



WHO Video Advertisement *Staying Mentally Healthy-Beat Covid-19*: A Semiotic Study

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Article info	Abstract*
<p>Received Date: 22 October 2024</p> <p>Accepted Date: 11 November 2025</p> <p>Published Date: 31 January 2025</p> <p>Keywords:* <i>semiotic, advertisement, verbal and visual sign, meaning</i></p>	<p><i>This study entitled WHO Video Advertisement “Staying Mentally Healthy – Beat Covid-19”: A Semiotic Study. The study aims to analyze the verbal and visual signs in this advertisement and also to identify the meaning of the signs. This study uses qualitative method to conduct a clear and well-organized description about the problems which is identified. The data were taken from YouTube audiovisual uploaded by World Health Organization (WHO) and analyzed by applying theory proposed by Saussure (1983), and theory of meaning by Barthes (1964), followed by supporting theory of color term by Wierzbicka (1996). The result of the study mentioned that verbal signs used as media to inform and emphasize the persuasive expression to people about a positive message from the advertiser. Meanwhile, the nonverbal signs contained conceptual and hidden meaning to beautify the advertisement and attract the audience attention. The characteristics of verbal signs occurred in form of word phrases and sentences while visual signs can be analyzed from the cartoon illustration, inanimate objects, and gestures.</i></p>

1. Introduction

According to Dyer (1982: 2) advertisement is drawing attention to something, or notifying or informing somebody of something. Advertisement can be divided into two those are commercial advertisement and public service advertisement. Commercial advertisement usually gives information about a product or promoting sales and service. On the other hand, public service advertisement usually use to promote something positive for society, such as inform a regulation from government, and share national information. Sometimes it can be used to give social education to society.

In an advertisement, a theory of Semiotic is applied since the idea from advertisement can be interpreted through the words or sentences as verbal sign and symbol or color as nonverbal sign. The context in which a sign, is communicated in order to comprehend its real meaning, and hence act appropriately. What is going on behind the sign is usually as important for a person to know as the sign itself, in order to receive the message completely, and interpret its meaning.

This study used public services advertisement especially about the pandemic of corona virus. This study focused to analyze the signs and also analyze the meaning. This advertisement

is chosen since there are many values, advices, and information appeared through the signs occurred. It uses attractive and great signs including language, body gesture, performance, and emotion to attract the people's attention about that advertisement. In WHO Video Advertisement "Staying Mentally Healthy – Beat Covid-19" give awareness for audience to keep mental health during this pandemic. Through this video the advertiser try to educate viewer about this social message. WHO was established on 7 April 1948 and this organization works worldwide to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable. Working with 194 Member States, across six regions, and from more than 150 offices, WHO staff are united in a shared commitment to achieve better health for everyone, everywhere. Therefore, the video was taken in this organization is trusted to be analyzed.

2. Research Method

The data of this study was taken from YouTube about Public Service Advertisement that was uploaded by World Health Organization (WHO) who is a specialized agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health. This research discussed a video of public service advertisement by WHO "Staying Mentally Healthy-Beat Covid-19". This advertisement used as the data source because it is provide the data which consisting of attractive verbal and visual signs. The data were collected by using observation method and it was analyzed qualitatively used the theory proposed by Barthes (1986) followed by supporting theory of advertisement by Dyer (1982). Furthermore, the meaning of the signs used was analyzed by theory of meaning proposed by Leech (1974) followed by supporting theory of color term by Wierzbicka (1996).

3. Discussion

After analyzed the video of advertisement which was uploaded by WHO, it could be seen that the used of verbal sign and visual sign has certain affects regarding to persuade people. Those signs could reflect to the message that the company would like to deliver. The video advertisement put their ideology and persuade people by combining the great visual effect to attract the audience. The result of observing those advertisement was listed in the table below.

