

REVEALING THE MYTHS IN IPHONE 14 ADVERTISEMENT: SEMIOTICS APPROACH

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Abstract

Semiotics is a branch of science that examines human signs. The semiotic aspects and cases are exciting topics to discuss in interpreting the meaning of advertising because the ambiguous message conveyed in the advertisement may cause difficulties in understanding its meaning among the customers. This research aims to discover the connotative and denotative meanings of the signs in the iPhone 14 advertising video. This study was qualitative research. The data of the study is iPhone 14 advertising video; Action Mode Feature. The data were analyzed with verbal and nonverbal signs according to Saussure's theory (1950) in the form of words, phrases, sentences, sounds, situations, models, motion, and video images of iPhone 14 advertisement and then searched for connotative and denotative meanings according to Barthes' theory (1983). The results revealed that the advertisement aims to create consumer appeal by emphasizing the iPhone 14's luxurious design and the quality associated with the Apple brand. In addition, by featuring Black individuals prominently, the ad sends a message of inclusivity and empowerment, suggesting that success and prestige are attainable by all, regardless of their racial or ethnic background. Therefore, the iPhone 14 positions itself as a symbol of progress, both technologically and socially.

Keywords: iPhone 14 Advertisements, meanings, semiotics, signs

Introduction

Semiotics is the study of signs in their broad meaning in society, both directly and figuratively, using language and non-language. Semiotics analysis seeks to find the meaning of signs, including things hidden behind the signs (texts, advertisements, news, movies, and even songs). This study explores and analyzes how meaning is produced and associated with people and society. Hoed (2011) says semiotics is a branch of science examining human signs. Semiotics basically takes signs or sign systems as the object of study.

Saussure (1950) stated that, as quoted in Rahmah (2019), signs are concrete objects in the form of letters, sounds, signs, and images that function as markers. In line with Saussure, Chandler (1994) stated that signs can be expressed through words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects in a semiotic sense. Semiotics and signs are two things that are often found in human life. One human field that contains many signs is the entertainment sector, especially when advertising products, services, or commercial items.

Concerning semiotics, the constructivist Ferdinand Saussure proposed the concept of semiotics (Saussure, 1972: 33). In 1956, Roland Barthes read Saussure's *General Linguistics* and discovered that semiotics could be used in other fields as well. His view of linguistics in semiotics differs from that of Saussure. By contrast, he said, semiotics is a branch of linguistics because ideas (meanings, symbols) can be represented by symbols in other realms of structural composition because they can contain symbolic and verbal content.

In Barthes' semiotics, symbols are the first layer of the system, and meaning is the second layer. In this case, the sign is close to the meaning of the object. Through this literal

interpretation of what oppression means, Barthes tries to avoid and deny it. Its true meaning is determined by the laws of nature. This theory is based on Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of symbols. This simple explanation makes sense in two steps (Ninuk, 2012).

From those explanations, it can be concluded that Barthes's theory in semiotics is the expansion of Saussure's theory. The difference is in Barthes' theory, denotation and connotation are terms describing the relationship between the signifier and signified, and an analytic distinction is made between two types of signifieds, a denotative signified and a connotative signified. Meaning includes both denotative and connotative (Isfandiyary, 2017)

Advertising is a means of communication in which products, brands, or services are promoted to others to generate actual interest, engagement, and sales of the advertised goods or services. In short, it is a form of public communication that advertises goods, names, services, or opportunities. Customers are influenced and encouraged by advertisements to purchase goods or avail services. It is an essential component of everyday life, particularly in the commercial world, as it serves to promote client interest and the sale of goods and services. A strong advertising plan is required to help with sales and marketing in a business. Ads can be actively driven by their explicit and inventive content.

