

A SEMIOTIC STUDY OF ICON AND SYMBOL OF *SUBARU* CAR IN AUTOMOTIVE ADVERTISEMENT

Syamsuri Ariwibowo

English Literature Program
Faculty of Letters
Dr. Soetomo University
Syamsuri.ari@unitomo.ac.id

Deka N. P. Priaditya

English Literature Program
Faculty of Letters
Dr. Soetomo University
dekapriaditya@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Priaditya, Deka N. P. 2018. A Semiotic Study of Icon and Symbol of Subaru Car in Automotive Advertisement. Thesis. English Program, Faculty of Letters, Dr. Soetomo University. Advisor: Drs. H. Syamsuri Ariwibowo, M.Pd

Advertisement is a media communication which mostly contains sign. In order to achieve the selling goals, companies will provide advertisement to introduce their product. In this matter, the thesis writer will be focused on analyzing sign in advertisement. One of the companies that is known world-wide for its car products and campaigns is Subaru, a Japanese brand of multifaceted transport equipment. There are two objectives intended to be solved in this thesis, they are to find the meaning and to find the role of icon and symbol in the ads picture of Subaru car in automotive magazine. The thesis writer applies qualitative research as her research design to analyze the sign in the ads. It is intended to the thesis writer to be able to gather information about meaning from social perspective. The study of this thesis will started by finding the meaning of icon and symbol by using triadic process, which is a semiosis theory by Charles Sanders Peirce. Finding out the symbol and icon meaning through representamen and interpretant in triangle figure. After finding out the meaning behind the icon and symbol, the thesis writer will be able to describe the role of icon and symbol in Subaru car ads pictures. It is concluded that even from one company, the icon and symbol used somehow serves different vibes to each product. But characteristics of the company brand are not left behind. The meaning behind icon and symbol mostly shows that the Subaru car is suitable for every weather, tracks, well-known for its safety and has sustainable machinery. The role of icon and symbol in the ads itself combined to support the quality of the product.

Key Words: Icon, Symbol, Representamen.

A. INTRODUCTION

One of the characteristics of language is conventional meaning that there is an agreement among speech community of language to name a certain symbol with something. Language is used by speech communities in society as media communication in order to deliver a message or meaning of things. Sign and symbol as part of language tend to help human being in comprehending and knowing its meaning intentions without any meaningful difficulties. The existence of sign and symbol is studied in semiology or semiotics as a part of Linguistics. Symbol, sign, and meaning can be examined in any substances such as; art, mass media, gestures, rituals, and many others. (2011:16)

In the globalization era, sign and symbol are not only used as media communication but also in technology communication. Those aspects have shown as media to deliver message or purpose such as news, invitation, warning, advertisement, and many others. Advertisement itself is a media communication to persuade or motivate social communities for using provider goods or services offered. Whether electronic or printed advertisement must be made as attractive and effective as possible to greatly persuade the viewers. Usually it consists of simple text, picture of the product, and supporting elements of the settings such as the surrounding of the product. The image causes the consumers-to-be see the good or service offered is a need even though it is not. (2013: 11)

In order to grasp consumers' attention and to gain selling goals, consumable and service companies advertise their products through brand-naming, designated logo, catchy slogan,

and visual ad campaign. One of those companies who has their own certain logo and worldwide-known brand is Subaru. Subaru is a Japanese brand runs as multifaceted transport equipment manufacturer. Its logo has blue-based colour and six stars embroidered inside an oval. Subaru name itself comes from a star cluster in Taurus constellation. Six of its stars are visible to the naked eye, but 250 bluish stars can be seen if one uses a telescope. The meaning in Japanese is to govern, to gather together, or to unite.

Applying semiotics to identify the sign or symbol meaning in order to find out the message of an advertisement is the solution. There are a lot of linguists who suggest semiotics theory. Ferdinand De Saussure as the first to distinguish the signified and signifier in semiotic then Roland Barthes follows the rules. While both experts serve sign theory in linguistic way, Charles Peirce from United States suggests semiology in philosophical way. Through the concept of representamen and interpretant using triadic process, Peirce finds different concept to analyze sign. This study will use Peirce's triadic process to analyze the meaning and the role of icon and symbol of Subaru car advertisement pictures.

B. PREVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. Previous studies

There are two previous studies related to Semiotic in advertisement as the variable used in this study. The first study is Peirce's Semiotic Analysis of Icon and Symbol on Perfume Advertisements conducted by Eriana (2015) and A Semiotic Analysis on The A-Mild Advertisements using Roland Barthes' Theory by A'la (2011). These studies both used visual advertisement but different object and theory. Eriana analyzes icon and symbol, meanwhile A'la discusses connotation meaning of the advertisement.

This study is different from both previous studies since this study uses Subaru car advertisement instead of perfume. Eriana only analyzes the meaning of icon and symbol, meanwhile this study discusses the role of the icon and symbol as well. It is also different from the later study which discusses connotation meaning and uses Barthes' semiotic theory.

2. Theoretical Background

In the semiosis process, there is a part of Peirce's philosophy aspect to be described, interpreted and applied.

a. Sign or Representamen

Sign is something that stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. Sign is not class or object, they only exist in the mind of interpreter. Representamen is a perceived object functioning as a sign.

b. Object

Object is the second to correlate of the sign, corresponding to the referent models of the sign. The object is that which the sign represent. There are two kinds of object, which is immediate and mediate object. Immediate object considered as the hint indicates sign. Mediate object is object outside the sign, which from nature things and can indicate by collateral experience only.

c. Interpretant

It has relation to its object in which it stands itself to the same object. Peirce distinguishes three interpretants; immediate, dynamic, and final. Immediate implies the fact that each sign must have its distinct interpretability before it gets any interpreter. Dynamic is perceivable effect of the sign upon the person. Then, final has general character and guarantee of any future interpretative development.

The sign is classified in several aspects according to Peirce. The first is the mode of sign apprehension (qualisign, legisign, and sinsign), the second is the relation between the sign and its dynamical object (icon, index, and symbol), and the last is the relation of and the sign to the immediate interpretant (rheme, dicisign, and argument). (1985:30)

This study is focusing on the second aspect, which is the relation between the sign and its dynamical object. The aspect is chosen because it is in the three grounds a sign can be connected with its object. The triadic process will be applied to find out the meaning of the sign.

- a. Icon
This type represents its object in several ways, either it looks or sounds like it. Good example of icon is visual, such as photograph, map, and diagram.
- b. Index
This directly connected to its object in terms causation. For example, a smoke signifies fire, or a sneeze and cough signifies medical symptom like cold. (1999:33)
- c. Symbol
The sign relates to its object by means of convention and agreement between the users only. There is no resemblance between it and the object. For example, a word sign 'STOP' has meaning society associates with. (1999:33)

Table B. 2. 1.
Peirce's Sign Classification.

	Quality <i>Firstness</i>	Brute Facts <i>Secondness</i>	Law <i>Thirdness</i>
Representamen <i>Firstness</i>	Qualisign	Sinsign	Legisign

Object <i>Secondness</i>	Icon	Index	Symbol
Interpretant <i>Thirdness</i>	Rheme	Dicent	Argument

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

According to Crotty in Creswell (2003), there are several points to establish the ground work in designing a research proposal. Besides the theoretical perspective and the methodology, knowledge claims that are made by researcher is also important. In this study, Socially Constructed knowledge claims will be used since it is most suitable for qualitative research. This knowledge claims is the based on the social basic generation of meaning which is arising among human society, therefore, the thesis writer be able to gather information about meaning better from social perspective.

2. Source of Data

This study will use advertisement pictures of Subaru car which published in online automotive magazine. The main source of this research is fifteen pictures of Subaru car advertisement which is downloaded from www.pinterest.com.

3. Technique of Data Collecting

The steps of data collecting are conducted as follow:

- a. Searching through online automotive magazines and selecting Subaru ads pictures in English.
- b. From Subaru ads pictures, they are sorted from 52 best pictures to 15 pictures.
- c. The 15 pictures are chosen randomly and downloaded from pinterest.com.

