



A Comparative Semiotic Analysis of Pocari Sweat Advertisements in Ramadan and Sports Context Based on Peirce's Theory

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Abstract: This study examines how meaning is constructed in two Pocari Sweat advertisements presented in different contexts, namely Ramadan (sahur) and sports, using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory. Advertising today not only promotes products but also communicates cultural values and social meanings through signs such as images, language, and symbols. The objective of this research is to identify the types of signs used, interpret their meanings, and compare how different contexts influence meaning construction. This study applies a qualitative descriptive method by analyzing visual and verbal elements from both advertisements. The findings show that both advertisements use icons, indexes, and symbols, but with different emphases. The Ramadan advertisement highlights symbolic and cultural meanings related to togetherness, spirituality, and health during fasting, while the sports advertisement emphasizes physical activity, endurance, and performance through more indexical and iconic signs. These differences indicate that advertising strategies adapt to audience context to create specific interpretations. The study implies that advertisements function as complex systems of meaning that shape audience perception, and understanding these signs can help viewers become more critical in interpreting media messages.

Keywords: Advertising; Context; Meaning Construction; Semiotics; Signs.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, advertising has evolved beyond its basic function as a tool for promoting products. It has become a medium that constructs meaning, conveys values, and reflects social and cultural contexts. Advertisements are composed of various elements such as images, language, colors, and sounds, all of which function as signs that communicate messages to the audience. Therefore, advertisements can be understood as systems of signs that can be analyzed through a semiotic approach. Semiotics is the study of signs and how meaning is produced and interpreted. According to Chandler (2007), semiotics focuses on how meaning is constructed through sign systems in communication. Similarly, Eco (1976) states that signs do not only represent reality but also shape how reality is understood by individuals. This indicates that meaning is not inherent in objects, but is created through interpretation. One of the most influential theories in semiotics is proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce. He defines a sign as something that represents an object and generates meaning in the mind of the interpreter (Peirce, 1931–1958). Peirce introduces a triadic model consisting of representamen, object, and interpretant, which explains the process of meaning-making. He also classifies signs into icon, index, and symbol, based on the relationship between the sign and its object. This framework is particularly useful in analyzing advertisements, as they rely heavily on visual and symbolic elements. Pocari Sweat, as a well-known isotonic drink brand, presents different advertising

strategies depending on context. Two notable versions are the Ramadan (sahur) advertisement and the sports advertisement. Although both advertisements promote the same product, they construct different meanings. The Ramadan version emphasizes hydration, health, and daily routines during fasting, while the sports version highlights energy, endurance, and physical performance. This shows that meaning in advertising is flexible and influenced by situational context and target audience. As stated by Danesi (2004), advertisements use signs strategically to influence audience perception and create specific associations with a product. In this case, the same product can be represented differently to produce different interpretations. Therefore, it is important to analyze how signs function in different advertisements to understand how meaning is constructed.

Based on this phenomenon, this study aims to analyze and compare the signs found in the Pocari Sweat Ramadan and sports advertisements using Peirce's semiotic theory. This research seeks to reveal how different contexts shape different meanings and how these meanings influence audience perception.

Research Questions

- a. What types of signs (icon, index, and symbol) are found in the Pocari Sweat Ramadan and sports advertisements?
- b. How are these signs interpreted using Peirce's semiotic theory?
- c. What are the differences in meaning construction between the two advertisements?

Research Objectives

- a. To identify the signs used in the Pocari Sweat Ramadan and sports advertisements.
- b. To analyze the meanings of these signs using Peirce's triadic model.
- c. To compare how different contexts influence meaning construction.

Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it enriches semiotic studies, especially in applying Peirce's theory to advertising analysis. Practically, it helps readers understand how advertisements construct meaning and influence audience perception through different contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Semiotics

Etymologically, semiotics derives from the Greek word *semeion*, meaning “sign.” Semiotics is the study of signs and how meaning is constructed and communicated through them. It examines how signs operate within various forms of communication, including media and advertising. According to Solík (2014), modern society is surrounded by systems of signs, including advertisements, which function as complex sign structures used for commercial purposes. Semiotics helps explain how these signs produce meaning through processes of signification, allowing audiences to interpret messages embedded in visual and textual elements. Therefore, semiotics is essential in understanding how advertisements communicate and influence audiences.

Charles Sanders Peirce’s Semiotics

According to Charles Sanders Peirce, semiotics is closely related to logic, as signs enable humans to think, interpret, and construct meaning about the world. Advertisements are not merely visual displays but function as systems of meaning that continuously shape human perception (Pompeu & Sato, 2024).

