

MEANING OF SIGN IN IPHONE 15 PRO (ON WITH THE SHOW) ADVERTISEMENT: ROLAND BARTHES APPROACH

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Abstract: This study investigates the meaning of the symbols displayed in the iPhone 15 Pro "On with the Show" advertisement on YouTube released by electronics company Apple Inc. in 2023. Apple's iPhone is considered a highly anticipated flagship product and has a strong appeal among global consumers. The focus of this research is to analyze the ad using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which includes the concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory as the analytical framework. Data was collected through direct observation of the iPhone 15 Pro "On with the Show" advertising video as well as document analysis related to Apple Inc's marketing strategy. This method allowed the researcher to explore the symbols used in the ad and analyze the implied meaning from the perspective of semiotic theory. The analysis in this study identified several symbols that appear in the commercial, such as an angry white director with an ethnically diverse film crew, a car that explodes in a remote location, a woman driving with an alien creature, and the statement "There's no camera like Pro" with the Apple logo. Each symbol is analyzed to understand how they represent power, the challenges of action filmmaking, advanced technology, gender representation, and the image of quality associated with the iPhone 15 Pro. The findings from this study provide insights into how Apple constructs meaning and identity through its advertising, as well as how these symbols influence our perception and understanding of the product and popular culture more broadly.

Keywords: Apple, iPhone 15 Pro, sign, semiotics

INTRODUCTION

This research is based on the public's view that the iPhone from Apple Inc. is a superior product that is highly anticipated. As reported in iniliah.com that every time Apple announces a new product such as the iPhone 15, there is a significant surge in public enthusiasm. This phenomenon shows that the iPhone is not just an ordinary technological device, but has become a symbol of the status, desires and expectations of global consumers. This enthusiasm reflects Apple's success in building a strong brand image and great trust in the market, which is important to understand in the context of this research on the semiotic analysis of the iPhone 15 Pro "On with the Show" advertisement.

This research investigates the significance of symbols displayed in the iPhone 15 Pro “On with The Show” advertisement on YouTube, which was released in 2023 by electronics company Apple Inc. Apple Inc. is a technology company that creates and sells iPhone, a smartphone. iPhone is the company's flagship model among its various products. Apple's main products—such as MacBook laptops, iPad tablets, iWatch smartwatches, AirPods wireless earbuds, and iPhone smartphones—have elevated its brand and made it the world's leading technology company until January 17, 2023.

iPhone 15, Apple Inc.'s sixteenth-generation smartphone, was announced on October 20, 2023, in an event held at Apple Park, Cupertino, California. iPhone 15 and iPhone 15 Plus were released simultaneously and share many of the same features. As usual, public enthusiasm rose at the announcement of the iPhone 15, indicating that many people have been looking forward to the release of the iPhone series from Apple Inc.

Previous research discussing signs in iPhone 13 advertisements found that there were ten verbal signs and five visual signs. This study uses the documentation method to collect data, with theories from Dyer (1982), Barthes (1964), and Chapman (2010). Although the theories and methods used are the same as previous studies, the data used is the iPhone 15 Pro “On with The Show” advertising video, making it different from previous studies that used the iPhone 13 advertising video.

Apple Inc. uploaded a 1-minute 9-second promotional video for the iPhone 15 Pro “On with The Show” on November 11, 2023, via YouTube, which showcases the functionality of the device. The features of the iPhone 15 Pro are not explicitly mentioned in this promo, but the video may illustrate how the quality of the iPhone is known by many. The promotional video for the iPhone 15 Pro is silent, showing only the action of someone shooting a video while running. From here, questions arise that become the basis of research, such as “What are the signs used in the iPhone 15 Pro (On with The Show) advertisement?” and “What is the meaning of these signs based on the Roland Barthes approach?”

This research aims to relate the meaning of the advertising video to Barthes' semiotic theory. Barthes' semiotic theory which includes denotation, connotation, and myth that exist in the object of research can be interpreted in the context of meaning, which is why this theory is applied in this study.

