



Verbal and Non-verbal Signs of Starbucks Advertisements

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 15 May 2024	Advertisements are an effort of the company to attract the customer's attention by using attractive colours, words, pictures, and so on. Hopefully, the product that they sell will be better known by the people. This study presents the verbal and non-verbal signs contained in the Starbucks advertisement. Besides presenting verbal and non-verbal signs, this study also explains the meaning of the verbal and non-verbal signs. Two Starbucks advertisements were used as data sources. The data source has been taken from the internet. The theory used in this study is the theory of semiotics that was proposed by Saussure (1983) to describe verbal and non-verbal signs. The theory proposed by Barthes (1977) to analyse the meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs and the supporting theory of the meaning of colours was proposed by Wierzbicka (1996). As a result, the writer found six (6) verbal signs and six (6) non-verbal signs in this Starbucks advertisement.
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1. Introduction

Semiotics is a field of science dealing with the meaning of signs. It's the study of how people create and understand the meaning of signs because it can demonstrate how words and other symbols convey information (Chandler, 2017; Crow, 2010; Danesi, 2006; Withalm, 2006). People use signs to interpret what is going on around them.

A signified and a signifier are both needed components of a sign, according to Saussure (1983). Every sign will have a signifier or signified in the study of semiotics. Semiotics distinguishes between verbal and nonverbal signs. The usage of words or texts is referred to as verbal signs. Non-verbal signs are images that are used to convey information without the use of words. Non-verbal signs are commonly used to define a company's or business's logo or product (Ares et al., 2011; Gravells, 2017; Mikhaeil & Baskerville, 2019).

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Advertising is a method of promoting goods and services through the use of various media (Shariq, 2020). Media selection cannot be done at random; rather, it must be taken into account by the target audience and other factors. In advertising, semiotics is frequently utilized to express an advertiser's message with letters and symbols. In most advertising, there are two types of signs: the first is a verbal sign, such as language, which is conveyed by speech or writing—nonverbal signs present in advertising, such as graphics, colours, and gestures.

Based on the explanation above, in this study, the author will use Starbucks advertisements as data to examine both verbal and nonverbal signs and their meanings. In this study, two problems have been analyzed: the first problem is the verbal and non-verbal signs found in Starbucks advertisements, and the second problem is the meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs found in Starbucks advertisements. The researcher used various theories to solve this problem, including the semiotic theory proposed by Saussure (1983), which is used to describe verbal and non-verbal signs. To analyze the meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs, researchers used the theory of meaning proposed by Barthes (1977), along with the supporting theory of colour proposed by Wierzbicka (1996).

2. Literature Review

Human communication does not only rely on verbal language, but is also greatly influenced by non-verbal signs such as facial expressions, body movements, and voice intonation. Djalolovna (2025) emphasized that non-verbal communication plays an important role in spoken language, shaping how messages are delivered and interpreted. In the medical context, Prusti et al. (2022) found that non-verbal elements such as eye contact and tone of voice greatly influence patient satisfaction and the effectiveness of communication between doctors and patients.

In the field of advertising, Hostiani et al. (2022) analyzed global warming advertisements and found that a combination of verbal and non-verbal signs were used to convey environmental messages effectively. Similarly, Agastya and Suastini (2024) in their study of iPhone 14 advertisements showed how verbal and visual signs were used to construct deep denotative and connotative meanings.

Rivalina et al. (2024) in their semiotic analysis revealed that everyday signs, both verbal and non-verbal, have complex cultural meanings and can reflect social values. In the context of linguistics, Salim (2023) highlighted the importance of understanding verbal and non-verbal communication for a comprehensive linguistic analysis.

Numonjonovna (2021) added that non-verbal communication, including facial expressions and body movements, plays an important role in interpersonal interactions and can reinforce or even contradict verbal messages. In their study, Prusti et al. (2022) also emphasized the importance of awareness of non-verbal signals in professional communication, especially in the medical context.

