

Advertisement Strategy using Semiotics as Marketing Approach: An Analysis on Food Product

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Abstract. The aim of this study is to analyze and discover the effective advertisement strategy using semiotics approach and marketing review. This study used mixed method, which is the combination of quantitative and qualitative method. Questionnaire was used as the data collection method and supported by literature review. The questionnaire was distributed to 100 respondents in Bandung. The questionnaire regarding food advertisement was distributed to students as the study case. The results of this study showed that semiotics could maximize elements of an advertisement and have great effect in conveying the message which makes more potential consumers recognize and attracted to the product. This study concludes that food advertisements can attract more potential consumers if they focus more on the visual element. This study is expected to help food sellers in gaining more potential consumers which indirectly could increase the acquired income.

Keywords: Marketing, Advertisement, Consumers, Semiotics, Visual, Textual

1. Introduction

Industrial Revolution 4.0 provides many benefits for companies regarding the convenience in handling their business such as the integration of Internet of Things and automated production. However, this convenience also served as a spark of fire in market competition. It forces companies to increase their performance and grow larger so they can guarantee their survivability. One of the determinant factors to survive and win in the competition is product marketing. Marketing itself is defined as a management process to identify, anticipate, and satisfy the customer which focuses in gaining profit and customer satisfaction [1]. According to Kotler, marketing manages the pricing of products, sales force, promotion, market research, and advertising which is one of the tools in the promotion mix [2] [3]. The promotion and advertising aspect focus on how a company sells their product to potential customers. It introduces the product to the target audiences and decide whether the potential customers would be persuaded to purchase the products. It is also the most crucial aspect of marketing as it could increase commercial profits and consumers demand [4]. It is supported by the previous research which stated that advertising is the most widely used promotional media, especially for consumer products [5].

In promotion, companies must formulate the right strategy in marketing their products. From its nature, marketing is actually an interdisciplinary science. Companies can combine or use the method from other disciplines such as using economics, psychology, sociology, management, or information system in their activity. Companies can use sociology and psychology to learn about the target market's behavior, management in their organizational matters, information system in maximizing their digital marketing, or even linguistics in their customer approach. Therefore, companies must be creative in creating an advertisement. It not only serves as a persuasive attempt to appeal customers, it also shapes the public opinion about the products, expanding the market, and also act as a means to counter the claim of competitors. Advertisement can be done through various media and forms such as video, text, or word of mouth. However, they share a common appeal in their essence. There are two types of appeal in advertisement, informational and emotional appeals [5]. Informational appeal focuses on cognitive approach on its advertisement, such as functional and practical feature and the usage of formal words as well as the reasoning on why people should buy the product. Emotional appeal focuses on the feeling of people on its advertisement such as initiating sadness, happiness, anger, or hunger on the audiences. However, emotional advertising is more effective in branding because it is more shareable, people would share something they find interesting, funny, and/or uplifting. Therefore, it can be simplified that informational appeal engage in functionality while emotional appeal engages in people's feeling. One special technique that can be used in maximizing the emotional appeal in advertising is through the utilization of semiotics approach.

Ferdinand de Saussure, a renowned linguist, defined semiotics as a study that learns about signs in various media including but not limited to text, videos, and images [6]. In semiotics, Saussure used the term "signifier" and "signified" in analyzing an object or nouns, be it a color, being, machines, or other materials and non-material objects. Signifier is the object that we perceive through our senses, while Signified is the concept that came in a person's mind when perceiving an object. The two relation between the signifier and signified is called Signification. The theory is expanded by Barthes which then indicated that signification is divided into connotative and denotative. Denotative is a descriptive sign that does not have an ideological content. In addition, the thing which historical meaning has lost is called connotative. The reason of it could be culture, revolution, event changes, and terminology [7]. It can be simplified that Semiotics is a study that delve analyzes the hidden conceptual meanings or definitions in an object, be it a simple or complex meaning. Popular companies actually have been using semiotic approach in their brand design as the representation of the company and its marketing strategy; for example, the Golden Arches that represents McDonalds, the Siren Starbucks, and Colonel Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken. However, brands tend to use the approach at their most basic of signification, or even sometimes used unintentionally. From the nature of semiotics that engaged in the feelings of audiences, the potential of using semiotics in advertising is promising. For example, by giving a black theme in an advertising of a product, if done right, can create the impression of cool, elegant, serious, and/or alluring. It also made the advertisement interesting as the audiences could figure out the meaning themselves thus giving them a sense of achievement.

