

A Semiotic Analysis: Exploring the Verbal Signs Found in Fast Food Online Advertisement

Nur Iylia Mohd Noor Be^{1*}

¹ Language Centre & General Studies, Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis, Perlis, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author: nuriylia@kuips.edu.my

Received: 28 April 2023 | Accepted: 1 August 2023 | Published: 1 September 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55057/ijbtm.2023.5.3.4>

Abstract: *The linguistic landscape has changed due to social media platforms which provide real-time interaction and high dynamism. Moreover, the emergence of new media has left a profound impact on the techniques adopted by businesses to maintain a relationship with customers through digital marketing. Online advertisement is a sort of on social media platforms. Every advertisement contains signs. The language cues used in fast food ads will be examined in this study. The two objectives of this study are to identify the verbal signs in fast food commercials and examine the importance of those verbal signs. A descriptive qualitative approach is used in this study which will utilise Leech's theory of meaning and Saussure's theory of semiotics for the data analysis. The study's findings indicate that language cues were presented in the selected fast-food advertisements. Declarative sentences are used as verbal cues. The results will contribute to the current knowledge in the area pertaining to social media advertisement and its significance.*

Keywords: semiotic, online advertisement, verbal signs, Leech's theory of meaning, Saussure's theory of semiotics

1. Introduction

Language serves as a medium for communication between individuals, involving both spoken and nonverbal elements. The study of symbols and signs is known as semiotics, encompassing various sign systems like images, gestures, and objects and their interactions within public rituals or performances. Barthes (1967) highlights that semiotics applies to all sign systems, regardless of their nature and boundaries. Wardaugh (1972:3) states that language is a universal tool for expressing ideas and understanding for everyone. Advertisements commonly use images, often referred to as ads, to promote products (Jha, 2017).

Semiotics, as a field of study, focuses on how meaning is created and conveyed. It investigates how signs and images collaborate to form a sign system, prevalent in different media forms like magazines, advertisements, and posters. By employing semiotics, readers can interpret the underlying meanings in these media forms and easily grasp the information presented to them. According to Barthes (1967), the connection between the expression (signifier) and the concept (signified) is crucial in this study. For example, drivers quickly understand the meaning of the three colors on a traffic light and know how to respond to each light accordingly (Keane, 2018).

Signs are pervasive, existing universally in even the smallest aspects of the world. Saussure (1959) has defined a sign as a combination of two elements: the signifier, which is the form

representing the concept, and the signified, which is the concept itself. Suwitri (2021) identifies sound, image, and word as signifiers, representing various concepts. Verbal and visual signs can both convey these concepts. Verbal signs are communicated through spoken and written language, such as words, phrases, and sentences, and they play a role in adding interest and appeal to advertising content.

Numerous studies have explored semiotics with various areas of interest. Solihatun's (2018) research delved into denotative and connotative meanings in Clear shampoo advertisements, uncovering multiple verbal and visual signs. While this study also examines verbal signs, its data sources differ, focusing on fast food ads instead. Similarly, Sena's (2016) study analysed both verbal and visual signs in Adidas advertisements but used a different theory by Dyer (1993), while the present research adopts Barthes' (1967) theory. On the other hand, Nadia's (2022) study also analysed verbal signs but emphasised visual and linguistic elements, and it varies from this research in terms of the chosen data source for analysis.

In addition, there have been some recent studies conducted in this area. One such study was carried out by Nasser Alqahtani & Abdullah Alqahtani in 2020. It used semiotic analysis to identify the underlying messages and meanings in fast food advertisements in Saudi Arabia, focusing on their visual and linguistic elements. Another study conducted by Fatima Tariq & Anam Iqbal in the same year analysed the semiotics of fast-food advertising in Pakistan, with a focus on the cultural and symbolic meanings conveyed through visual and verbal signifiers. Li Li & Liyuan Guo also compared the semiotics of McDonald's advertising in the United States and China in 2019, identifying differences in cultural symbols and messaging. Similarly, Mwongera & Matoso's 2018 research examined the semiotics of fast-food advertising in the United States and Brazil, identifying cultural differences in messaging and using signifiers. In Malaysia, Nadzirah Ahmad Basri & Nor Liyana Mohd Shuib conducted a study in 2018 that analysed the visual and linguistic signifiers used to convey meaning and messages in fast food advertising.

The researchers chose to study fast food commercials due to the captivating and intriguing verbal and visual cues frequently employed in these ads, which aim to capture the attention of potential consumers and entice them to make purchases (Singh, 2020). This research's primary objective is to identify and examine the verbal cues featured in fast food ads and analyse their intended significance. The collective findings from these studies shed light on the semiotics of fast-food advertising across diverse cultures and contexts, underscoring the importance of understanding the implicit messages and meanings conveyed through visual and verbal signifiers.

2. Method

In this research, a qualitative approach was employed by the researchers to examine data obtained from fast food online advertisements on the official Instagram accounts of several companies in Malaysia, particularly those featuring burgers, french fries, and fried chicken. The reason for selecting these advertisements as data was their abundance of unique sentences and implicit meanings. The data was collected by means of observation, including searching, downloading, and reading the advertisements. The Burger King Malaysia (@burgerking_malaysia), McDonald's Malaysia (@mcdonaldsmalaysia), KFC Malaysia (@kfcmalaysia), Texas Chicken Malaysia (@texaschickenmalaysia), Marrybrown Malaysia (@marrybrownmy), and A&W Malaysia (@anwmalaysia) Instagram accounts were all included. The researchers utilized Saussure's (1959) semiotics theory and Leech's (1981)

meaning theory to analyze the data, particularly focusing on the verbal signs in each advertisement to interpret the meaning conveyed.