Peirce introduced a triadic model consisting of three interconnected elements:

- a. Representamen (Sign): the physical form of the sign perceived by the senses
 - b. Object: the entity or concept to which the sign refers
 - c. Interpretant: the meaning produced in the mind of the interpreter
- In addition, Peirce classifies signs into three categories:
- a) Icon: a sign that resembles its object
 - b) Index: a sign that has a direct or causal relationship with its object
 - c) Symbol: a sign whose meaning is based on social convention

This framework is particularly relevant for analyzing advertisements, as it allows researchers to explore how meaning is constructed through different types of signs.

Visual Communication in Advertising

Advertising is a form of visual communication that combines verbal and non-verbal signs to convey messages and influence audiences. These signs include images, colors, text, sound, and narrative elements that work together to create persuasive meanings. Solík (2014) explains that advertising is closely related to processes of semiosis, where meaning is produced and interpreted through structured sign systems. Advertisements are designed not only to communicate information but also to influence audience perception and behavior, often by

appealing to emotions and cultural understanding.

Previous Studies

Several previous studies have applied semiotic approaches to analyze advertisements. Hidayati & Finasyahadatina (2025) found that advertisements contain hidden meanings that must be interpreted through creative visual and narrative elements. Their study shows that advertisements often use indirect representation to deliver messages, which is relevant to the use of metaphorical elements in Pocari Sweat advertisements.

Senoprabowo et al. (2023) conducted a comparative study using Peirce's semiotic analysis and found that advertisements function as cultural texts reflecting social values. This study supports the use of comparative analysis in understanding how different advertisement contexts produce different meanings.

Fajar & Setyaningsih (2015) emphasize the role of verbal and non-verbal elements, such as color, imagery, and background, in shaping audience interpretation. Their findings highlight how visual elements influence the meaning constructed in advertisements.

Maghfira et al. (2022) demonstrate that advertisements construct meaning through icons, indices, and symbols within Peirce's semiotic framework. This shows that visual elements are systematically used to represent certain ideas and messages.

Mahmud & Gispa (2025) highlight the role of cultural symbols in representing identity through visual elements in advertisements. This is relevant to how cultural and religious values are represented in the Pocari Sweat Ramadan advertisement.

Agazi & Samatan (2023) show that beverage advertisements represent human needs through visual and narrative elements. Their study indicates that advertisements are designed to connect products with everyday human experiences, making the message more relatable and persuasive for the audience.

Briandana (2019) reveals that advertisements can convey ideological meanings through semiotic signs, such as social and cultural values embedded in the message. This suggests that advertisements do not only promote products but also reflect broader meanings within society.

Mahdalena et al. (2019) show that meaning in advertisements is constructed through the relationship between visual and verbal elements, which work together to create persuasive messages. Their findings highlight the importance of combining images and text to deliver clear and effective communication.

Sutiah et al. (2023) emphasize that advertisements shape public perception through symbolic meanings constructed by visual and textual elements. Their study shows that these symbolic elements play an important role in influencing how audiences interpret and respond

to advertisements.

Although previous studies have widely applied Peirce's semiotic theory in analyzing advertisements, most of them focus on a single advertisement. However, Solík (2014) states that advertising operates as a system of signs that can be interpreted through various contexts, indicating that advertisements can also be analyzed comparatively.

Despite this, studies that specifically combine comparative analysis with Peirce's semiotic framework are still limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by comparing two Pocari Sweat advertisements with different contexts, namely Ramadan (sahur) and sports, to examine how meaning is constructed differently through signs.

Conceptual Framework

This study analyzes two Pocari Sweat advertisements, namely the Ramadan (sahur) version and the sports version, using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory. The analysis focuses on identifying and classifying signs into icon, index, and symbol, as well as interpreting their meanings through the triadic model of representamen, object, and interpretant. By comparing the two advertisements, this study aims to understand how different contexts influence meaning construction.

Conceptual Framework Scheme:

- a. Object: Pocari Sweat Advertisements (Sahur and Sport Versions)
- b. Analytical Tool: Peirce's Triadic Model
- c. Analysis Focus: Icon, Index, Symbol

Result: Comparative interpretation of meaning in different contexts

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to understand and interpret the meanings of signs in two Pocari Sweat advertisements: the Ramadan (Sahur) version and the sports version. The research data consist of visual and verbal signs appearing in both advertisements, collected by carefully watching the ads and capturing screenshots of relevant key scenes. The analysis is conducted using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, employing the triadic model of Representamen (the physical form of the sign), Object (the concept referred to), and Interpretant (the meaning constructed by the audience). Each sign is analyzed and classified into three types: icon, index, and symbol. This approach allows for a comparative examination of the two advertisements, highlighting differences in meaning construction, communication strategies, and the dominance of specific types of signs according to the context, whether cultural and spiritual in the Ramadan ad or physical activity and active

lifestyle in the sports ad.

