slices to her eyes suggests the action of relaxation or skincare. It's an index because the cucumbers directly indicate a typical action associated with self-care.

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**Datum 9**



This sign is a **symbol**. The word 'FRESH' doesn't visually resemble any specific object, but through cultural understanding, it conveys the idea of freshness.

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**Datum 10**



This sign is a **symbol**. The phrase 'We want to look how we taste' communicates a concept through words, relying on interpretation rather than any direct visual representation of the objects.

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Based on the identification results above, the authors found that there were 10 data points, including 3 icons, 1 index, and 6 symbols.

Findings ought to be concise and clear. Instead of presenting facts in great detail, the outcomes should be a summary of (scientific) findings. Describe how your conclusions or findings differ from those reported in earlier studies by other researchers.

*Discussion*

**Datum 1:**



In datum above, the Burger King advertisement prominently displays the image of a burger with detailed ingredients, such as lettuce, tomato, onions, and meat, which plays the role of an **icon**. An icon, in semiotic terms, is a sign that directly resembles or imitates the object it represents. Here, the image of the burger is an iconic representation because it visually mirrors the actual product being advertised. The realistic depiction of the burger serves to create an immediate and tangible connection between the advertisement and the consumer's understanding of what Burger King is offering. This visual resemblance helps potential customers to easily identify the product and relate it to the experience of eating a fresh, flame-grilled burger.

Furthermore, the use of the Burger King logo itself can also be categorized as an icon within the advertisement. While logos can sometimes function as symbols, in this case, the logo closely imitates a burger (with the shape and layers mimicking a bun and patty) and thus serves as an iconic representation of the brand's core product—burgers. The orange, brown, and white colour scheme further strengthens this iconic connection by using colours that resemble the actual ingredients in a burger (bun, meat, and sauces). The purpose of this iconic representation is to create a clear and direct association between the image and the product, reinforcing the brand identity and its specialty in selling flame-grilled burgers.

**Datum 2:**



In the second image, the various burger wrappings with bold, colorful text such as "Tasty Eggy," "Golden Crunch," and "Plant-Based" function as **symbols** within the context of semiotics. A symbol is a sign that does not have a direct resemblance to the object it represents, but rather relies on a culturally learned or shared understanding. In this case, the words printed on the wrappings are symbols representing specific burger types or flavors. The words "Cheesy Bacon" and "Tender Crispy" do not physically resemble the food, but through a shared knowledge of language and culinary culture, they evoke specific expectations about the taste, ingredients, and texture of the burgers inside.

These symbolic texts are also supported by their distinct colors—green for "Plant-Based," brown for "Melty Juicy," and so on—which further create a mental association for the consumer. For example, the color green typically signifies health, nature, or vegetarian products, making "Plant-Based" a stronger symbol of sustainability or dietary preference. This use of color coding adds another layer to the symbolic function, guiding consumers to make quicker, more informed choices based on their preferences or dietary needs. The purpose of these symbols is to simplify the decision-making process and enhance brand identity by connecting certain visual cues (color and text) with the unique qualities of the product offerings.

**Datum 3:**



In the third image, the depiction of bright red tomatoes is an icon in semiotic terms. The tomatoes are drawn in a simplified yet recognizable form, resembling real tomatoes, which makes them an iconic sign. An icon works by directly imitating or resembling the object it represents. In this case, the tomatoes visually symbolize the freshness and quality of ingredients used in the food offered by the brand. The tomatoes immediately communicate the idea of freshness, natural flavor, and wholesome ingredients to the viewers without needing further explanation, as their appearance is universally associated with these attributes.

The phrase "It's all about the taste" strengthens the iconic relationship by directly linking the visual representation of tomatoes with the quality of taste. The tomatoes in this context are not just decorative elements; they serve as iconic representations of the fresh, real ingredients used in the food, suggesting that the taste of the product is derived from its natural and high-quality components. This visual strategy helps consumers associate the advertised product with health and taste in an intuitive, recognizable way. The purpose of using this icon is to evoke a positive response and assure the viewer of the brand's commitment to flavor and ingredient quality.

