

Discovering Hidden Messages in Covid-19 Advertisement “Stay Home Save Lives”: A Semiotic Analysis

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Abstract- COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) is a disease caused by a new type of coronavirus. WHO officially declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic. Both government and non-government parties work together to educate people and provide information about COVID-19 through various ways. Advertisement is considered as one of the effective ways to provide education and understanding about COVID-19. This study aims to discover the hidden messages in COVID-19 advertisements by analyzing the verbal and non-verbal signs used in the advertisement entitled “Stay Home Save Live”. The data were collected by using observation method and note-taking technique. The data were analyzed by descriptive qualitative method using semiotic theory proposed by Saussure (1983) and the theory of meanings proposed by Barthes (1977). The analysis was presented by informal method. The finding shows that both verbal and visual signs in the advertisement “Stay Home Save Lives” have hidden message. Generally, it delivers a message that during this difficult time, people can defeat COVID-19 by staying at home, obeying the health protocol, and being positive.

Keywords: Advertisement, COVID-19, Non-verbal sign, Verbal sign

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication cannot be separated from the human being. In social interaction, people are interacted by communicating with each other. Communication is the most frequent activity performed to express their opinions, idea, and information, either through written text or spoken. Therefore, communication has become an important thing in human social and daily life. Humans express their communication through various systems, one of them is through symbols or signs. The most basic rule of any language community is the acceptance of a set of signs that convey meaning. Meaning is a limitation to the technical terminology of a number of operational concepts that are components of the theoretical framework that

are inseparable from semantics and always from what we say (Jagalimu & Kasni, 2018).

A sign is comprised of something that expresses meaning. Sign is divided into two types namely: verbal sign and non-verbal sign. A verbal sign is communication that may be in form of spoken or written text. Meanwhile, According to (Chandler, 2007), the non-verbal sign is known as visual communication to deliver an idea, through image or illustration that combines with a symbol, art, color, gesture, facial expression, graphics, and posture. Therefore, the effectiveness of verbal and non-verbal signs become an important part in our life. Both verbal and non-verbal sign has many functions in daily life such as a media to represent something or convey the message to

the intended audience. Certainly, a sign has existed a meaning and as a human, we need a better understanding about the meaning itself. The meaning of a sign can be studied in semiotic.

Semiotics is the study of symbol or sign (Mayr, 2013) and the study of meaning how is created which are many kinds of activities and process that implicate signs including encounter the meaning. Principally, semiotics learns how human interpret thing around them. Picture, signs, symbols, etc. surround us all, whether they are verbal or non-verbal. Both verbal and non-verbal sign has many functions in daily life such as a media to represent something or convey the message to the intended audience. Mostly, sign found in the advertisement which is used to represent an object and persuade people to give attention and read the advertisement.

Nowadays, advertisement is one efficient media of communication for delivering information in society. According to (Dyer, 1982), advertisement is drawing attention to something or informing somebody of something. Advertisement is the media used by people either business companies, non-profit organizations, or individuals not only to introduce or promote their product to the public but also for encouraging, educating, and raising awareness of a certain circle or public about health, social issue, and environment. There are many forms of advertisement such as video, newspaper, film, poster, magazine, and many others. Generally, there are two kinds of advertisement such as commercial advertisement and non-commercial advertisement. Commercial advertisement is used to promote or sell something. Meanwhile, non-commercial advertisement is used as media to educate or inform something. One of non-commercial advertisement is COVID-19 advertisement.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) is a disease caused by a new type of coronavirus, namely Sars-CoV-2, COVID-19 case was first reported in Wuhan China in December 2019 (Yuliana, 2020). WHO officially declared that COVID-19 is a global epidemic and it has infected 90.038 people as of March 2020. Therefore, COVID-19 has become a serious problem is facing the whole world. All parties both government and non-government work together to educate and provide an understanding in the society about COVID-19

to reduce the spread of COVID-19 through various ways.

Some previous studies which are related to this study. One of them was about semiotic analysis found on the cigarette products. This study is study by (Prasojowati, Natsir, & Ariani, 2019). Other latest related research was about semiotic analysis in *maybelline* lipstick advertisement (Agustini, Netra, & Rajeg, 2017). By considering the current condition that is not conducive, advertisement is considered to become one of the effective ways to provide education and understanding about COVID-19. Through an advertisement, the understanding about COVID-19 can be provided well. Moreover, the advertiser makes a good displayed and attractive design without omitting the essential message of the advertisement itself, it can be supported the advertisement delivered well toward the audience. This study aims to analyze the verbal and non-verbal signs as well as the meaning of signs itself that portrayed in COVID-19 advertisement “Stay Home Save Live”.