4. RESULT

Table 1. Ramadhan Context.

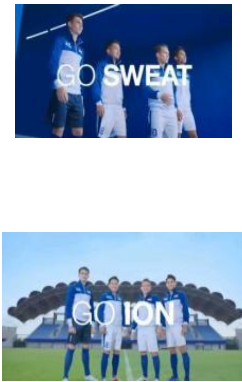
No.	Duration	Representament	Object	Interpretant	Sign
1.	0.00-0.01		A large glowing bottle displayed on the screen during the stage performance.	The bottle represents a hydration drink that gives energy, freshness, and supports an active lifestyle.	Symbol: The meaning of blue is based on cultural understanding.
2.	0.03-0.04		A performer energetically playing a guitar on stage with the Pocari Sweat bottle displayed in the background.	The scene suggests that Pocari Sweat provides energy and freshness that support active and energetic performances.	Symbol: The meaning is based on social recognition.
3.	0.08-0.09		A performer splashing a drink while singing into a microphone during the show.	The scene implies that Pocari Sweat gives a refreshing and revitalizing effect during energetic activities.	Index: The water splash indicates fluid loss
4.	0.22-0.24		A man points at the viewer while saying "Ter-la-lu" (too much).	The scene suggests that excessive activity or sweating can cause dehydration, reminding viewers to replace lost fluids with Pocari Sweat.	Symbol: The meaning comes from language convention.

5.	0.31-0.32		A close-up image of dry lips with the text “Bibir Kering”.	It indicates dehydration, suggesting the need to drink Pocari Sweat to restore body fluids and maintain hydration.	Index: Physical symptoms directly indicate fluid loss.
6.	0.33-0.34		A woman with pale skin appears tired, showing a possible sign of dehydration.	Pale skin indicates the body lacks fluids, suggesting the need to rehydrate with Pocari Sweat.	Index: Physical symptoms directly indicate fluid loss.
7.	0.43-0.45		In this scene, a man holds a bottled water product with the text “ION TAHAN BOCOR,” showing the leak-proof bottle feature.	This scene suggests that the bottled water is practical and reliable because its packaging is designed to prevent leakage.	Icon: because the advertisement directly shows the visual image of the bottled water product that resembles the real object.
8.	0.17-0.18		The actual electrolyte isotonic drink product represented by the bottle, which is Pocari Sweat .	The audience understands that the drink is a refreshing isotonic beverage that helps replace body fluids and electrolytes, often associated with hydration and health.	Icon: because the image directly resembles the real product (the actual Pocari Sweat bottle).
9.	0.18-0.19		A woman drinks a bottle of Pocari Sweat.	Drinking Pocari Sweat helps restore body fluids and relieve dehydration.	Index: Drinking indicates the need for fluids.

10.	0.24-0.25		In this scene, a family stands together while drinking bottled beverages during sahur.	This shows the importance of drinking fluids before fasting to maintain body hydration	Symbol: The bottle represents a healthy hydration drink.
11.	0.25-0.27		In this scene, people dressed as cactus characters stand together while holding bottled drinks and showing cheerful expressions.	This indicates that drinking the product can keep the body fresh and hydrated during fasting.	Index: A cactus is directly related to dry and hot environments
12.	0.27-0.30		A group of people wearing green cactus-shaped costumes while holding bottled drinks. On the screen there is text that says "ION saat SAHUR – Jaga Cairan Tubuh".	This scene suggests that the drink helps maintain body hydration during sahur before fasting.	Symbol The meaning comes from language convention.

Table 2. Sport Context.

No.	Duration	Representament	Object	Interpretant	Sign
1.	0.46-0.50		Drinking represents the Process of rehydrating the body after fluid loss due to exercise.	This scene illustrates that after intense physical activity, the body needs to replenish fluids to restore energy maintain proper hydration. Viewers understand that Pocari Sweat serves as the perfect solution for replenishing lost body fluids and aiding the recovery process.	Index: The act of drinking immediately indicates the body's need for fluids following physical activity, thus establishing a cause-and-effect relationship between exercise and the need for hydration.