Table 3.1 Type of Signs in WHO: Staying Mentally Healthy-Beat Covid-19

Type of Sign	Categories	Form
Verbal	Sentence	Declarative
	Animate Objects	Human Animation
Non Verbal	Inanimate Objects	Building
		Car
	Gestures	Housing Stuffs
		Gadget
		Expression
		Eye contact
Font styles	Body language	
	Colored words	

According to the table above, it can be seen that the advertisement of "Staying Mentally Healthy-Beat Covid-19" consisted of verbal and nonverbal signs. The verbal signs appeared in sentence (question and narration text), and word phrase forms (noun, noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase). All of these verbal signs ended up as a short story that was telling about keep healthy in this pandemic situation. Meanwhile the nonverbal signs appeared in animation form

(human) and inanimate objects (building, car, housing stuffs, gadget). There were also gestures including expression, eye contact, and body language. Last is font styles, which is colored words and numbers.

As the discussion of this study, the way in analyzing the data was conducted through the analysis of verbal and nonverbal signs found in the advertisements of WHO. Thus, from the verbal and nonverbal signs in each advertisement, the message could be interpreted to get the meaning. The data found were analyzed based on the theory of Semiotics proposed by Saussure (1983), while the meaning of the advertisements were analyzed based on the theory of Denotation and Connotation proposed by Barthes (1964).

Data 1

STAYING MENTALLY HEALTHY

#beatCovid-19

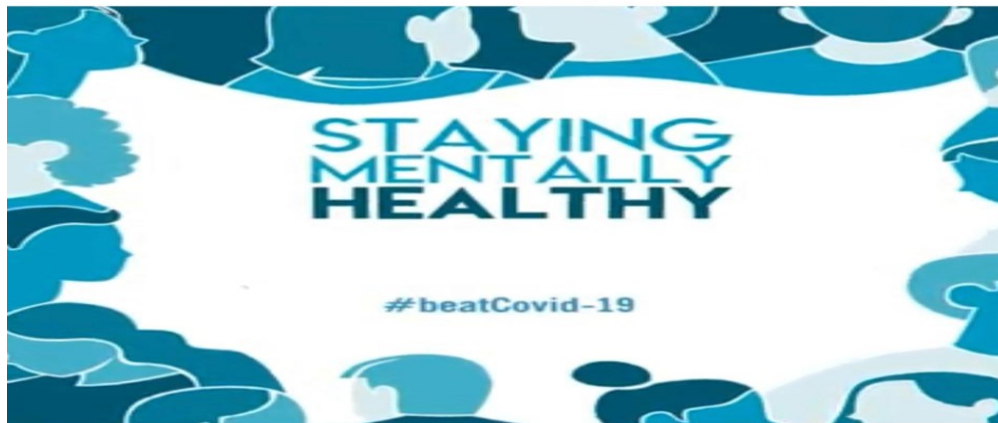


Figure 3.1 Introduction Design(00:00-00:03)

These advertisement were posted in global pandemic of Corona Virus Disease 2019. World Health Organization (WHO) declared this pandemic as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. The governments have mandated or recommended several way to prevent people from this virus such as by hand washing regularly, keep surface cleaning, using face masks and respiratory hygiene, social distancing and self-quarantine for entire populations. After a while in self-quarantine, people feel burdened and scared, it is also influence mental health of people in population. In addition overcome this situation, WHO launched this video advertisement.

In data 1 above, consists of verbal and visual signs. The first verbal sign is “*STAYING MENTALLY HEALTHY*”. The advertiser chose to make the utterance in capital letter. Capital letter intend to attract the attention of the reader as well as to emphasize the point of the message. This utterance indicated a conceptual meaning. Here, the advertiser was telling the content of this video and in literal the audience understand this video will share some important thing about mental health. The second verbal sign in this scene is “*#beatCovid-19*”. It has a connotative meaning. The using hashtag (#) has a hidden meaning. It means a specific and important messages for the audience. By using hashtag, this utterance can be specified found in social media app for relevant content with this video. This is like a campaign separated by the advertiser to build the awareness of audience against coronavirus.