3. Findings

In this research, the researchers analyzed six fast food Instagram accounts containing verbal signs. According to Barthes (1967), every sign has a signifier as the form of the sign itself and signified as well as what means the concept behind the form. The table below shows the findings of the research.

Table 1: The Occurrences of Verbal Signs in the Fast Food Online Advertisements

No	Data	Verbal Signs
1.	Burger King Malaysia	Supreme Salmon Triple Whopper Jr. with Cheese Get Ready for that Brekkie Mozzarella Madness Mushroom Bliss
2.	McDonald's Malaysia	Rilek dan Mengopi Dulu Ice Blended Kopi Susu McCafe Hawaiian Chicken Burger Meriah Bersama Order Relax Enjoy On Wednesdays, We're 50% Off
3.	KFC Malaysia	Semarakkan Aidilfitri Bersama Famili Lagi Best Kalau ada Kepci Baru Betul Raya Ramadan Mubarak Wishing You A Very Happy Thaipusam You Bring In The New Year We Bring In The Finger Linkin' Goodness! All I Want for Christmas is
4.	Texas Chicken Malaysia	Ayam 8 Lada Gabungan Padu Menambat Rasa New Buttermilk Rice Bowl Spicy Korean Rice Bowl Breakfast With Texas Is Now At More Stores! Jimat O'Clock 3PM – 6PM Daily Strawberry Sunday
5.	Marrybrown Malaysia	Get 2X Coke Towers and 10% Additional Vouchers With Minimum Purchase of RM 300 MB Vouchers Selamat Hari Malaysia Hari Nasi Lemak MB 2 Kombo Nasi Lemak MB RM 22 Sahaja N.P Dari RM29 Celebrate Burger Day With Us RM 20 for 10 Spicy Nuggets Grab This Hot Deal!
6.	A&W Malaysia	New Cheesy Fingers Irresistibly Cheesy Happy Labour Day Clock In to Good Food, Good Times Coney Tuesday 50% Off A&W Curly Fries Available All Year Round 365 Come and Get 'Em! Online Pun Boleh! Skip the Que and Order on Our App!

The results of the verbal signs discovered in the online advertisements of six fast food companies are illustrated in Table 1. The researcher was able to identify thirty verbal cues from the data, indicating that fast food ads feature a substantial number of verbal cues in their written content.

4. Discussion

4.1 Verbal Signs in @burgerking_malaysia



Data 1: Burger King Malaysia Online Advertisements extracted from https://instagram.com/burgerking_malaysia

The advertisements shown in Data 1 show Burger King's new products. The advertisement contains several verbal signs. There are three verbal signs found targeted for introducing the new menu which is "Supreme Salmon", "Triple Whopper Jr. with Cheese" and "Mushroom Bliss" which are the signifier of the advertisement. It aims to show the customers that these products are amongst the new burgers that they can try. Supreme Salmon is a dish or menu item that features salmon as the main ingredient. The word "supreme" suggests a high-quality or top-tier dish. It is one of the burgers that contain different types of protein. The patties are made of salmon. Usually, the other burgers patties are either made from chicken or beef; meanwhile, Supreme Salmon has a different choice of protein perhaps targeted at pescatarians customers who only consume fish and seafood but not meat.

Meanwhile, the phrase "Triple Whopper Jr. with Cheese" refers to the menu item or dish offered by a fast food restaurant, likely consisting of three small-sized beef burger patties (the "triple" part), topped with cheese and served on a bun (the "Whopper Jr." part). The verbal signs in this name are "triple" (which indicates that the dish has three patties), and "Whopper Jr." (which suggests that it is a smaller version of the Burger King's Whopper burger). This menu is also most likely in Burger King's premium menu and this burger is probably a downsize from the original Whopper burger since the name was first introduced as "Jr.". So, it is clear that these two burgers might have the same ingredients, lending them the same flavour and texture. However, their only difference might be in terms of the size. The verbal sign "with Cheese" highlights the addition of cheese as a topping. The name is designed to appeal to customers who enjoy a filling and indulgent burger experience. "Triple Whopper Jr. with Cheese" contains three 100% pure beef flame-grilled beef patties as the illustration signifies.

"Get Ready for that Brekkie" is a slogan or tagline used to promote breakfast offerings at Burger King. The phrase "get ready" suggests excitement or anticipation, while "brekkie" is a colloquial term for breakfast in some English-speaking countries. The phrase is a fun and catchy way to get people excited about the breakfast options available. The use of "brekkie" in the slogan also adds a friendly and approachable tone, appealing to a younger audience. Additionally, the slogan implies that the restaurant or cafe has a variety of delicious breakfast options to choose from, encouraging customers to come in and enjoy a satisfying meal.

"Mozzarella Madness" is likely a menu item or dish that heavily features mozzarella cheese, perhaps in the form of a melted, gooey topping or a breaded and fried appetizer. The use of the word "madness" adds an element of excitement or indulgence, suggesting that the dish is particularly rich or flavorful. The alliteration of "Mozzarella Madness" also makes the name memorable and catchy, which could attract customers to try the dish. It also signifies the introduction of a new menu that is not a burger but a cheese stick. The verbal sign found in

here is the word “mozzarella” which shows the selection of cheese is mozzarella. The choice is most probably due to the melting properties that this cheese offers as it melts easily and evenly, making it an ideal cheese for a cheese “madness” experience for the customers. “Get Ready for that Brekkie” is another verbal sign found in the next picture that means this menu is targeted specifically for breakfast time from the image we could see that this menu comes in a set of a burger that has crispy beef strips and fluffy eggs sandwiched between a different type of bun compared to other burgers; the set comes with a cup of black coffee to kick start the day.