Malik et al. proposed that a brand image has a significant impact on customer buying behavior because good brand image in a product advertisement can positively change the customers' perspective toward the products [8]. Buil et al. also indicated that the creation of brand equity has a positive effect in a customer's brand awareness [9]. Another research regarding advertisement analysis was conducted by AKTAŞ stated that children are easily attracted to the food advertisement on a television because of its good visual [10]. This is in-line with research conducted by Kelly et al. which stated that children mostly affected to a food advertisement on television [11]. Soba and Aydin also analyzed the food advertisement in Fast Food Company, they indicated that company have to pay attention to their

advertising strategy especially their potential customer's health [12]. However, in management science, researches with a semiotic approach are relatively limited, this is because semiotics is more familiar with the disciplines of social sciences and literature. Our study focuses on analyzing food advertisement using marketing and semiotic analysis for young adults. Inclusion to the explanation above, there is only few literatures that discussed an advertisement analysis using semiotic analysis. Therefore, this study combined a marketing analysis with a semiotic study in food advertisement for young adults.

By integrating semiotics approach to marketing, companies are able to maximize the potential of product marketing to a higher degree which can strengthen the company's competitiveness on market as well as improving the company's survivability and growth. This study aims to analyze and discover the effective strategy of food products advertisement using semiotics approach and marketing review. We used mixed method that combines quantitative and qualitative method with questionnaire distribution as the data collection technique and supported by literature review. Hopefully, this study can be useful as an insight for companies in marketing their products or researchers in improving the study of semiotics in culinary marketing further.

2. Method

This study used mixed method, which is the combination of quantitative and qualitative method as well as questionnaire and literature review as its data collection method. We took a case study of culinary advertisement and customer's preferences in Bandung. Questionnaire was chosen as the data collection method.

2.1 Questionnaire

Purposive sampling technique was used with two criteria namely age and location of residence. It was distributed among 100 respondents with age ranging from 18 to 24 years old and resided in Bandung, the respondents are decided using Slovin Formula. Young adults are chosen as the respondent because culinary businesses tend to focus their products for young adults. They are a valuable target for foods as well as beverage industries with their purchasing influence and spending power. This way, they could influence their food preferences and eating habits [2] [3].

2.1.2 Slovin Formula

The Slovin formula is used to calculate the minimum number of samples if the behavior of a population is uncertain [13]. This formula was first introduced by Slovin in 1960. This formula commonly used in survey research that have large sample size to get a small sample that can represent the total population, it is shown in equation (1).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + (N \cdot e^2)} \quad (1)$$

Where:

n = number of representative populations

N = total population

e = margin of error

Figure 1 showed the classification of the total population based on age and sex in Bandung; the total population of young adults aged 18 to 24 years are 314,412 person. Based on the equation, and the confidence level of 95%, we can safely assume that the representative sample have the minimum of 97 respondents. We have decided to limit the sample size to 100 respondents.

Kelompok Umur Age Group	Jenis Kelamin/Sex		Jumlah / Total
	Laki-Laki Male	Perempuan Female	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
0-4	89 709	83 869	173 578
5-9	109 216	102 428	211 644
10-14	107 269	101 512	208 781
15-19	93 886	89 483	183 369
20-24	96 541	94 502	191 043
25-29	95 686	96 215	191 901
30-34	92 812	90 839	183 651
35-39	107 028	103 919	210 947
40-44	99 162	98 072	197 234
45-49	88 870	88 958	177 828
50-54	77 044	78 714	155 758
55-59	60 656	64 428	125 084
60-64	49 223	51 558	100 781
65-69	35 518	36 011	71 529
70-74	19 139	22 324	41 463
75+	25 192	30 681	55 873
Jumlah/Total	1 246 951	1 233 513	2 480 464
Proyeksi BPS	1 263 916	1 243 972	2 507 888

Figure 1. Total Population by Age Groups and Sex in Bandung Municipality, 2019 (Source: Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Bandung, 2020) [14].