II. METHODS

In conducting this study, the data was taken from A Will Production YouTube Channel entitled “Stay Home Save Live” <https://youtu.be/1Jfj3BnTMDM> with duration 1 minutes 13 seconds. It was published on April 8, 2020. The data were obtained by using observation method and note-taking technique. The data were classified into verbal and non-verbal signs. Afterward, they were analyzed by using qualitative method. First, the researcher classified verbal and non-verbal signs found in COVID-19 advertisements by implementing Saussure's semiotic theory (Saussure 1983). Then, continued by examining the meaning of verbal and non-verbal by using the theory proposed by (Barthes, 1977) and supported by theory of color term proposed by (Wierzbicka, 1996). The analysis was presented by informal method.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

COVID-19 Advertisement “Stay Home Save Live” was evaluated based on Saussure's Semiotic theory (Saussure, 1983) as well as the theory of meaning by (Barthes, 1977). COVID-19 Advertisement “Stay Home Save Live” consists of verbal and non-verbal signs. The verbal signs consist of words and sentences.

Meanwhile, the non-verbal sign is in the form of a figure or image combines with facial expression, gesture, and color.

The Analysis of Scene 1



Figure 3.1 Scene 1 in Stay Home Save Live Advertisement

The Analysis of Verbal Signs

Sign as an entity of social phenomena markers have often been reviewed in the past (Berek, 2018). The verbal sign in this scene is "Staying at home isn't so bad". This statement has connotative meaning because the advertiser wants to tell people that we have to stay at home and stop thinking that staying at home is a bad thing. The signifier signifies that even though people just stay at home during COVID-19 global pandemic, it is not as bad as people thought. Staying at home gives many benefits for people. It makes us getting closer to our family and loved ones, reducing the pollution because we reduce our outdoor activities and most importantly, we can stop the spread of COVID-19. Although we feel bored, lonely or stressful for being separated from our communities, it is all for our own good.

Living through pandemic is strange. Most of us have never been asked to make sacrifices like this before, staying home and limiting contact with others. Pandemic fatigue is real, and it's draining to stay on high alert month after month after month. The verbal signs "Staying at home isn't so bad" carried implicit message. It is true that quarantine has changed us but it's not all bad. Living in quarantine for months has offered a rare opportunity to reflect on our lives and, potentially, to reset them. Quarantine has allowed us to experiment with new habits and new lifestyles. Other than that, Putri, Sosiowati, & Winaya (2016) said that verbal communication is used more in video clips that contain hidden stories.

The Analysis of Non-Verbal Signs

The first non-verbal sign in the first scene

is a lake view with clean water. It represents clean environment, clear water and free from waste. This is because there are many factories stop operating during pandemic. Therefore, the waste that usually contaminates river or lake has been reduced. It is also supported by the blue color of the water. According to Wierzbicka (1996), blue is associated with health, healing, tranquility, understanding, and softness. Blue is associated with open spaces, freedom, intuition, imagination, inspiration, and sensitivity. Blue also represents meanings of depth, trust, loyalty, sincerity, wisdom, confidence, stability, faith, heaven, and intelligence. The color blue has positive effects on the mind and the body.

The second non-verbal sign is trees around the lake which gives the fresh effect. Tree has been found to represent physical and spiritual nourishment, transformation and liberation, union and fertility. They are seen as powerful symbols of growth and resurrection. They have played a role in our existence since the beginning of humankind and provide life and a place to live for many living creatures. Green is the color of nature. It symbolizes growth, harmony, freshness, and fertility. It is a symbol of life and energy. When a leaf is green it is said that the plant is a living thing because that is the best sign of life. It's the symbol of prosperity, balance, nature, spring, rebirth and progress. The picture on scene 1 above indicates that during COVID-19 global pandemic most people just stay at home hence causing fewer people to drive and more factories are closed. Therefore, the pollution is reduced and the trees are now able to generate more maximum oxygen. As the result the air is fresher than before and people get benefits from it.

The last non-verbal sign is the houses around the lake. From the picture we can see that nobody is outside the house, it is empty and quiet. It indicates that people just stay at home during COVID-19 global pandemic. People reduce their activities outside. Stay home aims to minimize contact with others, therefore, we can stop the spread of COVID-19.

By examining all of the non-verbal signs, the picture above implies connotative meaning because it has a hidden message in which the advertiser wants to convey to the public that staying at home is not inherently a bad thing, since we can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by staying at home as well as we can make the environment cleaner and fresher. Therefore, people can feel comfortable and safe with the

current environmental conditions.