In this study, the author used the Roland Barthes approach for their semiotic analysis. Semiotics is the study of the sign process. The central concept in semiotics is the sign, which is the basic unit of analysis. A sign consists of two components: the signifier and the concept signified. It can be a written or spoken word, an image, or even a behavior that has a certain meaning within a system. According to Jakobson in Chandler (2007:8), semiotics is “the general science of signs, focusing primarily on the science of verbal signs.” Semiotics is not only

limited to linguistics, but also extended to various fields including the study of body language, visual arts, media, myth, narrative, and more. The goal is to understand how signs are created, used, and received to produce meaning in various cultural and social contexts (Danesi, 2004).

Roland Barthes is known for his theory in criticizing Saussure's theory. Barthes' semiotic theory develops the idea of signification from Saussure's theory into its connotation meaning. In the book "Popular Culture" by Strinati (2010), he says that semiology is the definition of the science of signs in order to maintain Saussure's proposal. There are two levels of sign interpretation. At the first level, there is denotation, and the intermediate level is developed into metaphor and connotation. Barthes gives an example to give a stronger understanding. In his mind comes the rose and his desire. This time the signifier is the rose while the sign is desire, something signified by the rose given to a loved one. Thus, the bond of roses if explained analytically, becomes a signifier, desire as a signifier, then the two components are put together into a sign, namely roses as a sign of desire.

According to Barthes (in Strinati, 2010), the second order in the semiological system is a myth. This shows that myths rely on signs in the first-order system. A sign in the first-order system such as a rose, a photograph, or a word is a signifier in the second-order mythical system. Signification is the myth itself (Barthes in Strinati, 2010).

There are several key figures in the history of semiotics, such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Roland Barthes, who each have their unique contributions to the development of the discipline. Ferdinand de Saussure, for example, was a Swiss linguist who is recognized as one of the founders of modern studies in linguistics and semiotics. His most influential contribution was in dissecting the sign structure of language. Tarigan (2022) stated that according to Chandler (2007), Saussure divided signs into two interrelated aspects: the signifier and the signified concept.

1. Signifier: The signifier is the physical form of the sign, such as the written word or spoken voice. It is the concrete part of the sign that we recognize and use in everyday communication. A simple example is the word "apple" in English. The word "apple" is a signifier that refers to the apple fruit itself.
2. Signified: The concept signified is the meaning or concept associated with the signifier. In the previous example, the signified concept is the apple itself, both in its physical form and in any other flavors or associations that the speaker or listener may have.

It is important to note that Saussure insists that the relationship between the signifier and the signified concept is arbitrary. This means that there is no natural relationship between the physical form of the signifier and the meaning it gives. For example, the word "apple" (signifier) in English does not naturally describe the apple itself; this meaning is determined by the language conventions that apply within a community. Saussure's contribution to semiotics was not only limited to language, but also applied to systems of signs in broader contexts, such as in visual arts, advertising, and even in social behavior.

His approach paved the way for the development of more complex semiotic theories, which allow us to understand how signs work in creating meaning and influencing human communication.

In a broader context, semiotics helps us understand how meanings are formed, exchanged, and understood in everyday life as well as in larger cultural contexts. It recognizes that signs are not only innate in language, but also appear in all aspects of human life as meaning-makers and communication. So, semiotics is an essential tool for understanding how signs operate in creating understanding and the culture around us, as well as how they influence the way we interact with the world.

METHOD

Using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory with the descriptive qualitative approach as the design, this study seeks to explain the significance of each symbol discovered in the iPhone 15 Pro (On with The Show) advertisement. Barthes developed his approach in denotation and connotation in relation to photographic images as a sign system, claiming that semiological analysis can be applied to modes other than language. The data source in this study includes an iPhone 15 Pro (On with The Show) commercial issued by Apple Inc. in the form of a 1-minute 9-second video uploaded to the YouTube video streaming application. The iPhone 15 Pro (On with The Show) adverts were chosen because it was considered to be relevant and significant in the context of this small study. Moreover, the researchers chose iPhone 15 Pro (On with The Show) advertising to use symbols in their virtual narrative messaging.

