



A Peircean Semiotic Analysis of Herborist Handbody Advertisements

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Abstract

Keywords: semiotics, Peirce's theory, advertising, visual communication, branding.

Advertising plays a crucial role in modern marketing by attracting consumers and encouraging purchases. Every advertisement uses specific signs to engage customers. This research aims to identify the signs present in Herborist handbody advertisements and examine their role in visual communication. Using a qualitative descriptive method and image analysis, the researcher analyzed 23 data points, including 11 icons, 8 indexes, and 4 symbols. The findings reveal that icons and indexes are the most dominant elements, significantly influencing the advertisement's message. Icons serve as visually appealing representations that capture the audience's attention and create positive associations with the product, reinforcing beauty and self-care ideals. Meanwhile, indexes establish connections between product usage and expected results, fostering trust and confidence among consumers. By integrating these two components, the advertisement constructs a compelling narrative that draws attention and encourages consumer engagement. The prominence of icons and indexes highlights the critical role of semiotic elements in effective advertising, demonstrating their ability to enhance communication and spark consumer interest.

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E-ISSN: 3047-8693

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a powerful tool in modern consumer culture as it serves as the primary means for brands to communicate with potential consumers about their philosophy, values and products. Advertising seeks to make an emotional connection, persuade customers, and ultimately influence purchasing behavior through various media channels. Effective advertising strategies are increasingly important given that the value of the worldwide beauty and personal care industry is expected to exceed \$500 billion by 2023 (Statista, 2023). Brands like Herborist strive to lead the natural beauty industry by using innovative advertising in this dynamic market.

The well-known brand Herborist focuses on using natural ingredients and traditional herbal ingredients in its beauty products. In particular, Herborist hand lotion aims to provide skin nourishment and hydration while supporting a holistic beauty approach. Herborist's campaign aims to appeal to customers who seek authenticity, sustainability and well-being in their beauty routine. By showcasing the benefits of its handbody products, Herborist not only emphasizes the effectiveness of the formulation, but also follows the growing consumer trend for natural and eco-friendly options.

To understand how effective Herborist's advertisements are, it is imperative to look at the key messages conveyed in their promotional materials. This is where semiotics, the discipline that investigates the use of signs and symbols in communication, becomes relevant. Semiotics provides an important perspective on how advertisements create and interpret meaning. Signs, according to Eco (1976), not only show what is happening; they also construct the context in which consumers make sense of the world. By looking at the semiotic elements in Herborist advertisements, we can determine how the brand conveys its values and attracts the attention of the targeted audience.

Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model is one of the most significant semiotic theories. Peirce (1991) divides signs into three main categories: "icon," "index," and "symbol." Each category has a different way of conveying its meaning. A sign that resembles an object is called an icon, and an index shows a direct relationship between the icon and the object. Symbols, however, are derived from social and cultural norms. The broad framework provided by this triadic model helps us explore the different levels of meaning contained in advertisements.

Using Peirce's framework, this research conducted a semiotic analysis on Herborist handbody advertisements. The aim is to uncover how signs, indices and symbols interact with each other to convey messages about self-care and beauty. This research aims to uncover the cultural narratives that shape consumer perceptions and the broader impact of Herborist's advertising strategy by examining these components. Beauty advertising can influence societal norms and individual self-esteem, so it is important to understand these dynamics (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014).

Many studies have been conducted to understand how advertisements influence customer perceptions through semiotic components, especially in terms of beauty product advertisements. Setyaningsih and Palupi (2022) examined the representation of beauty in Scarlett Whitening advertisements using Roland Barthes semiotic analysis. The research shows how the signs in the ads reveal the ideology contained in the visual communication and contribute to the formation of an ideal beauty picture. Despite using Barthes' approach, this research is in line with Herborist's semiotic analysis of how signs shape meanings and values in beauty advertisements.

In addition, the research "Semiotic Analysis of Beauty Product Advertisements: A Case Research of L'Oréal" by Iriani and Aditya (2021) emphasized the use of symbols, icons, and indices in beauty product advertisements. This research shows how semiotic elements can influence consumer perceptions of products and brands. It is similar to Herborist's research in that it looks at visual elements and language, but differs in that it focuses on different

brands and cultural contexts.

In addition, research written by Nuraini and Nugroho in 2020 titled “Visual Rhetoric in Beauty Advertisements: A Semiotic Perspective” discusses how beauty advertisements use visual rhetoric to influence audiences. This research provides additional understanding of how advertisements shape narrative and meaning, although the main focus is on visual rhetoric. This research's focus on Peirce's semiotic model, unlike Herborist analysis, distinguishes this research from Herborist analysis.