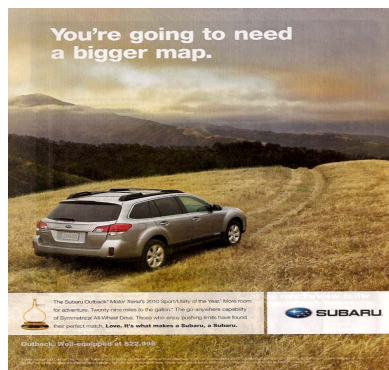
4. Technique of Data Analysis

The data has been downloaded and printed after being sorted into 15 samples. Non statistical data will take part in this study since it applies qualitative method. Peirce's triadic process and socially constructive knowledge claims will be used to identify the icon and symbol meaning in advertisements' signs. The results of discussion will be explained through description.

D. ANALYSIS

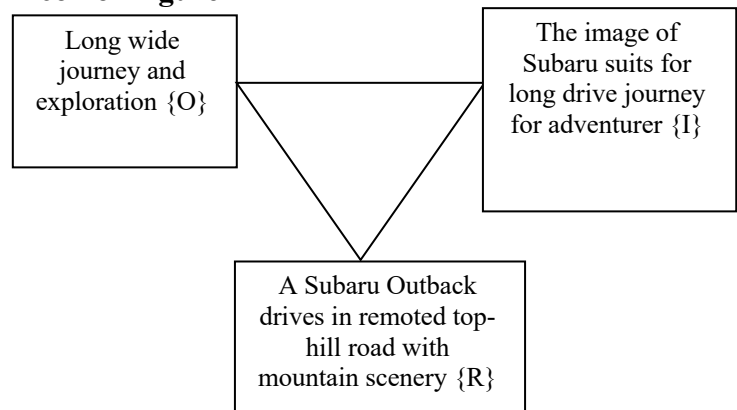
1. The Meaning of Icon and Symbol

Figure C. 1
Subaru Outback: Need a bigger map



This picture contains SUV's type Subaru Outback which has roomy interior and spacious cargo capacity. Those specifications brings Subaru Outback suitable for traveling by car. The picture shows Subaru Outback rides on a remoted top-hill road. In the background can be seen a scenery of wide-spread mountain, which is the representamen {R}. The top-hill road with mountain scenery in the background represents a long wide journey and exploration {O}. The next semiosis process for icon, the relation between represantemen and object in this picture produces interpretant {I}:

Diagram C. 1. 1.
Icon of Figure 1



For the symbol of Figure 1, written sentences *You're going to need a bigger map* comes in the process. The symbol written is the representamen {R}. The word 'map' represents guidance, destination, and representative world in a smaller scale. Then, the symbol written itself represents the necessity of the unlimited destinations even a small map cannot contain {O}. The semiosis process of the

representamen and the object produces the interpretant {I} of the symbol:

Diagram C. 1. 2
Symbol of Figure 1

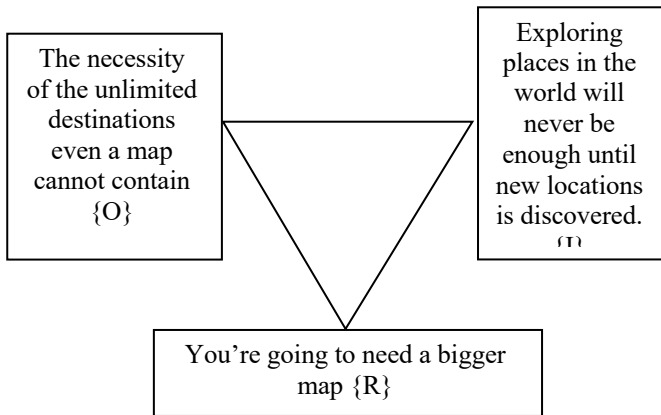


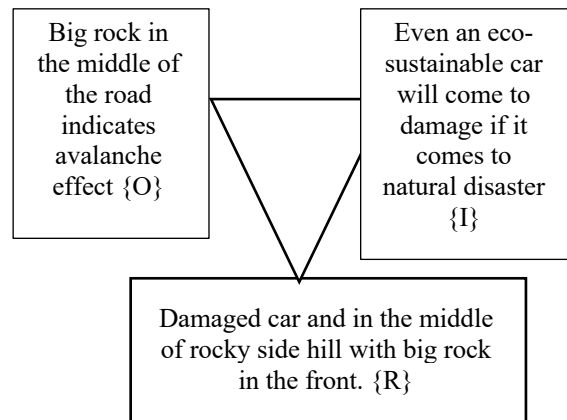
Figure C. 2
Subaru I-80: Dear Subaru



In this picture, Subaru car got into a collision which makes the hood and front part of the car damaged and there is a big rock sit right in front of the car in a rocky side hill road is the representamen {R}. The big rock in the middle of the road represents object {O}. The relation between representamen and

object produces interpretant {I} to figure out the meaning of icon in semiosis process:

Diagram C. 2. 1
Icon of Figure 2



Next, semiosis process to figure out the symbol in Figure 2. There is a phrase '*Dear Subaru,*' usually found in a letter as addressee to the recipient. There is white box beside the Subaru logo containing a short story by a Subaru car user as seems as continuity of the phrase in the upper part. That is the representamen {R}. The content inside the white box is a letter from Subaru driver in Nevada, United States who experienced a collision but he feels lucky because he is safe and only his car damaged, this is the object {O}. The interpretant is:

Diagram C. 2. 2
Symbol of Figure 2

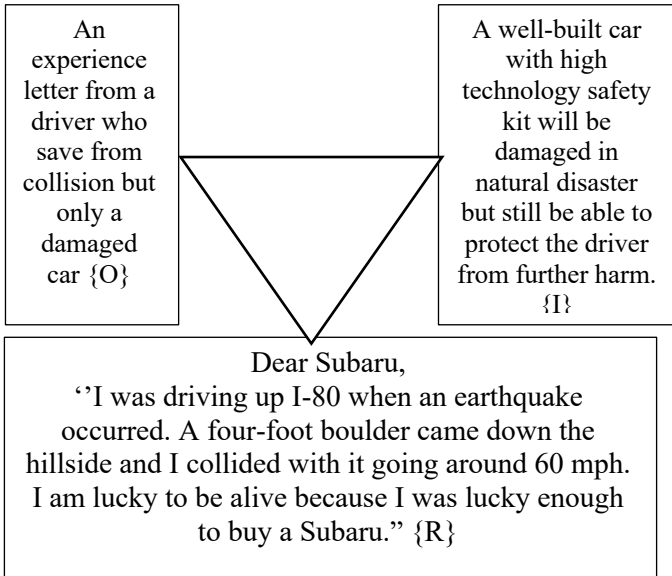
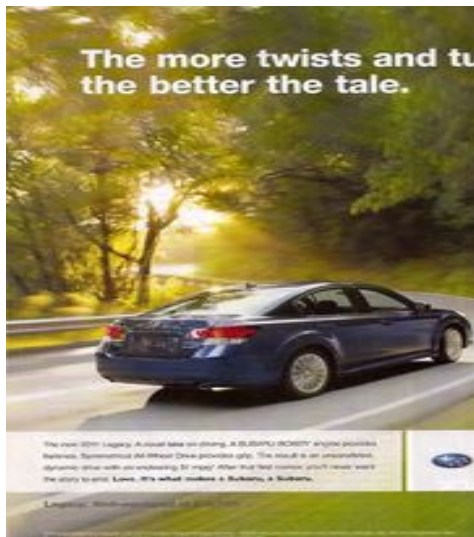


Figure C. 3.
Subaru Legacy: The more twists and turns, the better the tale



In figure 3, the car is driving in the middle of a narrow turn and several similar twists can be seen is the representamen {R}. Narrow turns and twists in the hill usually marked

as dangerous area and considered as difficult track by most of drivers {O}. The interpretant {I} of the symbol is:

The text *“The more twists and turns, the better the tale”* is the representamen {R} of the icon in figure 3. The ‘tale’ word refers to story to be shared to people, meanwhile twist and turn in story refers to plot {O}. The interpretant {I} of the icon is:

Figure C. 4.
Subaru Tribeca: While you stare at the landscape, the landscape admire you



The landscape in this figure is impersonating human faces. Both trees beside Subaru car each has two eyes, nose and lips, that stare at the car {R}. Something that worth staring is mostly fascinating view {O}. The icon’s interpretant of this figure is:

bigger map' indicates that even a map as world representation in smaller scale is not big enough to Subaru Outback's driver to explore.