The data was collected using two methods: observation and document analysis. The iPhone 15 Pro (On with The Show) advertising video was observed, and then the visual and narrative aspects to be used, including the symbols that emerged, were written and analysed. Meanwhile, document analysis is carried out by collecting advertising-related documents such as previous studies reports, visual communication theories, and documentation about Apple Inc.'s marketing strategy.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This study will appear at the significance of the iPhone 15 Pro (On with The Show) advertisement that Apple Inc. posted on the company's YouTube channel. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and Roland Barthes' Semiotics theory, this article will examine the various meanings conveyed by this advertisement. Apple Inc., as we all know, has done an excellent job of establishing the iPhone's reputation. As a result, when it comes to marketing the iPhone, Apple Inc. frequently creates straightforward advertisements that appear more formal. Discussion as follows:

SCENE 1

Sign: White Male Directors and Ethnically Diverse Film Crews



Pict 1. The director throwing away the script paper scene

Signifier:

In the 20th second of the commercial, an angry white director is seen throwing a movie script. He is on set with a diverse film crew, including an Asian woman and a black man.

Denotation:

In the context of the iPhone 15 Pro "On with the show" ad, the first decipherable denotative meaning is that at the 20th second of the ad, an angry white director is seen on a movie set. This image directly shows the figure of a director, focusing on his physical attributes (white skin) and the emotion shown (anger). The director throws the script paper hard on the ground, showing frustration or intensity in the creative process. This physical action concretely shows the expression of emotion (frustration or anger) in the context of the director's work. Furthermore, there is an ethnically diverse film crew around the director, including black and Asian individuals, who are involved in the production process of the action film. This directly demonstrates the ethnic diversity of the working group in the film industry. Their physical appearance and presence show the variety of ethnic backgrounds without interpreting any deeper meaning.

Connotation:

An angry white director can be connoted as a symbol of power and authority in the film industry. The director's angry expression can signify the

pressure and high expectations of achieving high production standards. This can also be linked to the stereotype that in the creative industries, figures in positions of authority are often understood as being in control and demanding perfection. The scene of the script throwing can be connoted as an expression of the high dedication to work and the demand to achieve high standards in the industry. This can mean that in the quest to create high-quality work, emotions and pressure are often involved. The act of throwing the script paper can also be understood as a symbol of an intense and serious creative process. The presence of a multi-ethnic crew can be connoted as a representation of inclusion and equality in the film industry. Ethnic diversity in the crew shows an attempt to reflect the wider society and value the contribution of different cultural backgrounds in the creative process. It can send a message that the industry is open and welcomes contributions from anyone regardless of their origins.

Mythology:

The director featured in this ad is a white man who expresses emotion and leadership power on set. In the United States, there is a long history of white superiority ideology influencing various aspects of life, including the film industry. In this context, the presence of a white director as the main figure in the ad can be interpreted as a reflection of the historical dominance in the creative industry, where most of the leaders and decision makers are still dominated by white men. The director depicted as the main figure in the ad also represents the concept of strong and dominant masculinity. His intense and expressive actions in organizing the filming of the movie, including the scene of him throwing the script paper, illustrate the traditional stereotypes of power and authority that are often associated with masculinity in popular culture. In the context of the ad, the director's presence can be understood as a representation of the still dominant perceptions of how a man should behave and lead in the workplace, particularly in creative industries such as film. The myth constructed by the ad then links the ideology of white superiority and the concept of masculinity with the professional achievement and prestige associated with using an iPhone 15 Pro. By placing the white director at the center of the story, the ad not only observes professional aspirations and advanced technology, but also indirectly maintains narratives of power and dominance associated with mainstream US culture. This reflects how mythology, in Barthes' context, not only shapes narratives but also creates and reinforces social constructions of identity, power, and values in society.

The film industry has long been dominated by men, and stereotypes that place men at the center of the creative process remain strong. Narrative decisions in advertising often reflect a specific target market, with the choice of a male director partly aimed at capturing the attention of a more traditional audience.

Given the perception that women are more often involved in the use of consumer technology, such as smartphones, than in the professional technical roles represented by directors or directors of photography. The white director as the main character in the ad is understandable as a strategy to communicate the technological superiority of the iPhone 15 Pro in terms of professionalism and technical expertise, although it also reinforces stereotypes of masculinity in the film industry.