**Datum 4:**



The image shows an illustration of a hand holding a cup of ice cream with a swirl of soft-serve on top. The bold text above the image reads, "BRING NAPKINS, GET MESSY," suggesting the indulgence and carefree experience of eating the ice cream. The hand holding the cup is illustrated in a stylized manner, with exaggerated lines, and is placed against a bright yellow background, giving it a playful and bold aesthetic. The checkered pattern on the sleeve could hint at branding or an association with a specific theme or environment.

This illustration can be interpreted through Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, particularly as an icon in his triadic model. The hand holding the ice cream cup serves as an iconic sign because it visually resembles the real-life action of holding ice cream, while the text reinforces the casual and fun nature of the experience. Peirce defines an icon as a sign that represents its object by resembling it in some way, and in this case, the image and its message are closely tied to the sensory and enjoyable experience of consuming ice cream.

**Datum 5:**



In this image, the bold red word "CRAVEABLE" is a symbol in semiotic terms. Unlike icons, which resemble their objects, symbols are signs that represent their meaning through a learned association. The word "CRAVEABLE" doesn't have a direct visual resemblance to an object, but it conveys the idea of desirability and intense craving through the power of language. As a symbol, the word is understood because of the shared cultural and linguistic understanding of its meaning it implies that the product being advertised is something that people would intensely desire or crave.

The choice of a bold red font enhances the symbolic impact, as red is often associated with strong emotions like passion, excitement, and appetite, reinforcing the sense of urgency and desire conveyed by the word. The combination of the bold, eye-catching typography and the word "CRAVEABLE" immediately evokes a reaction from the audience, signaling that the product is irresistibly good and worthy of indulgence. This use of a symbol relies on the audience's familiarity with the language and their emotional response to the visual presentation, creating an effective and persuasive message.

#### **Datum 6:**



In this image, the Burger King logo is a symbol in semiotic terms. It represents the brand through a combination of text and imagery, specifically the stylized burger shape framing the words "BURGER KING." The design does not directly imitate a physical burger but symbolically represents the brand's identity as a fast-food chain specializing in burgers. Symbols, unlike icons, rely on conventional associations to convey meaning, and in this case, the logo is a widely recognized symbol of the Burger King brand.

The rounded, simple shapes and the bold red lettering inside the burger shape further enhance the brand's association with warmth, comfort, and appetite. The logo does not resemble an actual burger in a detailed way but instead symbolizes the core product of the brand through minimalistic visual cues. The color choice, with warm tones like red and orange, is meant to evoke hunger and excitement, creating a strong, instant connection in the minds of consumers. This logo acts as a symbol because it communicates the identity and values of the brand through learned and culturally recognized associations.

**Datum 7:**



In the analysis above, the "true king" text can be seen as a symbolic sign within the framework of Peirce's semiotics. Unlike an icon, which directly resembles its object, a symbol operates based on convention or learned association. The phrase "true king" does not visually resemble a king or leadership figure but instead conveys meaning through cultural and linguistic understanding. It evokes ideas of authority, power, and legitimacy, relying on the reader's knowledge of what a "king" represents in various contexts. The use of the term "true" strengthens the symbolic connection by implying authenticity or rightful claim to leadership, even if no direct visual connection to a king is present.

In addition, the stylized font and color scheme contribute to this symbolic meaning. The bold, rounded lettering could suggest strength and reliability, while the orange background evokes feelings of energy, enthusiasm, or even creativity. The brown letters, reminiscent of earthy tones, may symbolize groundedness or stability. While these visual elements do not directly mimic the object they refer to (in this case, a king or leadership figure), they enhance the symbolic connection

by creating an overall impression of strength, authenticity, and positive energy associated with the phrase "true king." This reinforces the symbolic status of the text as representing more than just literal royalty, possibly appealing to individuals who see themselves as leaders in various aspects of life.

**Datum 8:**



In semiotic terms, this image can be analyzed as an index within Charles Sanders Peirce's theory. An index is a sign that has a direct or causal connection with the object it represents. The image shows a person holding slices of cucumbers over their eyes, accompanied by the phrase "Playfully Irreverent," with the Burger King logo appearing in the corner.