1.1. Figure 2

Figure 2 may not as attractive as any other advertisement because it shows a damaged car in middle of rocky side hill road. The icon of Figure 2 has role to exhibit that a well-built transportation mobile will be damaged when natural disaster takes over. It is also important to take a look at the symbol which started by '*Dear Subaru*' then continued as letter in small font inside the white box. It is a short experience written by a driver who collided with a big rock after earthquake and save. This experience letter as review of Subaru car product is the role of the symbol in Figure 2.

1.2. Figure 3

The sentence of the figure 3 is mostly used for a story or prose. It is applied when the told story has a lot of plot twists, therefore the story becomes more interesting. Meanwhile the icon conveys different meaning from the symbol. The symbol does not present a book or story but a car in the middle of twisted road. It means that the more Subaru car passes twisted road, the story about the journey will be more interesting.

1.3. Figure 4

The icon and symbol meaning in data 4 refers to the beauty of the product. Both interpretants behind trees staring at the car and '*... the landscape admires you*' have the role to beautify the object in the advertisement picture, which is a

Subaru car. The icon and symbol explain that a vehicle is not about speed, sustainable, and safe, but also fascinating to be driven.

E. CONCLUSION

Sign has been a part of speech communities as media communication. It is applied in most of mass media communication such as advertisement, news, invitation, and even traffic sign. Semiotics as the part of Linguistics which studies sign and symbol deciphers the meaning of it. As the data source, the writer choose Subaru among other advertised product because of their reputation in producing advertisement for their transport equipment. In this thesis, the analysis is divided into two problems which are to find out the meaning and the role of icon and symbol in Subaru advertising picture.

The thesis writer uses the semiosis theory provided by Charles Peirce to answer the problems. She applies triadic process method to identify the meaning of icon and symbol in the sign of each advertisement, and the Socially Constructed Knowledge Claims to elaborate the qualitative research in this study. Then she uses descriptive method to explain the finding of problems in the data.

The thesis writer found each 4 icon and symbol meanings based on the questions and analysis which refer to Charles Peirce's semiotic theory from 4 advertisement pictures of one brand. She also found out that the icon and symbol in each picture has worked in synchronization to produces sign. It means that the advertisement will not

much working without both the icon and symbol. After describing steps of finding the interpretant of icon and symbol through triadic process, the thesis writer combine them to describe the role of icon and symbol in each of the advertisement. The thesis writer concludes that role of icon and symbol in each sign nearly occurs the same task. Their roles are supporting object in the advertisement and emphasizing the classification the object occur. Even though it occurs the same role, but the icon and symbol used serves different vibes to each product. But characteristics of the company brand are not left behind.

Suggestion for readers is to look at the sign better from difference perspectives. It will be an advantage for those who understand the sign better because the real meaning or intention will be known. Meanwhile, for future researchers who are interested in analyzing advertisement or symbol is to synchronize the theory that are going to be used with the symbol that are going to be analyzed. It is sufficient for the study because each Linguists has different vision of Semiotics.

F. BIBLIOGRAPHY

A'la, T. F. 2011. A Semiotic Analysis on The A-Mild Advertisement Using Roland Barthes' Theory. *Thesis*. Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah.

Baskin, F. d. 2011. *Course in General Linguistics*. New York City: Columbia University Press.

Creswell, J. W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and*

Mixes Methods Approaches. Nebraska: SEGA Publications.

Danesi, M. 2013. *Encyclopedia of Media and Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Eriana, A. 2015. Peirce's Semiotic Analysis of Icon and Symbol on Perfume Advertisements. *Thesis*. Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah.

Jansz, P. C. 1999. *Introducing Semiotics*. Cambridge: Icon Books UK.

Pharies, D. A. 1985. *Charles S. Peirce and the Linguistic Sign*. Philadelphia/Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.