All of verbal signs here are written in blue. It is also support with the white and blue background color of this scene as the part of visual sign. Blue is associated with health. It

represent seriousness and white has a positive connotation (Wierzbicka, 1996:309). The hidden meaning from using white and blue color implied an informative advice to audience. Here the advertiser send a positive messages those are remind the audience to be strong facing this pandemic and seriously to keep their mental health.

Data 2

It is Normal to feel DISTRESSED

It is normal to feel SCARED

It is normal to feel ANGRY

It is normal to feel SAD

It is normal to feel WORRIED



Figure 3.2 Scene 2-6- (00:04-00:12)

Data 2 above consists of verbal and visual signs. The first verbal signs in these scene very unique because they use similar pattern. The key words of each sentence are *normal* and *feel*. These sentences categorized as declarative sentences and they indicated connotative meaning. From this, the advertiser was telling the introduction about some feeling which attack people in this pandemic, they are feeling distressed, scared, angry, sad and worried. The underlined messages from advertiser here about the effect of those bad feeling to the audience. Distressed, scared, angry, sad and worried are the symptoms of anxiety disorder. If they affected too much they will have depression.

The second verbal sign here is *STAY MENTALLY HEALTHY#beatCovid19* same like previous data. The different only position of this verbal sign, in this scene it is located on the left side. This sign remind the audience that all of these scenes in this video still related each other. The last verbal sign is *World Health Organization-South East Asia*. It has a denotative meaning. Here the advertiser try to get the audience attention by put WHO in every scene and also remind the audience this information come from trusted organization. All of the text here using blue color. This could be classified as the signifier which implied a meaning about warn and remind people to keep their mental health.

The visual signs here use human in cartoon illustration and inanimate object. These scene represent feelings that arise in different age and different gender. For children as the example, corona virus make them *scared* to do something. They have limited access to play with other children, go to school, or other close interaction. For teenager, this pandemic will affect their self

a lot, for the example they are easier to be *angry*. Some factors that influence this feeling are government regulation which ask people to do social distancing and self-quarantine. Sometimes angry also come from an inaccurate information in media social about corona virus. Other feelings are *distressed* and *sad* which attack middle aged like mother and father. Parents has responsibility for their family. In this pandemic, most of them lost their job. It means a big problem for their financial and it is a triggers for these feeling. The last one is in elderly age. This age will feel worried faced corona virus. This age has a high risk because people in elderly age usually has other disease and corona virus will make any complications of it. The background of these scenes take a place in family room. There were several things that could indicate if it was a family room, such as sofa complete with pillow. The messages from advertiser from this visual signs are warning to the audience that coronavirus is danger but anxiety disorder as the result of bad feeling thinking about corona virus is more dangerous. Follow the government regulation to keep protected from corona virus is as a must but keep the mental health of personal and also family is an absolute obligation.

Data 3

Talk To People YOU TRUST

Know where to seek help for PHYSICAL&MENTAL NEEDS

Avoid rumors SEEK CREDIBLE INFORMATION

Limit your time on following the news ABOUT THE OUTBREAK

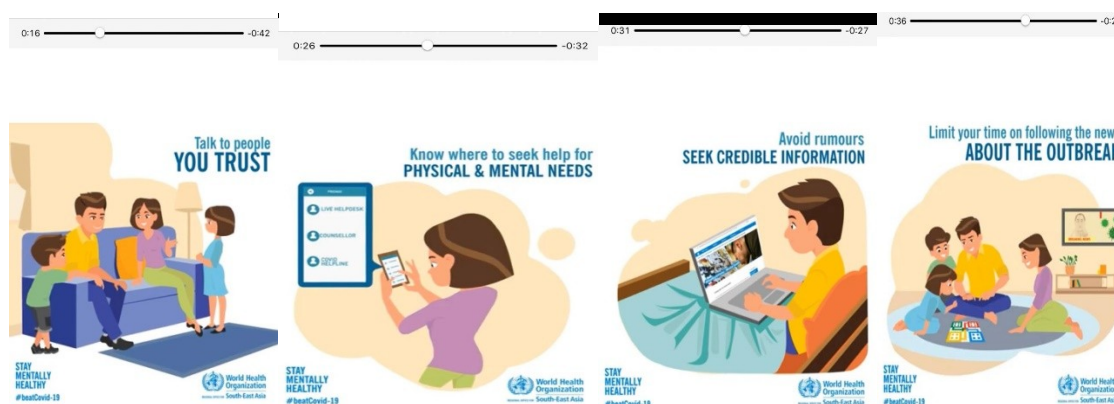


Figure 3.3 Scene 7-10 (00:14-00:41)