Next are the verbal signs of the phrases "mushroom," which indicates the main ingredient, and "bliss," which suggests that the dish is delicious and enjoyable to eat. The word "bliss" is often associated with happiness and pleasure, so using it in the dish's name suggests that eating this mushroom-incorporated burger menu offered for those who want grilled patties and mushrooms in their burgers will be a pleasurable experience. The sentence in the small circle means that the meat of the burger is grilled by fire or flame so that it has a great smoked taste when the customer eats it. The third verbal sign is “Grilled,” which is the signifier of the advertisement. The sentence means they emphasize that the meat they use is grilled and not fried, which is totally different from the other burger. Therefore, it offers a new taste and experience for the customers.

Therefore, the advertisements shown in Data 1 promote Burger King's new products, including the "Supreme Salmon," "Triple Whopper Jr. with Cheese," "Get Ready for that Brekkie," and "Mozzarella Madness." Each menu item features unique verbal signs designed to appeal to customers and entice them to try the new products. The "Supreme Salmon" is a high-quality burger with salmon as the main ingredient and is likely targeted towards pescatarians. The "Triple Whopper Jr. with Cheese" is a downsized version of the classic Whopper burger with the addition of cheese and is designed to appeal to customers who want a filling and indulgent burger experience. The "Get Ready for that Brekkie" tagline promotes Burger King's breakfast offerings and encourages customers to try their delicious breakfast options. The "Mozzarella Madness" menu item is likely a cheesy and indulgent dish featuring mozzarella cheese. Lastly, the "Mushroom Bliss" burger incorporates grilled mushrooms and patties to create a pleasurable experience for the customers. These verbal signs in the advertisements all contribute to the overall message that Burger King offers new, delicious, and exciting menu options for their customers.

4.2 Verbal Signs in @mcdonaldsmalaysia



Data 2: McDonald’s Malaysia Online Advertisements extracted from <https://instagram.com/mcdonaldsmalaysia>

The first verbal sign found in @mcdonaldsmalaysia is "Rilek dan Mengopi Dulu Ice Blended Kopi Susu McCafe". This phrase is in Bahasa Melayu (Malay language) and it means "Relax and have a cup of McCafe's Ice Blended Milk Coffee first". It is a verbal sign encouraging customers to take a break and enjoy a refreshing drink at McCafe. The phrase "Rilek dan

Mengopi Dulu" conveys a relaxed and laid-back atmosphere, inviting customers to take a moment to unwind and enjoy their coffee. The term "Ice Blended Kopi Susu" refers to a specific type of coffee beverage that is blended with ice and condensed milk. The mention of McCafe in the phrase indicates that it is a product that can be purchased at all McDonald's McCafe outlets, creating an association with the brand. Overall, the verbal sign is a call to action, inviting customers to take a break and enjoy a refreshing beverage at McCafe in McDonald's.

The name "Hawaiian Chicken Burger" is a verbal sign that describes the key ingredients of the burger, which are likely chicken and toppings such as pineapple, McDonald's special sauce, or other flavours associated with Hawaiian cuisine. The name is also likely intended to evoke a sense of relaxation and tropical vibes associated with the Hawaiian Islands, which may appeal to customers looking for a flavorful and exotic fast food option.

The phrase "Meriah Bersama" is a verbal sign in Bahasa Melayu that promotes a sense of togetherness and celebration. It could be used in various settings such as in advertisements for festive events or holiday promotions, or in social media captions for photos of group gatherings or parties. The phrase "Meriah Bersama" invokes a positive and welcoming sentiment, inviting people to come together and enjoy each other's company. In the context of McDonald's Malaysia, "Meriah Bersama" could be used as a marketing message to promote their restaurants as fun and welcoming places to dine with family and friends. It can be used to create a festive atmosphere during special occasions such as festive seasons, public holidays, or events. McDonald's Malaysia often introduces special menus or promotions during festive seasons, and "Meriah Bersama" could be used to promote these offerings and encourage customers to come together to celebrate. The verbal sign could also be used to encourage customers to share their McDonald's experience with others on social media platforms or by word of mouth. Overall, "Meriah Bersama" can be seen as a verbal sign that promotes the idea of community, togetherness, and celebration, which are values that align with McDonald's brand identity in Malaysia.

Whereby "Order Relax Enjoy" is a common marketing slogan used by various food and beverage establishments to promote a stress-free dining experience. In the context of fast food chain restaurants like McDonald's, it can be interpreted as a way to make customers feel more comfortable and at ease while they order their food and dine in the restaurant. The phrase "Order" in "Order Relax Enjoy" reminds customers that they are in a fast food establishment and should place their order promptly. The second part, "Relax," suggests that customers can take their time to enjoy their food and surroundings without feeling rushed. The final part of the phrase, "Enjoy," encourages customers to savour their meals and the atmosphere of the restaurant. Overall, "Order Relax Enjoy" is a verbal sign that promotes a positive and enjoyable dining experience.

Lastly, "On Wednesdays, We're 50% Off" is a verbal sign that is used to advertise a special promotion or discount on Wednesdays. The phrase "50% off" indicates that customers can enjoy a significant discount on their purchases, which is likely to encourage them to visit the restaurant or business on Wednesdays. By offering a discount on a traditionally slower day of the week, the business can increase foot traffic and sales while also building customer loyalty. The use of the word "we" in the phrase creates a sense of inclusivity, implying that the restaurant and customers are part of a community that shares this special deal on Wednesdays. The restaurant or business is offering a 50% discount on selected items or all items on that

particular day of the week, which is a way to entice customers to visit on a traditionally slower day.