Kusumawati (2015), stated that verbal communication is a form of communication that the communicator conveys to the communicant in writing or verbally, while non-verbal communication is communication that does not use words, for example using body language such as facial expressions and hand movements, even intonation, voice, and speed of speech. As a result, many manufacturers produce all kinds of inventive and imaginative advertisements to attract consumers. Ads rarely use subliminal messages, whether in the spoken words or the images shown. It serves to generate customer interest in ads. Sukma (2017) stated that advertising is an attempt to attract the attention of customers or clients. This is done through persuasive messages in the form of pictures, videos, or words about the products or services offered.

In addition, advertisements often have deeper cultural, political, and other meanings. Not infrequently, advertisements use implied meanings, both the words used and those displayed non-verbally. This applies to capture customer curiosity about the advertisement. However, only some can understand the concept of advertising. Advertisements often use cues such as language, images, music, colors, and other elements and signs that can have different meanings (Novitasari, 2014).

The ambiguous message conveyed in the advertisement may need help understanding its meaning. Because each individual can interpret a sign in an advertisement differently, the existing signs must be understood accurately, precisely, and equally by everyone (Putri, 2014). As a result, advertising content must not be confusing or deceptive. Therefore, to understand and judge the true meaning of the advertisement, customers need to do more research and have a deeper understanding. Thus, semiotic analysis is the designation for this type of research (Putri, 2014).

The semiotic aspects and cases above are exciting topics to discuss in interpreting the meaning of advertising. The researcher is interested in analyzing new feature ads on iPhone 14 series advertisements and choose to analyze these advertisements because these advertisements use creative ways to convey their advertisements. It also contains many signs, such as attractive pictures, sounds, and words to convey meaning. In addition, based on CNN world news data, the iPhone 14 Pro Max accounts for 28% of all iPhone sales in the US Q4 2022. The second most popular series is the iPhone 14, which accounted for 23% of total US iPhone sales during the same quarter. Moreover, Counterpoint shows an increase in the premium cellphone market in Southeast Asia throughout Q3 2022. Compared to the previous year, the iPhone 14 Pro Max experienced a significant growth of 63% in Southeast Asia from July to last September, with Vietnam as the largest country that uses iPhones. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the iPhone 14 Pro Max dominates the first position in the mobile phone segment, with prices above USD 700.

From the data above, it can be concluded that customers' interest in using the iPhone 14 Pro Max is considerable, especially at the launch of this product. Therefore, this aroused the researcher's curiosity to analyze the signs in the advertisement for the iPhone 14. Good product sales can be influenced by good marketing, especially by commercial means. Through

advertising videos, the researcher can also see creative and exciting ways of advertising. Verbal and non-verbal signs are perfectly displayed. However, advertisers are trying to convey a specific message through the signs in the iPhone 14 ad to customers. Thus, to ensure consumers or readers understand their message, advertisers create various codes.

Previous research conducted by Sarah and Masinissa (2017); A previous study on social preference analysis of Condor smartphone advertisements in Algeria, found that Condor smartphone advertisements had nonverbal symbol sources (images, colors), using symbols and words). (information) sensitive; focus) and language (subject, clause, pronoun/noun/adjective, and verb).

This aligns with research conducted by Ramadhani (2021) titled "Analysis of Verbal and Non-Verbal Meanings in Telephone Ads Using a Semiotic Approach." It was found that the denotative and connotative interpretation of the meaning of the sign (verbal and nonverbal meanings) attracted viewers to buy the product. A further related study was carried out by Agustia & Kurniawan (2022) with the title, "Semiotic Analysis of Non-Verbal Language in Digital Gadget Ads," with the result that there was a misinterpretation of the meaning of non-verbal language in digital gadget advertisements. Three commercials were discussed because there is no verbal component.

The last related study, "Semiotis Analysis of OPPO F Series Mobile Phone Ads," was conducted by Rahmah (2019). The researcher found 36 signs in 12 "OPPO F Series" advertisements. These marks are 13 Iconic signs and 23 Symbolic signs. The researcher gets six different meanings from each series of advertisements.