Data 3 mention about the way to protect mental health in this pandemic. The first verbal sign is *Talk to People YOU TRUST*. The advertiser want to say that keep mental health is not started with big thing but with small thing. Care is the simplest thing to prevent each other. Sharing with other member of family or with close friend, will reduce your stress. Second verbal sign is *Know where to seek help for PHYSICAL&MENTAL NEEDS*. Nowadays it is very easy to find accurate information. From our own gadget, we can access everything. The trend in this pandemic is having online consultation which is provided by several application in our gadget. The third and fourth verbal sign is *Avoid rumors SEEK CREDIBLE INFORMATION* and *Limit your time on following the news ABOUT THE OUTBREAK*. Both of these signs means we need to set the frequency of update information about corona virus. Knowing the current information is good, but please check it in government official site. All of the verbal signs above use declarative sentence.

The important point written in capital letter and it use to emphasize the messages from advertiser. All of the text still written in blue. Blue here as the representation of the advertiser's characteristic, spirit and trust. Here, the use of blue color represented all verbal sign mention in these scenes as recommended way to keep your mental health. Getting the trust from the audience means WHO successfully with their mission. The nonverbal signs here use human in cartoon illustration and inanimate object like laptop and mobile phone. The illustration happen in family room also. Human illustration use family as togetherness and also individual illustration as guidance where the audience can find accurate information.

Data 4

Get involved with RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS
Amplify POSITIVE &HOPEFUL stories



Figure 3.4 Scene 11-12 (00:42-00:52)

Data 4 mention about the important thing to do in beat corona virus and also keep mental health in this pandemic. From the illustration, the messages from advertiser is the audience need to have positive thinking and always do positive in this pandemic. From the verbal signs it use declarative sentences like *Get involved with RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS* and also *Amplify POSITIVE &HOPEFUL stories*. This is the suggestion from the advertiser to the audience. The scene of the left side use cartoon illustration, and it can be seen that the young lady sharing groceries to couple of elderly age, but still apply health protocol like social distancing. Other thing that the audience can do is collect some donation. On the right side is an illustration of young man which make a story about this pandemic. Nowadays so many people change their activity become you tuber. Stay at home and build a content about positive stories about corona virus. Smile from his face indicated a hope about bright future after this pandemic.

4. Novelties

The novelties from this research show that health video advertisement has several characteristic for the signs. The characteristic for verbal signs used interrogative and declarative sentence. The word phrase used are noun, noun phrase, verb phrase and adjective phrase. All of these verbal signs ended up as a short story that was telling about keep healthy in pandemic situation. Meanwhile the characteristic of nonverbal signs appeared in animation form (human) and inanimate objects (building, car, housing stuffs, gadget). There were also gestures including expression, eye contact, and body language as the representative of visual signs. The last characteristic is from the using of font styles, which is used blue colored text and also numbers.

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above it can be concluded that the advertiser make a good composition between verbal and visual signs in WHO Video Advertisement “Staying Mentally Healthy – Beat Covid-19. Verbal sign can be seen from the text. The characteristics of verbal signs occurred in form of word phrases and sentences. It is also written in blue. The hidden meaning of this color is like an advice to be strong facing the pandemic of Corona Virus. The verbal signs deliver a warning, motivation, information and awareness message by written text which could growth the people caution about the pandemic of Covid-19. Meanwhile the visual sign can be analyzed from the cartoon illustration, inanimate objects, and gestures. Signs in this advertisement consist of denotative and connotative meaning. Denotative meaning was represented the exactly meaning of the text, and connotative meaning represent the hidden meaning of the text.

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