Hence, each verbal sign discussed in Data 2 serves a specific purpose in promoting McDonald's and its products. The phrase "Rilek dan Mengopi Dulu" invites customers to take a break and enjoy a refreshing beverage at McCafe. At the same time, the name "Hawaiian Chicken Burger" evokes a sense of relaxation and tropical vibes. "Meriah Bersama" promotes community, togetherness, and celebration, which align with McDonald's brand identity in Malaysia. "Order Relax Enjoy" promotes a positive and enjoyable dining experience, while "On Wednesdays, We're 50% Off" is a verbal sign encouraging customers to visit the restaurant on a traditionally slower day by offering a significant discount. These verbal signs contribute to McDonald's marketing strategy in Malaysia and help to create a unique brand identity that appeals to customers.

4.3 Verbal Signs in @kfcmalaysia



Data 3: KFC Malaysia Online Advertisements extracted from <https://instagram.com/kfcmalaysia>

The verbal sign discovered in Data 3 started with the verbal sign "Semarakkan Aidilfitri Bersama Famili Lagi Best Kalau ada Kepci Baru Betul Raya" is a promotional message from KFC Malaysia, encouraging customers to include KFC as part of their Eid al-Fitr celebration with family and friends. The phrase "Semarakkan Aidilfitri Bersama Famili" means "Make Eid al-Fitr more festive with family," while "Lagi Best Kalau ada Kepci Baru Betul Raya" translates to "It would be even better if there's KFC as part of the celebration." The phrase "ada Kepci Baru Betul Raya" refers to KFC's new menu offerings that are suitable for the Eid al-Fitr celebration. By using this verbal sign, KFC is attempting to create an association between its brand and the festive occasion, thereby increasing sales during the holiday season.

"Ramadan Mubarak" is an Arabic phrase used to convey greetings and well wishes during the holy month of Ramadan. It means "Blessed Ramadan". "Ramadan Mubarak" is a common verbal sign used by Muslims during the month of Ramadan to convey their greetings and well wishes to one another. The phrase itself is derived from the Arabic language, which is the language of the Quran, the holy book of Islam. It is a way of acknowledging the importance and sanctity of the month of Ramadan, which is a time of fasting, prayer, and reflection for Muslims around the world. The phrase "Ramadan Mubarak" is often used in various forms of communication during this month, such as verbal greetings, written messages, social media posts, and more.

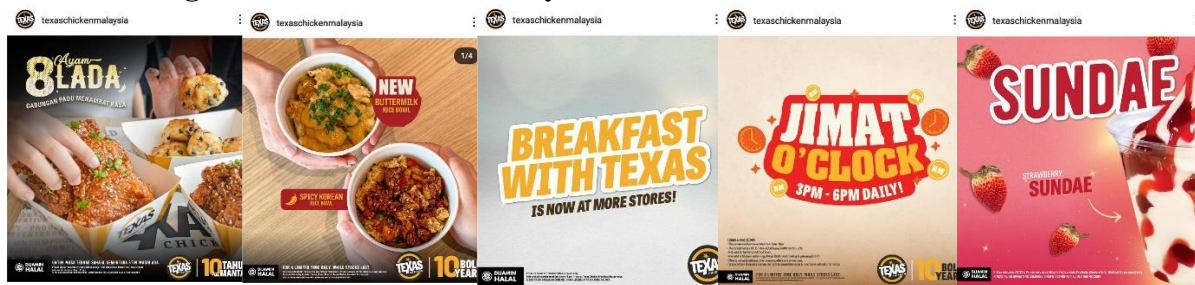
Meanwhile, the next verbal sign found in "Wishing You A Very Happy Thaipusam" is related to a Hindu festival celebrated in several parts of the world including the multicultural country, Malaysia. This phrase is a greeting often used during this festival to convey good wishes to the person being addressed. The phrase "Wishing You A Very Happy Thaipusam" is a verbal sign that conveys greetings and well-wishes to those celebrating the festival. It is a way of acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of cultures and religions in the community.

Next is the verbal sign "You Bring In The New Year We Bring In The Finger Linkin' Goodness" which is a marketing campaign for KFC, which aims to attract customers during the New Year's holiday period. The phrase plays on the idea of KFC's signature finger-licking good taste, and positions KFC as a delicious and convenient option for those looking for food to enjoy during the festive period. The use of the word "you" in the beginning of the phrase also creates a sense of personal connection with the customer, suggesting that KFC is there to support them and add to their celebration.

Another verbal sign is found in "All I Want for Christmas is". This is the beginning of a famous Christmas song by Mariah Carey. "All I Want for Christmas is" is a phrase that's commonly associated with the popular Christmas song by Mariah Carey. The phrase is often used playfully or humorously to express a desire for something specific during the holiday season. While the original context of the song is about longing for a romantic partner, the phrase can be adapted to different situations and desires. For example, someone might say "All I Want for Christmas is for my family to be together" or "All I Want for Christmas is a new phone." It's a flexible and recognizable phrase that captures the spirit of Christmas and the idea of making wishes or asking for what we want. This phrase "All I Want for Christmas is" has been used in McDonald's ads during the holiday season to promote their seasonal menu offerings. The phrase is often followed by a description of a specific menu item or promotion, such as "All I want for Christmas is a McCafe Iced Blended Mocha." This use of the phrase plays on the nostalgic and sentimental associations of the holiday season, while also promoting McDonald's products as a way to enhance the holiday experience.