3. Results and Discussion

Most of the respondents are women with 67 respondents (67%), while men are 33 respondents (33%). The majority of the whole respondents is 20 years old with 45 respondents (45%) and 19 years old with 24 respondents (24%), the complete data is shown in Figure 2. From the total of 100 respondents, social media is the highest source of influence (95% of the respondents) followed by television (49% of the respondents) as shown in Figure 3.

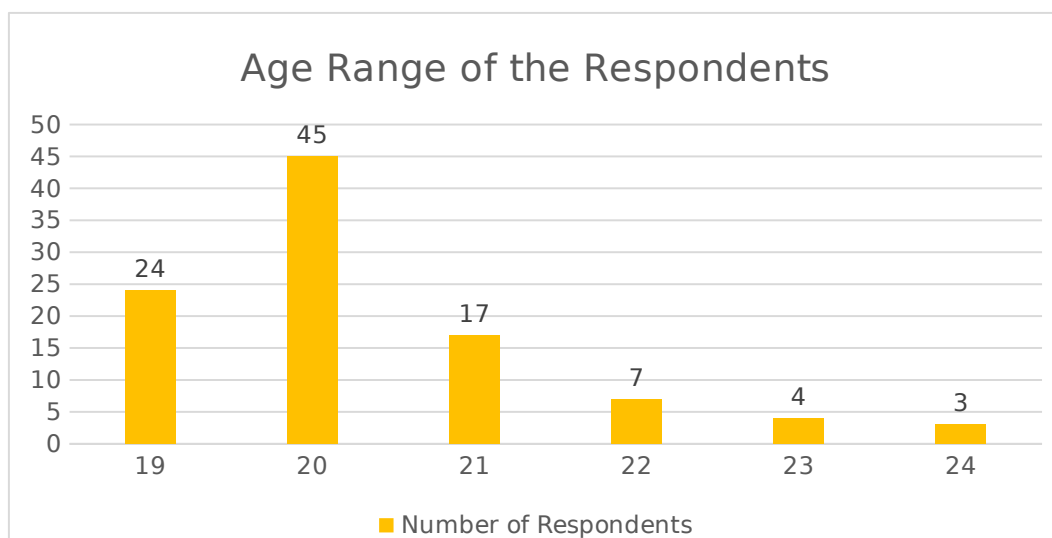


Figure 2. Age Range of the Respondents

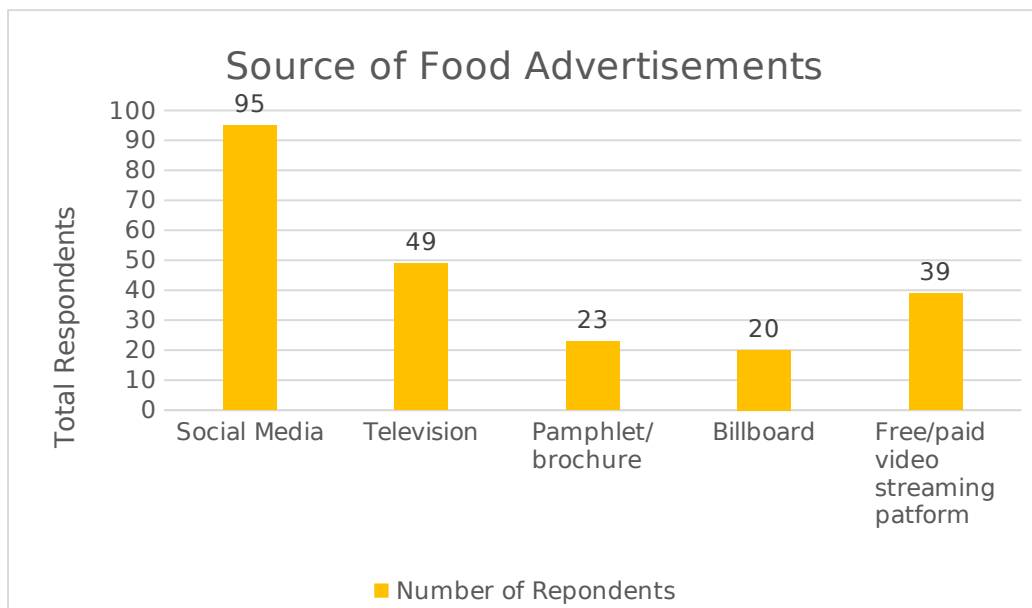


Figure 3. Types of Advertising Exposed to Respondents

In Figure 4, 64 respondents (64%) claimed that they are oftenly exposed to food advertisement, while 33 respondents (33%) claimed that they are occasionally exposed to the ads, the remaining 3 respondents (3%) stated that they are rarely exposed to food advertisement. Figure 4 also represent the advertisement effectivity in appealing customers. Only 40 respondents (40%) which stated that they are oftenly interested in the ads provided to them and 11 respondents (11%) stated that they rarely interested in the ads, a total of 49 respondents (49%) stated that they occasionally interested in the ads.

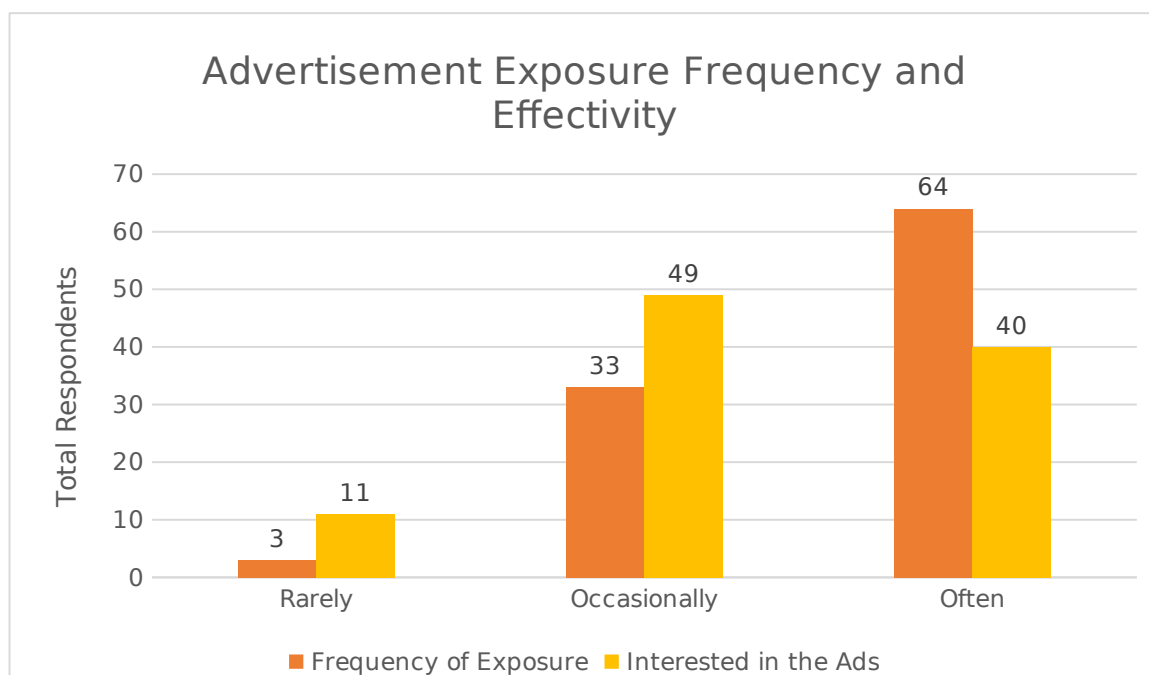


Figure 4. Ads Exposure Frequency and Effectivity

The most important aspect that draws the respondents interest is the visual of the advertisement (57% of the respondents) based on Figure 5, especially food product photography (50.5%) and the color composition (30.5%) (See Figure 6). Food products that are frequently appealing to the respondents are fast- and junk-food with the amount of 31 respondents (62,7%).