According to the research, although there are similarities in the use of semiotic approaches, each research focuses on different brands and cultural contexts. These studies complement each other by increasing our understanding of how beauty advertisements influence customer perceptions and how signs create meaning.

The aim of this research is to uncover the complex layers of meaning that influence consumer perceptions of beauty and self-care by looking at how icons, indices and symbols function in this advertisement. This will be formulated as follow:

1. How do Peirce's semiotic categories (icons, indexes, and symbols) function in Herborist handbody advertisements?
2. Which semiotic elements are most dominant in conveying the advertisement's message?
3. How do these semiotic components influence consumer perception and engagement?

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to examine the signs used in Herborist handbody advertisements. This method allows for a systematic and factual description of the semiotic components present in the advertisements.

The data was collected through document review by analyzing six Herborist handbody advertisements. The researcher carefully examined each advertisement, identifying key visual and textual elements that contribute to the brand's messaging. The process involved watching, gathering, analyzing, and classifying the data to ensure comprehensive evaluation.

The study applies Peirce's semiotic theory, categorizing signs into icons, indexes, and symbols.

1. Icons: Visual representations that directly resemble the product or concept (e.g., product images, human figures).
2. Indexes: Elements that establish a cause-effect relationship, linking product use to expected results (e.g., images showing improved skin appearance).
3. Symbols: Signs that rely on cultural conventions and shared meanings (e.g., brand logos, abstract representations of beauty and self-care).

By classifying and analyzing these elements, the researcher ensures a structured examination of the semiotic components in Herborist handbody advertisements. This methodological approach allows for transparency and replicability, providing a clear framework for future research in advertising semiotics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

In this research, the author found 6 picture that can be analyzed. Below is the data of signs that have been collected based on icons, indexes and symbols. In the first picture only 1 icon was found. The second picture found 3 icons, 1 index, and 1 symbol. The third picture found 2 icons, 2 indexes, and 1 symbol. The fourth picture found 2 icon, 2 indexes and 1 symbol. The fifth picture found icons, 1 index, and 1 symbol. And the last picture found 2 icons and 2 indexes.

Tabel 1. Icon, symbol, symbol Signs

Picture	Icon	Index	Symbol
1 st Picture	1. 2 woman		
2 nd icture	1. Woman 2. Handbody Herborist 3. Number 30	1. SPF PA+++	30 1. SPF dan PA
3 rd picture	1. Hand 2. Fruit (pomegranate, cranberry, beetroot)	1. Cream spread 2. Fruit (pomegranate, cranberry, beetroot)	1. Fruit (pomegranate, cranberry, beetroot)
4 rd picture	1. Phrase “hari ke 7” 2. Woman	1. Phrase “Sejak Hari ke7” 2. Circle shape on hand	1. The word “lebih cerah”
5 rd picture	1. Woman	1. Bounce	1. UVA, UVB
6 rd picture	1. 2 woman 2. Handbody herborist	1. 2 woman 2. Handbody herborist	

Discussion

The results show that there are types of signs that can be analyzed with all three theories. Icon, index, and symbol represent different ways of producing and conveying meaning. The data, both pictures and phrases, were analyzed through these three signs. By looking at signs through these three facets, we can understand how audiences form and receive meaning. We can also find out how signs function within the broader context of visual communication and culture (Peirce, 1991). This research also found more icons and indexes. This means that this research focused more on the visual similarities and objects represented. In addition, this research looked for evidence or clues to support the beliefs made in the advertisement.

Meanwhile, the research by Setyaningsih and Palupi (2022) found that symbols can convey a deeper meaning about beauty standards. These ads provide an overview of ideal beauty standards in a broader cultural context. The difference in the number of symbols found in each picture may indicate that some ads may focus more on emotional stories than others, creating variations in the way the message is conveyed.

The Analysis of Picture 1



Only the icon, two women staring at each other, is found in the first picture of the ad. In this combination, one woman appears fresh and radiant, highlighting her healthy and well-groomed skin, while the other woman has paler skin and appears less radiant. This clear contrast between the two women not only creates an attention-grabbing visual tension, but also conveys a strong message about the effects of using the handbody product. The fresh-looking woman is considered the ideal representation of beauty, giving the impression that the product can deliver the desired result of healthy, glowing skin. The picture utilizes the female icon to build a story that supports the product's claims of success, encouraging viewers to consider differences in skincare and emphasizing how important handbody products are to achieving the desired appearance.

The Analysis of Picture 2



In the second picture, 3 icons, 1 index, and 1 symbol were found. The woman and the herborist handbody product are identified as icons because the ad clearly shows a woman with fresh and bright skin holding a herborist handbody product. Finally, the SPF number “30” indicates the level of protection. Although there is no visual difference between direct sun protection, these numbers give a quantitative idea of how well the product protects against the sun.