The Analysis of Scene 2

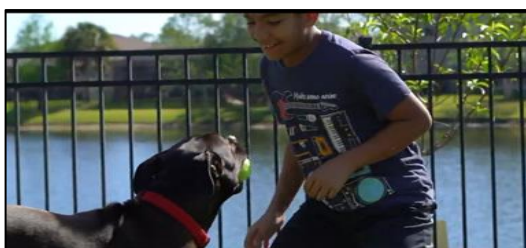


Figure 3.2 Scene 2 in Stay Home Save Live Advertisement

The Analysis of Verbal Signs

The verbal sign in this scene is “There are book, puppies and adventures to be had”. The signifier signifies that there are some fun activities which people can do during staying at home to relieve their boredom and loneliness. This statement implies connotative meaning because through the phrase “there are book”, the advertiser tries to convey that reading a book will relieve anxiety during stay at home. People will begin to concentrate on that book once they start reading, not on their anxiety. Reading a book can reduce stress and makes people feeling better physically and mentally during quarantine.

Afterward, the word “puppies” shows that the advertiser intends to invite people to spend their time taking care of their pets. One of the pets that many people like is dogs. This is because dogs are the social animals. Therefore, it is easy to establish communication with humans. Moreover, dogs symbolize loyalty and fidelity. During stay at home for a long time, a dog can be connoted as our new friend who may be able to eliminate our loneliness.

The last words “...and adventures to be had”. The advertiser wants to tell people that we can enjoy our days during stay at home by trying some new adventures which can be done inside the house. For example, we used to go traveling with loved ones but now we can enjoy

playing games or having a picnic in the backyard with our family which can be considered as a new adventure. Gardening or cooking is another adventure which demanding us to explore more information and develop our skill in that area. The activities which never been done in normal life is worth a try in this pandemic. Adventure can be any brand-new things which are interesting to do during quarantine.

Generally, the verbal signs carried an important message for the public. It encourages people to stay productive during pandemic. Being productive does not mean being busy. Because we should do most of our activities from home, our creativity is needed and even sharpened to keep life during the pandemic. We can do a lot of things to stay productive although we just stay at home. There are many options to choose, like reading books, taking care of pets and other new adventures that adds value to our life. It can lead to our goals to still staying positive and happy.

The Analysis of Non-Verbal Signs

The first non-verbal sign is a boy laying on the couch, reading a book. This advertisement used children as the model since the energy of a child is pure and charged with joy and willingness to learn and explore. Children are the most honest and transparent people. From showing exactly how they feel no matter the time or place to an opinion so loud and courageous, children live a brave life of truth. In addition, children are professors of fun. The joy a child has with a book, a small toy and a big imagination is priceless.

The picture shows that the boy looks happy and enjoy his time by reading a book which is a very positive activity. We know that COVID-19 make people discomfort and stressful. However, through this picture the advertiser sent a hidden message that we have to learn from our children to be positive and enjoy every moment with grateful heart. We can spend time doing small but beneficial activities. One of activities that can be done during staying home is reading a book. Reading a book can entertain people and relives stress. Therefore, it can make people more relax during staying home.

The second non-verbal sign is the picture of a boy playing happily with his dog. The dog is the first domesticated animal, and is symbolically associated with loyalty and

vigilance, often acting as guardian and protector. Dogs are portrayed as guides and companions, hence the notion of "man's best friend." Often associated with art and cunning, as it can be trained to do the greatest variety of jobs. The picture above implicitly shows that even a dog can give you happiness as long as you always be positive and not see something only on its bad side. The picture gives a message that stay at home is not always bad. Just enjoy the moment and turn your negative energy into positive energy and create your own happiness in this difficult time.

The Analysis of Scene 3



Figure 3.3 Scene 3 in Stay Home Save Live Advertisement

The Analysis of Verbal Signs

The first verbal sign in this scene is "While these times may be uncertain." It implicitly reminds us that the pandemic has created uncertainty in nearly every aspect of daily life. This is not only down to worries over exposure to COVID-19 and access to medical care, but also concerns about the stability of the economy, job security, the availability of food and household supplies, and even when to book a holiday. We have needed to adjust and readjust our behavior continually in response to changing risks and government guidelines. Uncertainty makes it difficult for us to predict what decisions to make and how to act. For this reason, it is common to find uncertainty upsetting, confusing and frustrating. But some people tend to find uncertainty particularly distressing and challenging to cope with. The verbal signs implied that it's important to learn that uncertainty doesn't always mean that

something bad will happen. We have to be optimistic and fearless.

The second verbal sign in this scene is "Love is what will remain in each and every person". It implied that times of uncertainty are also times to consider how we might support and help others. Caring and sharing are ways to express love to others. There are some things you can do right now to help others during this crisis without leaving your home. And most of these won't even cost you any money. Stay home, staying home is the best thing you can do right now. Not only will it keep you safer, but it'll also protect those in your community (including healthcare workers). Call your friends and neighbors to check on them; spread good news and kindness; make some deliveries; make a donation, etc. In this season, intentionally seek out people who may need encouragement and emotional support.