SCENE 2

Sign: An Exploding Car and Barren Area



Pict 2. Exploding car scene

Signifier:

At the 47th second of the commercial, we see an action movie set in a barren area in America. This scene features a dramatic event where a car explodes behind two other moving cars.

Denotation:

This scene directly shows the filming location in a barren area in America. The landscape is vast and arid, which is typical of barren areas such as deserts or rocky mountains. This is a physical description that can be seen directly without the need for additional interpretation. The chosen filming location reflects the harsh and dramatic setting, suitable for the movie's demanding action. In the scene, you can see the car that exploded explode behind 2 other cars that were driving. This is a physical depiction of what is happening on screen. This denotation shows a concrete event in the action of the movie that was shot using an iPhone 15 Pro. This exploding car is part of the dramatic action created to capture the audience's attention.

Connotation:

The barren location and the exploding car can be connoted as the challenges and dangers faced in action filmmaking. This connotation leads to the interpretation that the process of action filmmaking often involves setting up and executing scenes that are dangerous and require specialized skills from the production team, including skills in the use of devices such as the iPhone 15 Pro.

Mythology:

The use of iPhone 15 Pro in action filming creates a myth that this device is the top choice for professionals in the film industry, including in Hollywood. The ad builds an image that the iPhone 15 Pro is not only capable, but also desired by filmmakers for its ability to capture high quality action. Action movies often require the use of advanced technology to capture dynamic scenes, including exploding cars like the one featured in the ad. The use of the iPhone 15 Pro here confirms that the device is not only capable of taking on the technical challenges of complex action shots, but is also recognized in a competitive film industry environment such as Hollywood. It is common knowledge that Hollywood is known as the center of the film industry that sets high visual and technical standards. The choice of the action genre in the commercial shows that the iPhone 15 Pro is not only capable of capturing action-packed scenes well, but is also suitable for professional use in the movie industry where high quality is a priority. Action movies are often associated with commercial success and awards in the movie industry. The use of the iPhone 15 Pro in this context creates a myth that the owner or user of this device can achieve high standards equivalent to Hollywood movie productions. Shooting in barren filming locations such as wilderness areas or rocky mountains can be associated with the myth that the iPhone 15 Pro can deal with harsh and challenging environmental conditions. By choosing locations such as these, the ad creates the image that the iPhone 15 Pro is not just an ordinary technological tool, but can also be relied upon in situations that test the technical and creative limits of filmmaking.

SCENE 3

Sign: An Alien and A Woman



Pict 3. An alien and a woman scene

Signifier:

In the 52nd second of the commercial, a woman is seen driving a moving car. Right next to the woman is an alien sitting in the front passenger seat. This scene was shot using an iPhone 15 Pro.

Denotation:

In the context of the iPhone 15 Pro "On with the Show" ad, the denotative meaning that can be deciphered is that at the 52nd second of the ad, a gray-haired white woman is seen brutally driving an old car. She is dressed like she is fighting with a tense facial expression. Next to her is an alien or creature not from Earth who has unusually shaped pointed ears and black eyes. They say "On with the show" in turn. The background is in a barren and hot area during the day.

Connotation:

Aliens are extraterrestrial beings that are not of earthly origin. These beings are connoted as technological advancements that are more advanced than human technology. The unusual advertisement could suggest that the iPhone 15 Pro is an advanced, futuristic, and innovative technological product that goes beyond what is available today. This suggests that the iPhone 15 Pro has features that are cutting-edge and revolutionary. Alien has also portrayed creativity and mystery. These components work together to portray the iPhone 15 Pro as a product that is not only innovative and advanced but also unique and inspiring. The ad inspires us to see the phone as something more than just a tech device but also as a tool to explore and create new worlds. Meanwhile, a woman driving a car is connoted as independence and strength. The brutal driving scene performed by the woman

shows that the iPhone 15 Pro is capable of recording stable videos even under dynamic and moving conditions. It demonstrates the advanced image stabilization feature and produces clear and smooth videos without shaking.