2.	00.55– 01.59		The text refers to the message that Pocari Sweat is an isotonic drink that helps replenish the body's lost electrolytes due to physical activity and sweating.	Through this slogan, consumers understand that Pocari Sweat helps maintain fluid and electrolyte balance in the body, especially after physical activity. The message also reinforces the perception that this drink can help maintain optimal physical performance both during and after exercise.	Symbols: The meaning of the slogan is understood through language and social conventions. Words like “sweat” and “ion” have meanings that are learned by society, allowing viewers to interpret the message the advertisement intends to convey.
3.	0.52-0.53		A cold and refreshing drink.	Viewers understand that a condensation-covered bottle signifies a cold, refreshing drink. This visual helps the audience imagine the refreshing sensation of drinking it.	Icon: Because its appearance closely resembles that of a cold drink in real life.
4.	0.39-0.40		“Berkeringat” refers to physical exertion and sacrifice, as also supported by the visual depiction of sweat. “impianku” denotes individual ambition and personal goals. “impian kita” signifies collective aspirations and shared success within a broader social group.	The statement constructs a shift from individual to collective orientation, where personal effort is recontextualized as contributing to a shared goal. This produces the meaning of collective struggle, solidarity, and purposeful dedication.	Symbol: The terms inherently carry these meanings through socially agreed interpretations of effort, ambition, and solidarity. The transition from “-ku” to “kita” symbolically represents a shift from individual pursuit to collective identity.

5.	0.31-0.32		Extreme natural challenges and physical strength.	Viewers associate these massive waves with the refreshing, overflowing water as well as a challenge that demands great stamina. This creates the visual impression that Pocari Sweat is a "source of strength" on par with the magnitude of this natural challenge.	Icon: This wave is an icon because it bears a striking resemblance to the natural phenomenon found in the ocean. This visual is used to directly represent the elements of water and energy through its similar shape.
6.	0.06-0.05		An act of cheering or vocal support directed toward athletes during a football match.	The choir-like formation signifies unity, harmony, and collective support, creating the meaning of shared enthusiasm and coordinated emotional encouragement toward the team.	Index: An index of emotional intensity and active support. The open mouths and intense expressions indicate that they are producing sound (cheering or singing) as a direct response to the situation in the stadium.
7.	0.15-0.16		Dehydration.	Viewers interpret sweat as a sign that the body is losing fluids. This reinforces the message that drinks like Pocari Sweat are needed to replace those lost fluids.	Index:: Because sweating is directly caused by physical activity and body heat.

8.	0.45-0.46		Professional athletes, national sports achievements, and leading figures in the field of soccer.	Consumers interpret their presence as a guarantee that the product meets high-quality standards because it is consumed by professional athletes. Their presence builds public confidence that this isotonic drink is essential for peak physical performance and athletic achievement. Symbol: The national team players featured in this advertisement serve as symbols because the meanings of "professionalism" and "achievement" associated with them are the result of social construction and public recognition. The connection between these individuals and the status of "elite athletes" is formed through society's consensus regarding their achievements and careers, not because of a natural, self-evident relationship.
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The semiotic analysis of Pocari Sweat advertisements in the contexts of Ramadan and sports reveals differences in the pattern of sign usage according to the context. Both advertisements contain Peirce's three types of signs: icon, index, and symbol, but their distribution differs. In the Ramadan advertisement, symbolic and indexical signs are equally dominant, each accounting for 41.7%, while icons make up 16.6%. Symbols reflect cultural and religious values, such as togetherness during Sahur, whereas indexes indicate physical signs of dehydration. In the sports advertisement, indexical and symbolic signs are equally dominant at 37.5% each, with icons at 25%. Indexes emphasize physical activity and the need for hydration, while symbols communicate performance and aspirations through athletes and slogans. Iconic signs in both advertisements provide realistic visual representations, such as cold bottles of Pocari Sweat. These findings confirm that the advertisement context influences meaning construction, with Ramadan focusing on emotional and social values, while sports emphasize physical performance and an active lifestyle.

5. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings obtained using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory and previous studies. The discussion focuses on the types of signs found, their meanings, and the differences in meaning construction between the Ramadan and sports advertisements. The analysis shows that both advertisements contain Peirce's three types of signs: icon, index, and symbol. These findings answer the first research question and support the theory that advertisements function as systems of signs that construct meaning through visual and verbal elements (Solík, 2014). The presence of icons, indexes, and symbols in both ads indicates that meaning is systematically built through different types of signs, as also highlighted by Maghfira et al. (2022).