The Analysis of Non-Verbal Signs

The non-verbal sign is the picture of three boys who pouring food for birds. They help each other to hang it on the tree branch. It implied two messages. First, it represents teamwork which is needed during the global pandemic of COVID-19. Second, it implicitly shows that although we just stay at home there are always ways to share with others. This signifier portrays hidden meaning since the advertiser provides a message which aims to convince people that teamwork is very important to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The prevention only can be done if all people are committed to work together on doing all the health protocol and remain stay at home. Teamwork and cooperation are the keys to stop this global pandemic. Through this illustration, the advertiser intended to inspire the public. It encourages the public's awareness and understanding of the importance of love and compassion in our life. It also reminds people to share, not only with other people but also with animals. No matter how small it is, it is very meaningful in this difficult time.

The Analysis of Scene 4





Figure 3.4 Scene 4 in Stay Home Save Live Advertisement

The analysis of Verbal Signs

The first verbal sign is "Although we may be eager to go back to our busy lives. Let's slow down." The signifier signifies that all people want to get back to normal life doing their routine as they used to. This statement has connotative meaning since the advertiser implicitly advised people to control themselves during the COVID-19 global pandemic, be patient and wise. It does not mean that we do nothing at all but just slow down. The advertiser wants to persuade people to decrease their daily routine, which also can reduce the growth of COVID-19 cases. People should decrease interaction with others by staying home. As a result, we can lower the risk and number of COVID-19 patients. In addition people can spend quality time with family which hard to do in normal busy days.

Many parents are taking advantage of this time to slow down and reconnect with their children. To slow down means to change. An area that may need change is the schedule. Often, adults missed important events because they were so busy attending to other details: tight schedules, adult-planned activities, and all the preparation and effort these require. Staying at home during this time has allowed many people to slow down. One good reason to slow down is to be able to spend more time building and nurturing relationships.

The next verbal sign is "Let's stop the spread. Let's stay home and let's save lives". It persuades the public to participate to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the whole world. All people have to do an action to stop the spread such as: follow local guidance/regulation, stay at least 1 metre away from others, wear a mask, frequently clean hands with soap and water and cover your coughs and sneezes. Stay home can save lives and everyone can do that. People have to have the awareness to obey the regulations to stay home, work from home, study from home,

worship from home, etc. Those verbal signs aim to encourage people to prevent and stop the spread of COVID-19 by doing their part as global citizen to save the world.

The analysis of Non-Verbal Signs

The non-verbal sign in this scene shows a boy laying on the grass, looking up to the sky and smiling. Lying on the grass related with the message of the verbal signs which is "slow down". The fact is the Covid-19 pandemic has certainly forced the world to slow down. It forces us to rest and sleep more. Do things simply for the joy of doing them. Or sometimes do nothing at all. The picture implicitly tells the viewers to slow down and take a rest.

So much of our lives, from food, to fashion, to travel, has been designed for us to go fast. No wonder it is so hard to slow down. People often undervalued the process of slow. On the other hand, slow allows us to think in unstructured, unconventional ways. Slow allows us to enjoy the steps in the process, not just the end goals. Slow allows us to be less reactive and more proactive. Slow allows us really be there for each other. Slow allows deep, trusting relationships to form.

The picture also shows the boy looks at the sky and smiles which represents optimism and hopes. Even in this bleak moment there can be a silver lining. If we learn the lessons of this pandemic, we can make the world a much better place for everyone. Let's not waste this moment of mandatory slowness. Let's use it to rethink and redesign our lives. Reflect on how to transform your life after the crisis. Find ways to help those less fortunate than you. If this pandemic proves anything, it's that the world is a better place when we slow down and help each other. The hidden message is the slowness forced upon us by the pandemic can be a great gift, if we embrace it.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above it can be conclude that COVID-19 advertisement "Stay Home Save Lives" generally deliver a message and give an understanding toward the public that stay home is very useful during COVID-19 global pandemic. During this difficult time, people can defeat COVID-19 by doing some efforts such as stay home, obey the health protocol, stay patient and always be positive. By observing and analyzing the verbal and non-verbal sign portrayed in every scene in COVID-

19 advertisement “Stay Home Save Lives”, it can be concluded that every scene has a hidden message. The hidden message of the first scene is staying at home is not inherently a bad thing, since we can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 as well as we can make the environment cleaner and fresher because we reduce outside activities. The hidden message of the second scene is there are some fun activities which people can do during staying at home to relieve their boredom and loneliness. The hidden message of the third scene is even though people just stay at home, we are still able to share with other and keeps reminding people to strengthen one another. The hidden message of the fourth scene is to slow down, rest and sleep more. Do things simply for the joy of doing them. All of them are the efforts we can do to save the world.

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