In conclusion, the verbal signs discussed in these paragraphs highlight the diverse ways language is used to convey messages, promote products, and express cultural traditions. The first verbal sign discovered in Data 3 is a promotional message from KFC Malaysia, encouraging customers to include KFC in their Eid al-Fitr celebration. "Ramadan Mubarak" is a common verbal sign used by Muslims to convey greetings and well wishes during the holy month of Ramadan. "Wishing You A Very Happy Thaipusam" is a greeting often used during the Hindu festival of Thaipusam to convey good wishes to those celebrating. "You Bring In The New Year We Bring In The Finger Linkin' Goodness" is a marketing campaign for KFC that aims to attract customers during the New Year's holiday period. Lastly, "All I Want for Christmas" is a recognizable phrase associated with the popular Christmas song by Mariah Carey, which has been used in McDonald's ads to promote their seasonal menu offerings. These verbal signs demonstrate the power of language to convey meaning and evoke emotions, whether for commercial or cultural purposes.

4.4 Verbal Signs in @texaschickenmalaysia



Data 4: Texas Chicken Malaysia Online Advertisements extracted from <https://instagram.com/texaschickenmalaysia>

The first verbal sign found in @texaschickenmalaysia is “Ayam 8 Lada Gabungan Padu Menambat Rasa” which is a Malay language phrase that roughly translates to “8 Spices Chicken with an Intense Flavor.” The verbal signs used in this phrase are the words “Ayam,” “Lada,” “Gabungan Padu,” and “Menambat Rasa.” The word “Ayam” means chicken, which is the main ingredient of the dish. The word “Lada” means spices, which indicates that the dish is seasoned with various spices. The phrase “Gabungan Padu” means a combination, which suggests that the dish is made by combining different spices and ingredients to create a unique flavour. Finally, the phrase “Menambat Rasa” means intense flavour, which highlights the bold and strong taste of the dish. Together, these verbal signs are designed to convey the unique and intense flavour of the dish, which can be appealing to customers who enjoy bold and flavorful dishes. The use of the specific number “8” suggests that there are eight different spices used in the dish, which can create a sense of curiosity and interest among customers. Overall, the verbal signs used in this marketing message are effective in promoting the dish and conveying its unique flavour profile.

The verbal signs “New Buttermilk Rice Bowl” and “Spicy Korean Rice Bowl” are used to promote two new menu items at Texas Chicken Malaysia. The use of the word “new” highlights the fact that these are recently introduced dishes, which can create a sense of excitement and curiosity among customers. The words “Buttermilk” and “Korean” are used to describe the different flavour profiles of the two dishes. The word “Buttermilk” suggests a creamy and tangy flavour, which is a popular ingredient in Southern-style cuisine. The term “Korean” suggests a spicy and savoury flavour, which is commonly associated with Korean cuisine. The phrase “Rice Bowl” indicates that these dishes are served in a bowl and include rice as the main ingredient. This is a common format for many Asian-inspired dishes and is likely to be appealing to customers who enjoy this style of cuisine. In general, the verbal signs used in these phrases are effective in conveying the unique features of the new menu items and can help to generate interest among customers. The use of descriptive language such as “Buttermilk” and “Korean” can also help customers to imagine the taste and flavour of the dishes, which can encourage them to try the new menu items.

The verbal sign “Breakfast With Texas Is Now At More Stores!” is an advertisement that highlights the expansion of the breakfast menu at Texas restaurants. The use of the word “breakfast” indicates that the restaurant is now offering breakfast items, which may be new or expanded options compared to its previous menu. The phrase “Texas” refers to the restaurant or chain, which is likely a recognizable brand to its target audience. The use of the brand name can help to create a sense of familiarity and trust among customers. The phrase “more stores” indicates that the breakfast menu is now available at more locations than before. This suggests that the restaurant is expanding its reach, which may be appealing to customers who previously could not access the breakfast menu. Overall, the verbal signs used in this advertisement are effective in conveying the message of expansion and highlighting the new breakfast options at Texas restaurants. The use of familiar language and recognizable brand names can help to attract customers and generate interest in the new menu items.

The verbal sign “Jimat O’Clock 3 PM – 6 PM Daily” is a promotional slogan that uses the Malay language to convey a message of savings. The word “Jimat” means savings, which is a powerful motivator for customers. The phrase “O’Clock” is a colloquialism that refers to the hour, and in this case, it indicates that the promotion is time-sensitive. The time specified, “3 PM – 6 PM daily,” reinforces the urgency and exclusivity of the offer, encouraging customers to take advantage of the deal within the specified time frame. “Strawberry Sunday” is a dessert or ice cream dish that combines strawberries with other toppings. The verbal signs in this

phrase are the words "strawberry" and "Sunday," which refer to the ingredients and possibly the day of the week. The use of "Sunday" in this context is likely a play on words with "Sundae," a popular ice cream dessert. The use of a playful, catchy name for the dessert can make it more appealing and memorable to customers. Both verbal signs are effective in promoting the products and encouraging customer engagement. The use of language that is familiar and relatable to the target audience can help to create interest and motivate customers to take action.