Here, the cucumbers over the eyes serve as an index of relaxation or playfulness, commonly associated with spa treatments or humor. The gesture itself implies a carefree, playful attitude, which aligns with the slogan "Playfully Irreverent." There's a causal relationship between the act of placing cucumber slices on the eyes (a common symbol of relaxation or pampering) and the attitude being conveyed playfulness, which is a key message Burger King wants to convey. The indexical relationship lies in the action of holding the cucumbers, as it points to the broader ideas of fun and irreverence that the brand is communicating.



**Datum 9:**



In the context of Peirce's semiotic theory, this image, which features the word "FRESH" in bold red letters, functions as a symbol. A symbol, unlike an icon or an index, has an arbitrary or learned association with what it represents. The word "FRESH" does not have any intrinsic or visual resemblance to freshness itself, but through linguistic and cultural convention, it has come to symbolize qualities such as newness, vitality, or the state of being unspoiled.

The use of large, bold, red letters further emphasizes the symbolic importance of the word. Red can be associated with energy or urgency, reinforcing the idea of something fresh and appealing. The simplicity of the design allows the viewer to quickly understand the meaning without needing a direct visual representation of what is fresh, relying instead on the learned association between the word and its concept. In advertising or branding, this symbol could suggest fresh ingredients, new ideas, or a brand that promotes freshness in its products or services.

**Datum 10:**



The image you provided can indeed be analyzed as a symbol in Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, where symbols are signs that represent their objects by means of convention or learned association rather than resemblance or direct connection. In this case, the phrase "We want to look how we taste" functions as a symbolic sign. The slogan doesn't directly resemble the food or its flavor, but instead, it relies on a conventional, interpretative link between the appearance of food and its taste. This connection has to be understood by the audience through cultural and marketing context—consumers have been conditioned to associate certain visual cues with freshness, quality, and taste, which are symbolized here.

The visual elements of the tomato and leafy greens further enhance this symbolic relationship. Though they are more iconic (as they visually resemble real produce), they also operate on a symbolic level because of the cultural meanings they carry. For instance, tomatoes and greens in advertisements often symbolize freshness, health, and natural ingredients. These objects do not directly point to taste, but they are conventionally understood to symbolize the qualities of good, healthy food in the fast-food industry. This entire ad works as a symbol because it conveys a message that goes beyond the literal image and text it invites consumers to associate Burger King's food with freshness and natural quality, even though fast food is often seen otherwise.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study presents a semiotic analysis of the Burger King rebrand introduction video, applying Charles Sanders Peirce's theory, which focuses on the use of icons, indexes, and symbols in advertising. Advertisements are crucial marketing tools aimed at capturing attention and shaping consumer perceptions through signs. In this context, semiotics reveals how these signs communicate deeper meanings, enabling companies like Burger King to influence consumer behavior and enhance brand image.

The analysis identifies 10 data points from the video, comprising 3 icons, 1 index, and 6 symbols. Icons are signs that visually resemble their objects, such

as the close-up shots of a burger, tomatoes, and a hand holding ice cream, representing the actual products and ingredients. Indexes, on the other hand, are signs with a direct or causal connection to their objects. For instance, a girl holding cucumber slices to her eyes indirectly suggests relaxation and a carefree attitude. Symbols, which rely on cultural conventions or learned associations, are seen in elements like the Burger King logo and other visual elements or phrases that represent the company's identity. These symbols communicate meanings based on cultural understanding rather than direct visual resemblance.

This semiotic analysis demonstrates how the Burger King rebrand video effectively employs a combination of icons, indexes, and symbols to communicate its values and vision. The signs used in the advertisement not only promote the product but also shape the audience's perception of the brand, aligning it with current market trends and consumer expectations. This blend of iconic imagery and symbolic language ensures the message is both accessible and memorable.

However, it is important to acknowledge the potential limitations of this study. The analysis is constrained by the scope of the data, focusing solely on one video, which may not capture the entirety of the rebranding strategy. Additionally, the interpretations of signs are influenced by cultural and contextual factors that may vary among audiences, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Recognizing these limitations strengthens the study by situating its conclusions within a specific framework, providing a foundation for future research to explore semiotic applications in broader contexts or across multiple media.

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