To sum up, all studies above confirm that understanding verbal and non-verbal signs is essential in various communication contexts, from everyday interactions to professional communication and advertising. Integration between the two allows for more effective message delivery and a deeper understanding of the meaning conveyed

3. Method

The data source was taken from three Starbucks advertisements that Rosemary Wang uploaded on a Pinterest website entitled Gallery Starbucks—the data was collected by using the observation method through some steps. First, download the advertisements. The second choose three Starbucks beverage advertisements. Then, read and comprehend the advertisement. Last, the verbal and non-verbal content in the three advertisements must be taken into account. Then, the data was analyzed using the semiotic theory proposed by Saussure (1983, p. 65). Besides that, the meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs was analyzed using the theory proposed by Barthes (1977) and the last theory of color term purpose by Wierzbicka (1996). The data were presented using formal and informal methods.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Verbal and Non-Verbal Signs Contained in the Starbucks Advertisement

Researchers found that Starbucks advertisements consist of verbal and non-verbal signs. Verbal signs consist of words and sentences. Meanwhile, the non-verbal signs consist of figures that combine with the picture of the product and the background color. The analysis of verbal and nonverbal signs can be seen in the following section. The following section presents the findings of the research on the semiotic analysis of Starbucks advertisements using the description method. The advertisement data are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Verbal and Non-Verbal Signs in Starbucks Advertisements

Data	Verbal Signs	Non-verbal Signs
Data 1 Starbucks Christmas edition	- Let there be - Starbucks sparks your inner glow by celebrating a holiday tradition of coming together over coffee. - Unite in good cheer - Each purchase using a starbucks card receives one beverage star and planner sticker. In store by November 3.	- Christmas tree shadow - Red and white background color - The red cup with the starbucks logo. - The different toping between three products.
Data 2 Starbucks Halloween edition.	- Need to get my hand on you. - Franken green, midnight chocolate Available from 9 Oct for limited time only. -	- Black Color of background - Picture of bats, pumpkins and cats.
Total	6	6

Table 1 above shows the classification of verbal sign and nonverbal sign data found in Starbucks advertisements. Furthermore, each item in the advertisement is analyzed based on theories, including the sign theory proposed by Saussure (1983), the meanings analyzed based on the theory proposed by Barthes (1977), and the meanings of the colors proposed by Weirzbicka (1996).

Data 1



Figure 1. Starbucks Christmas Edition

Table 2. Signifier and Signified of Verbal Signs found in Starbucks advertisement Christmas Edition

No.	Signifier	Signified
1	Let there be bright	The advertisement's slogan
2	Starbucks sparks your inner glow by celebrating a holiday tradition of coming together over coffee.	To tell the customer that their product is suitable to consume when celebrating the holiday.
3	Unite in good cheer	To show the customer that their product can give happiness
4	Each purchase using a Starbucks card receives one beverage star and planner sticker. In store by November 3	To tell the customer that the customer who has and using card receiver will get gift, available in the time that already set.

There are four verbal signs found in the first advertisement. The first signifier is "Let there be bright." The statement above signifies that the product can inspire people and also give a bright think to the customer. It is because, as the name of the product, "latte," contains coffee and milk. Coffee that contains caffeine can cause anyone who drinks it to wake up and can inspire and think about something that inspires.

The second verbal sign in this advertisement is "Starbucks sparks your inner glow by celebrating a holiday tradition of coming together over coffee." The statement signified that the product can motivate some people to finish their work earlier. This statement is good to put in the advertisement because people would like to read the sentence like this. This sentence can remind us of the holiday atmosphere and gathering together. That is why a sentence like that needs to be used in the advertisement because a sentence like this can attract the customer's attention to see the advertisement, and some may interested

in buying the product. This verbal sign consists of a connotative meaning because there is a hidden meaning in the sentence that reminds the people who read the sentence to get the holiday and enjoy Starbucks.

The signifier in the next verbal sign is “unite in a good cheer.” The statement signifies that the product gives happiness to the customer who bought it. The product has a good taste, and good taste can make people happy. The statement has a connotative meaning because the sentence has a hidden meaning: to persuade the customer to buy the product by using this statement.

The last signifier in the verbal sign in this advertisement is “Each purchase using a Starbucks card receives one beverage star and planner sticker. In-store by November 3.” the statement was signified that to tell the customer about the difference for customers who use a Starbucks card will get one beverage star and planner sticker at a predetermined time. This sentence can also influence the customer to make a Starbucks card and become a regular customer.

Table 3. Signifier and Signified of Non-Verbal Signs found in Starbucks advertisement Christmas Edition

No	Signifier	Signified
1	Christmas tree shadow	Represent the Christmas atmosphere
2	Red and white background color	Represent the characteristic of the Christmas day
3	The red cup with the Starbucks logo.	To show the customer about the difference between Christmas edition and another product.
4	The different topping between three products	To show the differences between each product in the advertisement.

The signifier in the first non-verbal sign in the data above is “Christmas shadow tree”. The signified from the data above represents the Christmas atmosphere, which is the Christmas day, which is very related to the Christmas tree. This non-verbal sign is very related to the advertisement product edition, which is the Starbucks Christmas edition. From the explanation above, the researcher concludes that the non-verbal sign consists of denotative meaning. By looking at the Christmas tree shadow, the consumer directly knows the product is the Christmas edition.