Regarding interpretation, the findings show that each sign can be understood through Peirce's triadic model, consisting of representamen, object, and interpretant. Representamen appears in the form of visual images, text, and actions in the advertisements, while the object refers to concepts such as hydration, energy, and physical condition. The interpretant is the meaning constructed by the audience, such as understanding that Pocari Sweat helps replenish body fluids and maintain performance. This supports Pompeu and Sato (2024), who state that signs play an important role in shaping human perception and understanding.

Furthermore, the findings confirm that advertisements combine verbal and nonverbal elements to create persuasive meaning. Visual elements such as sweat, water, facial expressions, and the product bottle work together with text and slogans to reinforce the message. This aligns with Fajar and Setyaningsih (2015) and Mahdalena et al. (2019), who emphasize that meaning in advertisements is built through the interaction between visual and textual elements.

Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis reveals significant differences in meaning construction between the two advertisements, addressing the third research question. Quantitatively, the analysis shows differences in the dominance of sign types in each advertisement:

- a. Ramadan advertisement: symbol 41.7%, index 41.7%, icon 16.6%
- b. Sports advertisement: symbol 37.5%, index 37.5%, icon 25%

These differences indicate tendencies in the use of certain types of signs according to the advertisement context. A more detailed comparison of meaning construction is as follows:

- a. In the Ramadan advertisement, the dominance of symbols and indexes indicates that meaning is built through cultural, religious, and social interaction, such as Sahur scenes, family togetherness, and phrases related to hydration during fasting. The smaller proportion

of icons (16.6%) functions as visual support to reinforce the representation of objects, such as the Pocari Sweat bottle or flowing water.

- b. In the sports advertisement, symbols and indexes are balanced (37.5% each), with a higher proportion of icons (25%) compared to Ramadan. This indicates that meaning is constructed through a combination of cause-and-effect relationships (index), representation of values or aspirations (symbol), and direct visual representation (icon), such as athletes in action and the product bottle, clarifying the context of sports and hydration.

The differences in sign dominance reflect semiotic strategies adapted to context: the Ramadan advertisement emphasizes symbolic and socio-religious values, while the sports advertisement balances signs that indicate physical activity (index), aspiration/performance (symbol), and concrete visuals (icon).

Most Frequently Appearing Signs

The analysis also shows that the most frequently appearing signs in both advertisements are symbols and indexes, as they effectively convey messages relevant to the context:

- a. In the Ramadan advertisement, symbols and indexes are balanced because they connect spiritual values and physical needs during fasting.
- b. In the sports advertisement, the balance of symbols and indexes, along with an increase in icons, supports audience understanding of physical activity and the tangible benefits of the product.

These findings confirm that, although both advertisements promote the same product, the semiotic strategies used differ according to context. The Ramadan advertisement constructs meaning through cultural and symbolic elements, while the sports advertisement relies more on indexical and physical representation. This supports the idea that advertising is not only about promoting a product but also about building meaning aligned with audience experience and context (Briandana, 2019).

Furthermore, the comparison shows differences in message focus between the two advertisements. The Ramadan advertisement emphasizes emotional, cultural, and social engagement, conveying messages that touch on spiritual and collective values, such as family togetherness during Sahur and patience in fasting. In contrast, the sports advertisement emphasizes physical performance and an active lifestyle, focusing on bodily needs, stamina, and individual or group aspirations in a sports context, including the use of athletes and energetic activity scenes to reinforce the impression of hydration and optimal performance.

6. CONCLUSION

The analysis of Pocari Sweat advertisements in the Ramadan and sports contexts reveals that the same product can construct different meanings depending on the situational and cultural background of its audience. Using Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotic framework, this study

finds that icons, indexes, and symbols operate synergistically to convey messages of hydration in distinct ways. In the Ramadan version, the emphasis is placed on maintaining health and hydration during fasting as part of daily religious routines, while the sports version highlights physical performance, endurance, and the replacement of lost body fluids. Furthermore, the study shows that these meanings are not static but are dynamically constructed through the interaction of visual elements, language, and cultural context. Elements such as realistic imagery (icons), visual cues like water splashes indicating dehydration (indexes), and culturally agreed signs like color and wording (symbols) play a significant role in shaping audience interpretation. Overall, these advertisements demonstrate that advertising is not merely a promotional tool, but a complex system of signs that actively constructs consumer perception. By adapting its semiotic strategies to different contexts, Pocari Sweat successfully positions itself as an essential hydration solution across various aspects of life, from spiritual observance to active lifestyles.

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