Thus, the verbal signs used in the marketing messages at Texas Chicken Malaysia effectively convey their products' unique features and benefits. The first message uses the Malay language to describe the intense and flavorful "8 Spices Chicken." In contrast, the new menu items are explained using descriptive language such as "Buttermilk" and "Korean" to entice customers. The expansion of the breakfast menu is highlighted by the use of the recognizable brand name. The promotion of savings is conveyed using the Malay word for "savings" and a time-limited offer. Finally, the playful and catchy title "Strawberry Sunday" is used to promote the dessert, using familiar and relatable language to the target audience. Overall, using effective verbal signs in the marketing messages can help generate interest and encourage customer engagement with Texas Chicken Malaysia's products.

4.5 Verbal Signs in @marrybrownmalaysia



Data 5: Marrybrown Malaysia Online Advertisements extracted from <https://instagram.com/marrybrownmy>

The verbal sign "Get 2X Coke Towers and 10% Additional Vouchers With Minimum Purchase of RM 300 MB Vouchers" is a marketing message that uses several verbal signs to promote a special offer to potential customers. The phrase "Get" is a call to action that encourages customers to take advantage of the offer. The use of the number "2X" implies that customers will receive two times the usual amount of Coke Towers, which is a visual cue that helps to attract attention and create a sense of added value. The phrase "10% Additional Vouchers" also indicates that customers will receive extra value in the form of vouchers that can be redeemed for future purchases. The phrase "Minimum Purchase of RM 300 MB Vouchers" is a requirement that customers must meet to be eligible for the offer. This is an example of a verbal sign that creates a sense of exclusivity and urgency, as customers must act quickly to take advantage of the offer before it expires. Overall, the verbal signs used in this marketing message are designed to persuade potential customers to purchase RM 300 MB vouchers by offering additional value in the form of extra Coke Towers and vouchers. The use of specific numbers and phrases creates a sense of added value and exclusivity, which can help to increase the perceived value of the offer and encourage customers to take action.

The verbal sign "Selamat Hari Malaysia" used by Marrybrown is a greeting in Bahasa Malaysia that translates to "Happy Malaysia Day." It is a common way of expressing well wishes and congratulations to Malaysians on this special day. By using this verbal sign in their marketing message, Marrybrown is acknowledging and celebrating the significance of Malaysia Day. It

shows that they recognize the importance of this national holiday and are joining in the celebration with their customers. It also creates a sense of connection between Marrybrown and the Malaysian people, which can help to strengthen the company's brand image and reputation. In short, the use of the verbal sign "Selamat Hari Malaysia" by Marrybrown is a way to show respect and appreciation for Malaysia Day and to connect with their customers on a cultural and national level.

The verbal sign "Hari Nasi Lemak MB 2 Kombo Nasi Lemak MB RM 22 Sahaja N.P Dari RM29" is a marketing message that promotes a special deal on two combo meals of Nasi Lemak MB, a popular Malaysian dish. The phrase "Hari Nasi Lemak" means "Nasi Lemak Day," which suggests that this is a promotional event aimed at celebrating and promoting this dish. This verbal sign is likely to catch the attention of customers who are fans of Nasi Lemak and are interested in trying it at a discounted price. The use of the number "2" in "2 Kombo Nasi Lemak MB" is a visual cue that helps to attract attention and create a sense of added value. The phrase "RM 22 Sahaja" indicates that customers can purchase two combo meals for a discounted price of RM 22, which is lower than the regular price of RM 29. The phrase "N.P Dari RM29" emphasizes the savings that customers will receive by highlighting the regular price of the combo meals. Overall, the verbal signs used in this marketing message are designed to persuade potential customers to try Nasi Lemak MB by offering a discounted price for two combo meals. Using specific numbers and phrases creates a sense of added value and emphasizes the savings customers will receive. The phrase "Hari Nasi Lemak" also creates a sense of exclusivity and urgency, which can help to increase the perceived value of the deal and encourage customers to act quickly.

Next is the phrase the verbal sign "Celebrate Burger Day With Us" is a publicizing message that invites customers to celebrate Burger Day with the company. The phrase "Celebrate With Us" creates a sense of inclusivity and encourages customers to join the company in celebrating the occasion. This verbal sign is designed to create a positive emotional association with the company and encourage customers to feel more connected to the brand. The next verbal sign "RM 20 for 10 Spicy Nuggets Grab This Hot Deal!" is an advertisement for a promotional offer that offers ten spicy nuggets for RM 20. Using the specific numbers "10" and "RM 20" creates a sense of added value and emphasizes the savings customers will receive. The phrase "Grab This Hot Deal!" is a call to action that encourages customers to take advantage of the offer. The use of the word "hot" suggests that the deal is popular and in high demand, which can create a sense of urgency and encourage customers to act quickly. Generally, the verbal signs used in this marketing message are designed to persuade potential customers to purchase the promotional offer. The use of specific numbers, phrases, and emotional language creates a sense of added value, exclusivity, urgency, and emotional connection with the brand. These verbal signs are effective marketing techniques that can help to increase sales and build customer loyalty.

4.6 Verbal Signs in @A&W Malaysia



Data 6: A&W Malaysia Online Advertisements extracted from <https://instagram.com/anwmalaysia>

The verbal signs in "New Cheesy Fingers Irresistibly Cheesy" refer to a new menu item or dish likely consisting of fried breaded cheese sticks. The words "new" and "cheesy fingers" create a unique and appealing name for the dish, while the phrase "irresistibly cheesy" highlights the dish's deliciousness. The phrase "New Cheesy Fingers" creates anticipation for customers to try a new menu item, while the words "Irresistibly Cheesy" indicate that the dish is especially flavorful and cheesy, appealing to customers who love cheese. The repetition of the word "cheesy" also emphasizes the dish's main feature, which is the cheese. All in all, the verbal signs in this phrase work together to create a catchy and memorable name for a new menu item that will entice customers to try it.