This ad has an index in the phrase “SPF 30 PA+++”, which can serve as a sign that the product provides sun protection. In other words, consumers may take “SPF 30 PA+++” as a sign that the product is designed to protect their skin, providing assurance about the safety of their skin when exposed to the sun.

Finally, SPF and PA in the ad can be identified as symbols because “SPF” and “PA” are symbols that have an agreed meaning for skincare. The sun protection factor SPF (Sun Protection Factor) indicates the level of protection from UVB rays, while the protection grade UVA (Protection Grade of UVA) indicates the level of protection from UVA rays. The use of these symbols can be related to how well the product protects the skin.

The Analysis of Picture 3

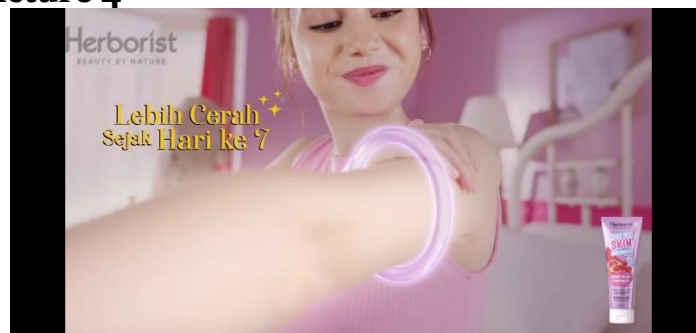


The third picture contains one symbol, two indexes, and two icons. The first icon in this ad is “hand”. The “hand” icon is often used to represent various meanings related to self-care and beauty in this ad about the body of the herborist's hands. Hands can symbolize care, touch and tenderness. Hands create a strong visual connection to everyday beauty practices when shown while using the product. In addition, hands that look smooth and shiny in the ad can show how well the product keeps the skin moisturized and healthy. The use of hands as an icon attracts the audience's attention and generates the desired experience of using the product. Other icons are fruits, such as beetroot, cranberry and pomegranate. Pomegranate has an attractive physical form, with bright red skin and shining seeds. Cranberries have a bright red color and small shape, and beetroot has a distinctive deep red color and an attractive round shape.

Then there is the index. The application of the cream on the skin of the hand serves as an indicator that shows the immediate results of the product. Advertisements that show a person applying cream to the skin show the connection between the action-the application of the cream-and the result-smooth, well-groomed skin. Products designed to provide protection and moisture and improve skin condition are indicated by this index. Applying creams also indicates self-care habits that customers can adopt, emphasizing that product use is an important step in maintaining healthy skin. Hand cream dabbing therefore demonstrates the use of the product and its benefits in a visual and practical way. Fruit (pomegranate, cranberry and beetroot) is the second index found in this advertisement. In beauty products, pomegranate often shows anti-aging and skin rejuvenating effects. In health or beauty products, beetroot may indicate detoxification or increased energy.

This third picture has fruit symbols (pomegranate, cranberry and beetroot). Many cultures regard the pomegranate as a symbol of fertility, life, and prosperity. It is often used in artwork and literature as a representation of new life. Products with cranberries often contain health claims. Cranberries can serve as a symbol of fitness and health. In terms of food, they are often associated with healthy dishes and fall foods. Beetroot is often associated with strength and vitality, and it can also serve as a symbol of natural health.

The Analysis of Picture 4

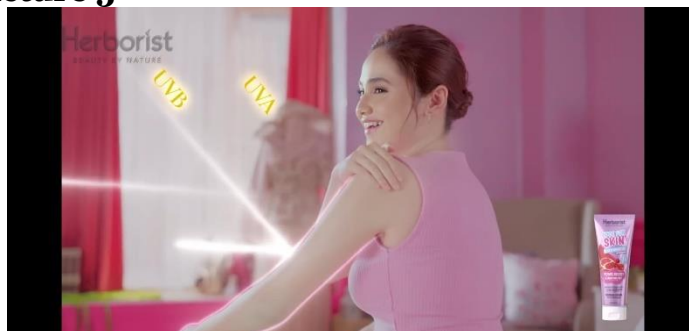


There are two symbols, two indexes, and two icons in the fourth picture. The first icon is the phrase “day 7”, which is a symbol of time. Although it does not directly indicate skin changes, the use of time as a reference suggests that the effect of the product can be seen after a certain time. This creates a visual link between the expected results and the use of the product. The second icon is of a woman who is stunned to see the results that can be created instantly by herborist hand products.