Mythology:

America's view of aliens is influenced by popular culture. Especially the UFO phenomenon since the Roswell incident in 1947 has sparked many conspiracy theories with Area 51 being the center of speculation regarding alien research. Research by NASA and programs such as SETI seeks to find signs of intelligent extraterrestrial life. In surveys, many Americans believe in the existence of aliens. With its sophistication and belief in aliens, it symbolizes the iPhone 15 Pro's futuristic technology and impressive cinematic and visual quality with limitless innovation. Through this alien symbolism, the iPhone 15 Pro has given the audience the view that this cutting-edge quality phone can provide an extraordinary experience. A woman in the ad symbolizes that modern women are not only brave, but also ready to face extraordinary challenges. Femininity is not just about softness, but also about toughness and strength. This shows the iPhone 15 Pro ad supports and upholds femininity.

SCENE 4

Sign: "There's no camera like pro" statement and Apple Logo



Pict 4. "There's no camera like pro" scene

Signifier:

The full screen shows the iPhone 15 Pro with the bitten Apple logo. It is silver in color with three advanced cameras consisting of a main camera (wide camera), an ultrawide camera, and a telephoto camera. Behind it is a cameraman whose image looks blurry because it only focuses on the iPhone 15 Pro. There is an English phrase in the middle of the scene that reads "There's no camera like Pro".

Denotation:

There is a logo of a bitten apple showing the logo of a famous mobile phone and also three sophisticated cameras indicating that it is an iPhone 15 Pro. Since the iPhone 15 Pro itself is the main focus of the scene, a cameraman is seen in the background, but the image is unclear. The phrase "There's no camera like Pro" shows that camera capabilities are highly emphasized in this ad.

Connotation:

In Indonesian society, apples are a symbol of prosperity and wealth as they are more expensive than other local fruits. A bite into an apple can symbolize innovation and creativity. It reflects technology that pushes the boundaries of human creativity. This apple bite logo also gives a minimalist and elegant shape. The phrase in the center of the scene reading "There's no camera like Pro" means that no other camera can match the performance, features, and results achieved by the iPhone 15 Pro. This phrase is used to show the exceptional quality and capabilities of a professional mobile camera. The language used throughout the advertisement in this video is English. English is symbolic of the most widely used international language in the world of business, media, and technology. It can reach international markets without local language barriers.

Mythology:

In ancient mythological life, the apple was known as a symbol of life. Under apple trees, the gods gathered for important meetings, discussing the most important issues such as life and death, happiness, and immortality. Even today, apples are still associated with life and well-being. Apples are also often considered a symbol of immortality, beauty, and power. There is also more to the 'bite' taken from apples than just the difference from cherries or other fruits. This idea dates back to the days of Adam and Eve chewing on the seeds of knowledge. Thus, the logo shows the human need for knowledge and the use of Apple products will help people gain and share that knowledge. Also, the words "bite" and "byte", which are units of digital data, have the same meaning. The phrase "There's no camera like Pro", shows that no camera can match the quality of the iPhone 15 Pro camera. The word "Pro" refers to professional which means used by or suitable for professionals. It also denotes exclusivity and premiumity reflecting high social status and the ability to choose products with the best quality and features. The use of "Pro" also shows one's identity in social settings and can influence the way others perceive.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the iPhone 15 Pro "On with The Show" advertisement uses various symbols to build a strong image associated with the product. A semiotic analysis using the Roland Barthes approach reveals that symbols such as the angry white director, the exploding car in a remote location, the woman driving with an alien creature, and the statement "There's no camera like Pro" with the Apple logo all work together to convey messages of power, advanced technology, gender representation, and high quality regarding the iPhone 15 Pro.

Each symbol in this ad not only represents the technical aspects of the product, but also constructs a narrative about identity and professional aspirations associated with using the iPhone 15 Pro. Utilizing semiotics, this study reveals how Apple strategically uses these symbols to influence public perception and judgment of its products.

The findings have important implications in understanding how modern advertising not only conveys information about products, but also designs broader narratives about technology, cultural identity and professional aspirations in contemporary society. Overall, this study demonstrates the importance of semiotic analysis in revealing the layers of meaning hidden behind visual and narrative representations in advertisements.

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