All of the above studies state that the advertisements analyzed have several signs and meanings explicitly and implicitly contained in these advertisements. These signs can perfectly capture consumers' interest in purchasing the product or using the promoted service. The study conducted by Sara (2017) also stated that analyzing the meaning of signs using a semiotic approach can help customers catch hidden messages conveyed through advertising videos. The fact is that not everyone can understand the creativity shown in advertisements (Jefkins, 2021). The average person thinks that the advertiser exaggerates the product or service so that people are enticed to buy and use it.

This study continues the study above but uses different data related to video advertisements for the iPhone 14 series. Therefore, researchers conducted research to analyze it using the theory of Saussure (1950) and Barthes (1983). This research is more focused on the verbal and non-verbal signs contained in the iPhone 14 Series Advertisement Videos and the connotative and denotative meanings of each of these signs.

Literature Review

Semiotics is an analytic approach to the study of symbols in everyday life. Etymologically, the term semiotics comes from the Greek *Seminion*, meaning "sign." Semiotics is the study of signs. Semiotics comes from the Greek word 'semeion,' which means sign. A sign itself are divided into two which are a verbal sign and non-verbal sign. Verbal signs in its use of language can make a set of words that have been structured become the core of meaningful sentences (Cangara, 2003). Meanwhile, non-verbal sign used for a communication environment with possible information about the meaning of a result sender or receiver (Mulyana, 2007).

Research Method

Silverman (2020) also notes that qualitative research emphasizes subjective meaning when describing people's experiences through reading or words without calculation. Data analysis aims to analyze data precisely so that it is easy to understand. The data in this study were analyzed using descriptive analysis techniques and a semiotic approach, namely by choosing the suitable advertisements, categorizing it, then indentifying it based the verbal and non-verbal signs.

In this study, the researcher analyzed six advertisements of the iPhone 14 series. Those advertisements were iPhone 14 action mode, introducing emergency SOS via Apple Satellite,



introducing Apple’s iPhone 14 Pro crash detection, introducing Dynamic Island on iPhone 14 Pro Apple, introducing iPhone 14 Pro Apple, and iPhone 14 & iPhone 14 Plus Big and Bigger Apple. Those advertisements were taken from Apple’s advertisements on YouTube that were uploaded in 2022-2023.


Results and Discussion



iPhone 14 Action Mode Apple



The first ad video chosen by the researcher was an ad that was broadcast in January 2023. The ad displayed the action mode feature found on the iPhone 14. The ad video is 0.39 seconds long. Analysis of the ad video can be seen in the following table:


Table 1. Analysis of iPhone 14 Action Mode Apple’s Advertisement

No	Time	Verbal	Non-verbal
1.	00.01	Get out my way.	
		Signifier	Signified
		The running race participants from different races are ready for the race. They look serious and focus on the race. There is a song title that appears at the bottom of the scene that is written: “Get out my way.” A back song that sings the song with the title written accompanies the video.	The race is about to begin.
2.	0.08	Verbal	Non-verbal
		You cross that line.	

		Signifier	Signified
		The boy stares at the mother. His face looks serious. The close-up shot is taken to show the audience about how serious the boy is. The text: "You crossed that line." appears at the bottom of the scene. A back song with the lyric written accompany this scene.	The boy stares at the mother.
3.	0.09	Verbal	Non-verbal
		It ain't your day. Written: It ain't your day	
		Signifier	Signified
		The mom stares back at her son while holding an iPhone 14, preparing to take the video. At the back of her, there are other audiences who also watch the race. A written text, "It ain't your day," appears at the bottom of the scene. A back song with the lyric written accompany this scene.	The Mom is ready to record her son's running race.