The phrase “since day 7” is a sign that functions as an index because it shows evidence or experience that supports the claim. The phrase “since day 7” not only indicates time, but also gives the customer an expectation that the effects of the product will be visible within a certain time. This gives customers confidence that the product has the ability to deliver measurable and tangible results, which strengthens their conviction to choose and use the product. This promised experience is particularly important in marketing strategies, where customers are often looking for concrete results from the products they use. The second index is the circle on the hand. This index shows the smeared and un-smeared sides of the hand, which directly shows the difference produced by using the product. The smeared side shows smoother and more well-groomed skin, while the unsmeared side shows rougher skin. Therefore, this circle not only shows where the product is used, but also shows the relationship between what is done when applying the hands and the expected results. Because of the circle, the product draws the audience's attention to the stark contrast. This reinforces the idea that the product can provide real skincare benefits. It gives consumers a strong visual experience that allows them to understand and feel the changes promised by the product.

In the fourth picture, the word “brighter” indicates an expected change in skin condition. The term “fair” in beauty is often associated with healthy, glowing and attractive skin. This concept is understood based on the prevailing cultural conventions in communication about beauty, where beauty standards often prioritize the picture of fair, blemish-free skin. In addition, the word “more” is used to emphasize comparison and improvement, suggesting that this product not only maintains the current skin condition but can also improve it. Therefore, both the index and symbol in the sentence work together to build a strong narrative that convinces customers that they will see a significant change in the appearance of their skin after using the product.

The Analysis of Picture 5



The fifth picture has one symbol, one index, and one icon. The female icon in this picture serves as a representation of the ideal customer of the product in this advertisement. Female icons are often associated with femininity, beauty and self-care. In advertisements, women are usually depicted with healthy and glowing skin, reinforcing the message that handbody products can help achieve such beauty standards. In addition, female icons can also display emotional and confidence elements; seeing a confident and attractive female figure can motivate customers to use the product and take care of themselves.

The reflection in this picture is identified as an index. In this context, the reflex serves as an indicator of the direct relationship between hand use and skin protection from the sun. If the picture shows a reflection of sunlight that does not hit areas of skin soiled by hands, this indicates that the product is effective in protecting against UV rays. This indicator draws the audience's attention to the real effect of the product, which is that use on the body of the hands not only moisturizes, but also produces a protective layer that blocks direct sunlight. Therefore, the absence of sun reflection on the applied skin further confirms the claim that this product can minimize sun damage and maintain healthy skin. This creates the impression that the hand care product not only functions as a moisturizer, but also acts as a shield that protects the skin from the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation. In this way, the reflection acts as strong visual evidence, reinforcing the message that the use of the product will deliver real results in skin care and protection.

“UVA” and “UVB” are symbols that have special meanings regarding skin protection and ultraviolet radiation. The terms are based on scientific and cultural conventions, where UVA is associated with rays that penetrate deep into the skin and can cause aging, while UVB causes more damage to the skin layer and is associated with rays that can cause sunburn. These meanings are not necessarily obvious, but arise from common understanding and knowledge.

The Analysis of Picture 6



Since she represents the ideal customer of the product, the woman holding the handbody

serves as an icon. Advertisements often associate women with self-care, elegance and beauty. Through her pose and facial expressions, the woman conveys the message that wearing a handbody is an essential component of a beauty ritual. The woman as an icon helps the audience imagine themselves using the product and achieving comparable results, as her healthy, glowing skin becomes a strong visual appeal that illustrates the expected results of using the product.

In contrast, the woman holding her hand serves as an indicator that shows a direct link between product application and skincare. By holding her hands, the woman shows that she is doing important things to keep her skin healthy. This creates a connection between the product and active self-care. In addition, this action shows that the product is easy to use and can be done every day.

The woman holding the hand reinforces the message of the ad with both functions-icon and index. She not only explains who can use this product, but also shows that using a handbody is an easy way to get better skin. This combination creates a powerful story that encourages customers to experience the benefits of the item and encourages them to participate in the self-care process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research, the researcher found 11 icons, 8 indexes, and 4 symbols from six scenes in the video advertisement. The researcher also found that icons and indexes were dominant in this research and were more decisive in determining the message. Icons, as attractive visual representations, attract the audience's attention and create positive associations with the product, enhancing the picture of beauty and self-care. Meanwhile, the index provides evidence or clues that connect the use of the product with the expected results, fostering trust and confidence among consumers. The researcher integrated the combination of these two components to create a strong and persuasive story, which allows the advertisement to attract attention and encourage action. Therefore, the dominance of icons and indexes in this research shows how important the semiotic component is to build effective communication and arouse the audience's interest.

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