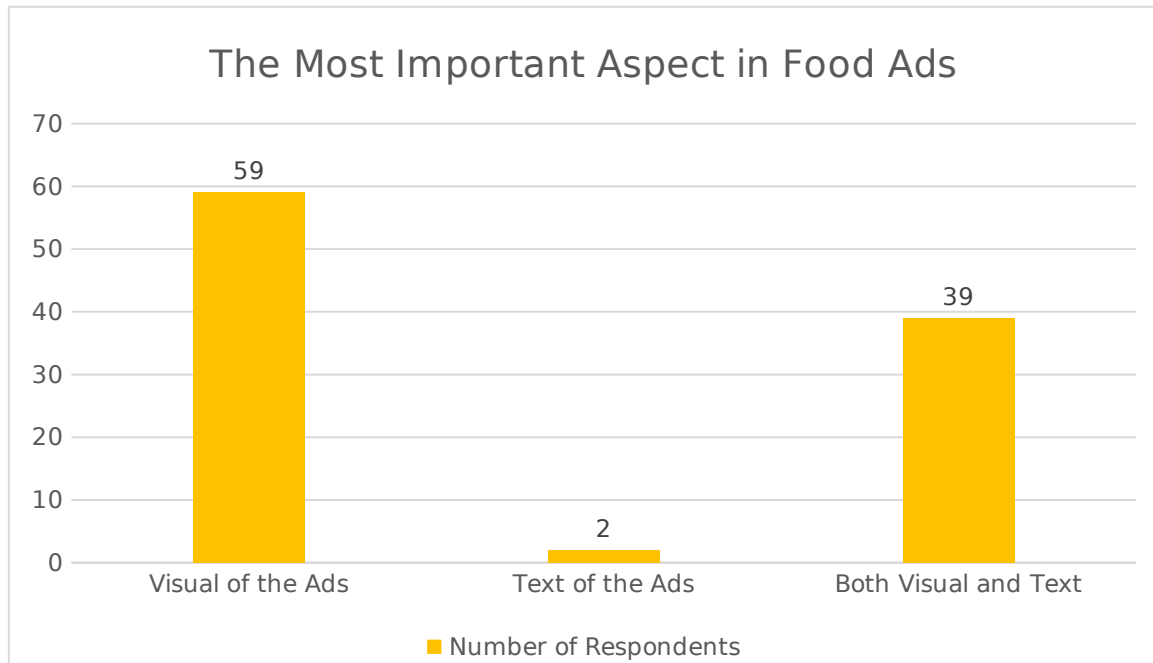


Figure 5. The Most Important Aspect in Food Advertisement

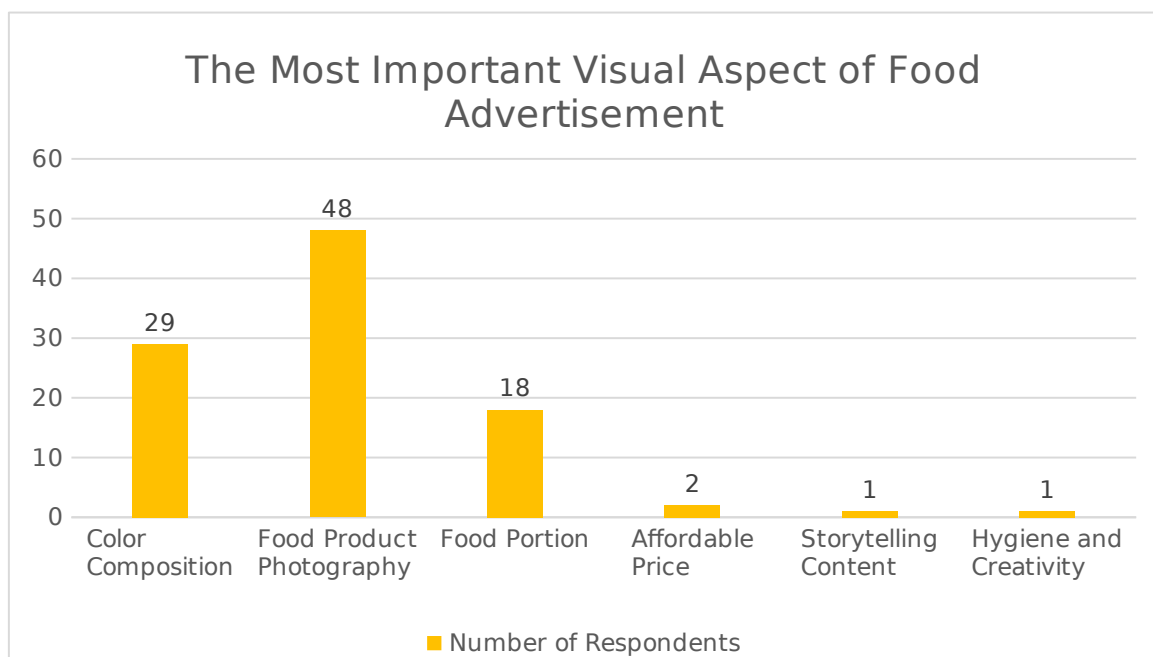


Figure 6. The Most Important Visual Aspect of Food Advertisement

As part of advertising, textual aspect is as important as visual aspect because it completes the appealing visual with information regarding the products including offers, location of the shop, or persuasion attempt. 39 respondents (39%) stated that both visual and textual aspects in advertisement are important (See Figure 5). According to this, customers tend to read the additional information in the copywriting. However, several factors made them ignore the copywriting including the redundancy of words (31% of respondents) and the length of the words (31% of the respondents). The respondents also stated that they are more likely to be interested if the shop is giving offers (35% of the respondents) and the words used are casual and informative (34%) which made them the most important aspects in the textual side of advertisement.

3.1 Semiotics

Figure 7 shows a good example of a food advertisement based on the distributed questionnaire. The image was taken from Instagram with the owner and target market being Indonesian, therefore the word is in Bahasa Indonesia. The word *Sehat* means Healthy, *Roti* means Bread or Bun, *Keju* means Cheese, *Daging* means Meat, *Sayur* means Vegetable, *Karbohidrat* means Carbohydrate, *Susu* means Milk, and *Lemak* means Fat.



Figure 7. Example of Good Visual Ads (Source: www.instagram.com/burgerbangorbandung accessed at 14th Nov 20.01)