4.	0.11	Verbal	Non-verbal
		Action mode	
		Signifier	Signified
		The scene shows the counting time and the written text “Action Mode.” Then the whistle is blown, which signifies that the race begins. The song “get out my way” still played to accompany the video.	The action mode of the iPhone is activated.
4.	00.31	Verbal	Non-verbal
		Get out of my way. Shaky camera	
		Signifier	Signified
		The video shows the child model running a race while his mother is taking the video by running, following the movement of her son. The written text “Shaky camera” appears in the middle of the screen. The back song, “get out my way,” accompanies this	The child’s mother is taking the video of the race.

		scene, and the song lyric “get out my way” is written at the bottom of the scene.	
5	0.23	Verbal	Non-verbal
		Stable video	
		Signifier	Signified
		There is a text “stable video” on the middle of the screen, and the boy model who runs over other participants, trying to lead the race.	The text “stable video” shows the audience that the video will remain stable even if the recorder moves or runs during the recording. The boy model, who runs over other participants, shows that iPhone 14 is able to run over other mobile competitors and lead the race.
6.	0.26	Verbal	Non-verbal
		Relax, it's iPhone 14	
		Signifier	Signified
		In this scene, there are the words "relax; it's iPhone 14," which has a background of a mother taking a video with a very serious face	The verbal signs above mean that the iPhone 14 claims that it is able to fulfill the necessity of the customer who wants to take pictures in any condition

		because she is running beside her child, who is racing while taking pictures. The video shows a busy background, but the audience can still focus on the advertised product because the model is doing different activities from the background, namely running.	with better video quality like a professional. The busy background identified that the recorder can still take good-quality pictures in any situation.
7.	0.27	Verbal	Non-verbal
		(Well) I need my space	
		Signifier	Signified
		At the end of the scene, the video shows that the boy model is able to win the race. He leads the race and makes some quite a far distance from other competitors. The song text “(Well) I need my space.”	The scene when the model boy becomes the winner identifies that, in the end, iPhone 14 will win the mobile market competition. The space that is a far distance from other competitors indicates that iPhone 14 is difficult to compete by other competitors. The song lyrics “(Well) I need my space” shows that iPhone 14 has its own space in the mobile phone market.

Based on the analysis in the table above, each scene of the advertisement has a denotative meaning, which consists of a signifier and a signified. However, each first order of signification does not always have one-second order of signification. Therefore, the connotative meaning is described in the paragraphs instead of within the table.

The *iPhone 14 Action Mode Apple’s advertisement* of has several connotative meanings. From the first scene, it shows the running race participants that come from different races getting ready for the race. They look serious and focus for the race. A boy who wears a red long sleeve T-shirt looks serious. His eyes look forward. While other participants also prepare for the

race, waiting for the whistle to blow. A singer's voice sings, "Get out of my way," as the lyric text is written at the bottom of the scene.

This advertisement has a myth that exists, namely, black people who were previously considered rude, low, and stupid by the stigma of society are now much different. They can even use the iPhone 14 series. The black color also denotes strength and immortality. This is in accordance with research conducted by Wahidar (2022), which states that the myth of racism in the film *Night School* is that black people are still considered stupid; black people are always considered troubling because, in the past many black people acted criminally and violently, people who had short and smaller bodies are more easily intimidated, black people have lower social status compared to white people, not only towards white people, people of Asian descent or who live in America also often receive acts of racism from Native Americans.

Conclusion

Based on data analysis conducted by researchers, it can be concluded that the six advertisement videos of the iPhone 14 series contained denotative and connotative meanings. The first advertisement depicted a race in which children from different races participated. The denotative meaning of this race was to showcase the action mode feature belonging to the iPhone 14. It could capture stable videos even when the camera was shaking or the recording conditions were unstable. The connotative meaning of this advertisement implied that the iPhone 14 was associated with a concern for racial equity and justice initiatives. Another interpretation was that Apple was prepared to secure victory in the competition within the mobile phone market and establish dominance.

The second advertisement revolved around two individuals who were lost in the middle of a mountain. The denotative meaning was to highlight the emergency SOS capability via Apple satellite, capable of procuring help in various emergency situations, including being lost atop a mountain. The connotative meaning conveyed that the emergency SOS feature via Apple satellite provided a beacon of hope for individuals in emergencies, as portrayed in the advertisement. The dire situation, which depicted the challenges faced by the lost individuals, was suddenly illuminated by the helicopter dispatched by emergency responders, who became aware of the situation through the assistance of the iPhone 14 feature.

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