The verbal signs in "Happy Labour Day Clock In to Good Food, Good Times" refer to a celebratory greeting for the holiday that honours workers. The verbal sign "Happy Labour Day" is a combination of two phrases - "happy" and "Labour Day". It is a phrase used to wish people a happy holiday that celebrates the contributions and achievements of workers. The verbal sign here is the word "happy" combined with "Labour Day" to create a celebratory greeting. "Labour Day" refers to the holiday that celebrates the hard work and achievements of workers, and "happy" is a positive adjective that adds a celebratory and joyful tone to the greeting. Together, these words create a verbal sign that conveys well-wishes and gratitude for the hard work of individuals. The phrase "clock into good food, good times" suggests that the restaurant is a great place to spend the holiday and that customers can enjoy good food and good times while celebrating. To further elaborate, the phrase "Clock In" can be seen as a metaphorical call to action, inviting customers to come and enjoy the restaurant's offerings. The phrase "good food, good times" is a play on words that highlights the enjoyable atmosphere and experience that the restaurant aims to provide on this holiday. Overall, the verbal signs in this message create a positive and welcoming message that is likely to attract customers looking to celebrate Labour Day in a fun and festive way.

"Coney Tuesday 50% Off" is a promotional offer indicating that customers can get a 50% discount on the specific coney menu every Tuesday. The verbal signs here are the words "Coney" (which likely refers to the specific type of hot dog), "Tuesday" (which indicates the day of the week the promotion is valid), and "50% off" (which indicates the amount of the discount). The name "Coney" is typically associated with a hot dog style that originated in Coney Island, New York. By using this term in the promotional offer, the company is likely trying to evoke a sense of nostalgia or authenticity. The phrase "50% off" is a powerful verbal sign that can attract customers looking for a good deal. The combination of these elements creates a memorable and effective marketing message.

"A&W Curly Fries Available All Year Round 365 Come and Get 'Em!" is an advertisement for a popular fast food restaurant's curly fries. The verbal signs here are "curly fries" (which is the menu item being promoted), "all year round 365" (which implies that the product is always available), and the exhortation to "come and get 'em" (which is a call to action). In addition, "A&W" is also a verbal sign in this phrase, which refers to the name of the fast food restaurant. The use of the words "all year round 365" emphasizes that the product is available consistently throughout the year, which can attract customers who are looking for a reliable food item. The phrase "come and get 'em" serves as an encouragement or invitation for customers to try the product, creating a sense of urgency and excitement.

"Online Pun Boleh! Skip the Que and Order on Our App!" is a promotional message that encourages customers to order food using a restaurant's mobile app. The verbal signs here are the phrase "Online Pun Boleh!" (which translates to "You Can Also Order Online!" in Malay),

and the statement "Skip the Que and Order on Our App!" which indicates that customers can avoid waiting in line by using the app to order. The verbal signs in this message are mainly focused on promoting the restaurant's mobile app as a convenient way for customers to order food. The phrase "Online Pun Boleh!" is a catchy and memorable phrase that emphasizes the convenience of ordering online. It is in Malay, which is the national language of Malaysia, where it is common for businesses to use a mixture of English and Malay in their marketing messages to cater to the local audience. Additionally, the phrase "Skip the Que and Order on Our App!" further emphasizes the convenience of using the app to order, as it allows customers to avoid waiting in long lines. Overall, the message is designed to attract customers who are looking for a quick and easy way to order food without having to wait in line or go through the hassle of calling in their order.

To sum up, these paragraphs discuss how different fast food chains utilize verbal cues in their marketing messages. For instance, "New Cheesy Fingers Irresistibly Cheesy" is a catchy name that highlights the main ingredient - cheese - and promotes the dish's deliciousness. "Happy Labour Day Clock In to Good Food, Good Times" is a celebratory message that recognizes workers and invites customers to enjoy good food and good times during the holiday. "Coney Tuesday 50% Off" is a promotional offer that implies customers can receive a 50% discount on a specific menu item on Tuesdays. "A&W Curly Fries Available All Year Round 365 Come and Get 'Em!" emphasizes the availability of a popular menu item and encourages customers to try it. Lastly, "Online Pun Boleh! Skip the Que and Order on Our App!" is a promotional message that promotes the convenience of using the restaurant's mobile app to order food. These examples use verbal cues to create a memorable and effective marketing message likely to entice customers.

The discussion above has discussed how various fast food chains utilize verbal signals in their marketing communications. Verbal signs play a crucial role in creating an emotional association with the brand, encouraging customers to feel more connected, and persuading them to make purchases. Using specific numbers, phrases, and emotional language helps to create a sense of added value, exclusivity, and urgency, and emphasizes the savings customers will receive. The paragraphs also emphasize the power of language to convey meaning and evoke emotions, whether it be for commercial or cultural purposes. Each marketing message uses verbal signs to convey a specific message to potential customers. These verbal signs can significantly impact consumer behaviour, increase sales, build customer loyalty, and strengthen the brand image and reputation. Overall, verbal signs play a crucial role in marketing communication, and their effective use can help to generate interest and encourage customer engagement with the products.

5. Conclusion

Semiotic analysis is a method used to study how signs and symbols convey meaning, and it has been used in linguistics, anthropology, and philosophy. Semiotic analysis has recently been applied to communication design, particularly in analyzing marketing messages and ads. Verbal signs are commonly used in marketing messages and advertisements to communicate the value and benefits of products, create emotional connections with the audience, and drive sales. Fast food companies such as Burger King, McDonald's, Texas Chicken, KFC, MarryBrown, and A&W Malaysia use verbal signs in their marketing messages and advertisements to convey their products' unique features and benefits. The effectiveness of these signs depends on their ability to create a positive emotional association with the brand,

emphasize the value and advantages of the offer, and develop a sense of urgency and exclusivity.