According to Saussure, the aspect should be divided into verbal and non-verbal aspect. In verbal aspect, it includes the signifier and signified in semiotic analysis. Barthes expanded the theory and used denotative and connotative in analyzing verbal aspect of semiotic. Therefore, the non-verbal aspect includes image and colors. Figure 7 shows an example of a good food advertisement. Saussure categorized image as a sign. The sign is used as a communication tool between humans. Therefore, we could conclude that the sign in the figure above is “Food” with ‘Burger’ as the signifier and “Delicious”, “Junk food”, “Fast-food”, and “Unhealthy” as the signified. Other than that, the verbal aspect from Figure 7 that could be analyzed is the denotative and connotative meaning (See Table 1).

Table 1. Denotative and Connotative Meaning

No	Texts	Denotative	Connotative
1.	Burger = Sehat (Burger = Healthy)	The burger is healthy	Burger is actually unhealthy. However, this burger composed of healthy ingredients
2	Roti = Sehat (Bread = Healthy)	Bread is healthy	Bread contains carbohydrate but if we consume it too much, it will be unhealthy
3	Keju = Sehat (Cheese = Healthy)	Cheese is healthy	Cheese was made from milk and protein but it actually contains a lot of saturated fat, which increase the level of cholesterol
4	Daging = Sehat (Meat = Healthy)	Meat is healthy	Meat contains a lot of saturated fat which could increase the risk of heart disease
5	Sayur = Sehat (Vegetable = Healthy)	Vegetable is healthy	Vegetable gives the impression that the burger has a complete nutritional value standard for food ranging from carbohydrate, protein, fat, mineral, vitamin, and completed by the addition of vegetable