The second non-verbal sign in this advertisement is the “red and white background colour” As known by the people, Christmas day is very identical to red and white colour, with white colour representing the colour of snow at the time celebration of Christmas is always celebrated during the winter. This sign contains a connotative meaning because, according to Wierzbicka (1996), red and white have a hidden meaning. Red colour means warm, and we hope that the product can provide warmth for customers who enjoy the product. Meanwhile, white colour means purity, kindness, innocence, humanity, safety, and cleanliness.

The signifier in the next non-verbal sign is “The red cup with the Starbucks logo.” The signified from the data above shows the customer the difference between the Christmas edition and another product. All of Starbucks’s products use their logo on the cup, but the Christmas edition has a different colour of the cup. There is a red colour, which represents the Christmas edition. The sign has a denotative meaning because by

looking at the different colours of the cup, the customer knows directly that the product is the Christmas edition.

The last non-verbal sign in this advertisement is “The difference between three products”. The signifier from this data describes the difference between each product in the advertisement. In the first picture, it can be seen that the topping used is peanut flakes. This sign indicates that this is a variant of the Toffee nut latte. Likewise, the second picture uses a topping in the form of mocha sauce, which shows the difference between the first and second products, namely the Peppermint Mocha variant. The last picture also uses flaky cookies, which shows that this product is a variant of the cookie latte.

Data 2



Figure 2. Starbucks Halloween Edition

Table 4. Signifier and Signified of Verbal Signs found in Starbucks advertisement Halloween Edition

No	Signifier	Signified
1	Need to get my hand on you.	The Halloween slogan Edition
2	Franken green, midnight chocolate Available from 9 Oct for limited time only	To tell the customer that the Halloween edition available for limited time.

The signifier in the first verbal sign is “Need to get my hand on you”. This sign consists of connotative meaning because this sign sentence contains a hidden meaning. From the sentence, it does not mean that they want to share their hands with the customers, but they want to say that they are offering service by using their hands. They darkly convey their meaning because the product is the Halloween edition, which is related to the darkness.

The next verbal sign found in this advertisement is “Franken green, midnight chocolate, Available from 9 Oct for a limited time only.” This sentence has a denotative

meaning because it clearly mentions the time when the product is available and also directly mentions the date.

Table 5. Signifier and Signified of Non-Verbal Signs found in Starbucks advertisement Halloween Edition

No	Signifier	Signified
1	Black Colour of background	Represent of dark and horror atmosphere.
2	Picture of bats, pumpkins and cats.	Represent of Halloween atmosphere.

The first non-verbal sign contained in the Starbucks advertisement Halloween edition is “Black colour background”. The black colour, based on the theory from Wierzbicka (1996), is defined as darkness and can also be interpreted as evil, strength, hidden, fear, death, elegance and mystery. This theory can be related to the theme of the advertisement in the Halloween edition, where people wear scary clothes during Halloween celebrations. This sign can attract people’s attention; this non-verbal sign consists of connotative meaning because not all people know the meaning of the black colour; therefore, it consists of a hidden meaning.

The next nonverbal sign in this advertisement is “Picture of bats, pumpkins and cats.” Those bats, pumpkins, and black cats were related to the Halloween celebration, so the advertisement was chosen to strengthen the Halloween atmosphere in accordance with the theme of the edition they raised. It has a denotative meaning because one clearly knows the meaning by seeing the pictures.

5. Conclusion

An advertisement is a text or picture that is used to persuade people to be interested (see Adam, 2019; Simon & Dejica-Cartis, 2015; Wahyuni et al., 2022). The advertisement was conducted using verbal and nonverbal signs. In this research, there were two data advertisements for Starbucks in different editions. The researcher found 6verbal signs and six non-verbal signs using the theory of semiotics by Saussure (1983). These advertisements are dominant with declarative sentences to make a statement in the form of facts or opinions. Besides declarative sentences, these advertisements also used imperative sentences such as: Let there be bright. Furthermore, these advertisements also used interrogative sentences such as: Need to get my hand on you?

This study also addresses the meaning that develops in two representations through verbal and non-verbal signs, according to Barthes (1977) about connotative and denotative meaning. In this study, the researchers discovered that implicit and explicit meanings have the same number. Besides employing hidden meanings to deliver messages, they also employed literal meanings to deliver their messages to customers. In this advertisement, verbal and nonverbal signs are related or supported because they have the same goal: to attract the attention of buyers.

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