Verbal signs can effectively convey the brand's values and identity, encourage customers to visit the restaurants, and connect with the target audience through cultural or local references. Using positive adjectives, descriptive language, playful names, and specific details can create a clear and compelling message that resonates with customers and drives sales. Time-sensitive promotions can also create urgency and exclusivity, motivating customers to take action. Semiotic analysis can be used to analyze the use of verbal signs in marketing messages and advertisements and to understand how these signs communicate meaning and drive sales. The study examined the use of verbal cues in fast food advertising, and future studies can explore semiotic analysis in other types of ads. Overall, using effective verbal signs can contribute significantly to the success of marketing campaigns and help build brand loyalty and customer satisfaction.

Saussure's semiotics theory and Leech's semiotic analysis share the idea that signs and symbols are used to convey meaning. This concept is essential to understanding the use of verbal signs in marketing messages and advertisements in the fast food industry. Saussure emphasized the importance of the signifier (the word or symbol used) and the signified (the concept or meaning conveyed) and how they are related in a language system. Similarly, in marketing messages, verbal signs are used to connect the product and the consumer by communicating the value and benefits of the product.

Leech's semiotic analysis provides a framework for studying how signs and symbols convey meaning and how they are used in specific contexts. In fast food advertising, verbal signs such as adjectives, descriptive language, playful names, and exact details create a clear and compelling message that resonates with customers and drives sales. Semiotic analysis can examine how these signs convey the brand's values and identity, connect with the target audience, and create a sense of urgency and exclusivity.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to express great appreciation and gratitude to the Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis for funding this publication and special thanks go to the Asian Scholars Network Secretariat and Publication Team for organising an insightful conference and providing a scholarly platform for research publications.

References

- Andina, A. D. (2021). *Discovering The Meaning Of Verbal And Visual Signs In L'oreal Paris Video Advertisement*. Journal Of Language And Applied Linguistics, 02(01), 15-22.
- Barthes, R. (1967). *Elements of Semiology*, trans. A. Lavers and C. Smith. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Dyer, Gillian. (1993). *Advertising as Communication*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Dyer, G. (1993). *The Matter Of Images: Essays On Representations*. Routledge.
- Harrington, A. (2005). *Modern Social Theory*. 1-13.
- Harun, R., Hock, L. K., & Othman, F. (2011). *Environmental Knowledge and Attitude among Students in Sabah*. World Applied Sciences Journal, 14, 83-87.
- Harris, A. L., Lang, M., Yates, D., & Kruck, S. E. (2008). *Incorporating Ethics and Social Responsibility in IS Education*. Journal of Information Systems Education, 22(3), 183-189.

- Jha, A. R. (2017). *A Semiotic Analysis of Portraying Gender in Magazine*. IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science, 22(118), 1-22.
- Keane, W. (2018). *On Semiotic Ideology*. The University of Chicago Journals, 06(01),64-84.
- Leech, G. (1981). *Semantics. The Study of Meaning*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Li, L., & Guo, L. (2019). *A Cross-Cultural Study Of Semiotics In Mcdonald's Advertising In China And The United States*. International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning, 14(13), 66-78.
- Mwongera, C. W., & Matoso, L. B. (2018). *A Comparative Semiotic Analysis Of Fast Food Advertising In The United States And Brazil*. Journal of Advertising and Public Relations, 2(2), 15-28.
- Nadia, N. (2022). *Multimodal Discourse Analysis Of Visual Protest On Climate Change*, English Journal of Indragiri, 06(02), 246-266.
- Nadia, N. (2022). *The Linguistic And Visual Signs In Selected Magazine Advertisements*. The Journal of English Language and Literature, 9(2), 183-192.
- Nadzirah, A. B., & Mohd Shuib, N. L. (2018). *The Use Of Semiotics In Fast Food Advertising: A Case Study Of Mcdonald's And KFC In Malaysia*. Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Environment Management, 3(9), 54-62.
- Nasser Alqahtani, & Abdullah Alqahtani. (2020). *Semiotic Analysis Of Fast Food Advertisements In Saudi Arabia*. International Journal of English Linguistics, 10(1), 58-69.
- Saussure, F. D. (1959). *Course in General Linguistics*. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Sena, I. M. (2016). *The Analysis Of Verbal And Visual Sign Of Adidas Advertisement*. Journal Humanis, 17(01), 104-111.
- Singh, N. G. (2020). *Educational Intervention of Intention Change for Consumption of Junk Food among School Adolescents in Birgunj Metropolitan City, Nepal, Based on Theory of Planned Behaviors*. Journal of Nutrition and Metabolism, 20(01), 1-7.
- Solihatun, N. (2018). *A Semiotic Analysis In Clear Shampoo Commercial Advertisements*. Published thesis. English Department. University Of Sumatera Utara.
- Suwitri, S. (2021). *The Semiotics Of Language: An Analysis Of Signs And Symbols In Everyday Life*. Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, 6(1), 43-51.
- Tariq, F., & Iqbal, A. (2020). *A Semiotic Analysis Of Fast Food Advertising In Pakistan*. International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture, 6(6), 80-89.
- Wardhaugh, R. (1972). *Introduction: What Is Language?* In An Introduction to Linguistics (pp. 1-10). Blackwell Publishing Ltd.