Table 1 shows the denotative and connotative meaning from Figure 7. From the Table, we could conclude that denotatively, the seller claimed that burger is healthy because it contains a lot of healthy ingredients. However, if we look at the hidden (connotative) meaning, all these ingredients are actually unhealthy if it is consumed too much at the same time. Burger is a junk-food and fast-food, which categorized as an unhealthy food. However, the seller stated that their burger which they produce and sell is healthy and claimed it as their jargon. Another thing that we could analyzed is the in non-verbal aspect, which is color. In the Figure 7, we have black color as the background. Wierzbicka proposed that black gives elegant and powerful impression. Black used in food advertisement is appetizing for the viewers. White is also used as the smoke effect in the background. It represents hygiene of the cooking process and food serving. It also gives the impression of “fresh-from-the-oven”. Burger has the following colors which are orange, yellow, and green. The orange color boosts the appetite which convinces the viewers to purchase it. Red and yellow are claimed to be effective in fast-food for attracting consumers. Another color is green which represents the healthy aspect in the food and freshness [15].

3.2 Semiotic Marketing

Semiotic marketing refers to creative thinking process in marketing by applying cognitive science and semiotic cognitive method. Creating a product concept related to its connotative and denotative meaning to help interpretation and production process is one of the semiotic marketing objectives. Product concept is a marketing philosophy that emphasizes that consumers will like products that offer

the best quality, performance and features.

In the world of marketing, semiotics is very helpful for producers to build product positioning and product concept in the consumers' perspective through the advertisement. To study advertising from a semiotic perspective, it can be studied through the sign system in advertisements. Advertising uses a sign system consisting of symbols, both verbal and iconic. Basically, the symbols used in advertisements are of two types, namely verbal and nonverbal symbols. verbal symbols are known languages; Nonverbal symbols are forms, colors that are presented in advertisements, which do not specifically imitate the appearance of reality. Meanwhile, the semiotic approach in marketing is an influential tool in the development of marketing strategies because of their ability to unify company ideologies and create paradigms in consumer products. According to Sunardi, visual semiotics can be used as a scientific method approach because [16]:

- a. Semiotics focuses on technical things (technical things in advertising are the elements that are visible to the five senses). In this case, the visual aspect in Figure 7 which give the impression to the five senses that hamburgers are delicious and healthy food.
- b. Semiotics never stands alone but is related to other disciplines, this makes semiotics can provide new knowledge outside of technical matters (Visual semiotics is associated with cultural studies, namely glocalization and marketing management, especially advertising). This is one of the scientific reasons on why we choose young adults as our respondents and took food products as the study case, since hamburger is quite popular among young adults in Indonesia.
- c. Semiotics includes ideological theory (the ideology of the global state and the ideology of Indonesia). Indonesians tend to justify the wrongdoings in consuming junk food, which Figure 7 provide the justification. They also tend to imitate popular culture, such as western culture.
- d. Semiotics is always used in conjunction with art theory (Advertising has elements of art such as graphics, pictures, photos, which make advertising more creative). Saussure stated that image could be categorized as sign, especially the visual aspect. In Figure 7, the color composition is proportional which makes the image become more attractive.
- e. Semiotics is able to criticize the concept of culture (the culture of a global country and Indonesian culture that meets the concept of glocalization). Figure 7 also convey that young adults in Indonesia can acculturate foreign cultures.
- f. Semiotics can read beyond reach so that we can find meaning (With semiotics we do not stop at advertising but can learn more broadly about culture, perspective, management, business, communication, to historical consumer memory). Figure 7 conveys the implicit message that covers many perspectives of young adults in Indonesia including culture, habits, ideology, and preferences.

4. Conclusion

Semiotics can be used in marketing science because they both studies how meaning is formed from symbols and signs. The concept of effective meaning is largely determined by the combination of words and images. When the interaction between verbal and non-verbal elements is combined in an advertisement, a message that has meaning is formed. Modern advertising is so skilled at playing words, that it can force readers to pause and reflect on its meaning. Figure 7 successfully convey the message and attract consumers through semiotics approach.

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