

A VISUAL AND VERBAL ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN REPRESENTATION IN TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENT

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Abstract: The study investigates the representation of children in television advertisement of 3 *Indie+* cellular phone operator. The study is descriptive qualitative and has employed Kress & Leuween's Reading Images (2006) to analyze the visual data, and Halliday' Transitivity System (1994, 2004) which is simplified by Gerot and Wignell (1995) for the analyzing the verbal data. The aim of the study is to examine the representation of children visually and verbally in the 3 *Indie+* cellular phone operator advertisement. Based on the data analysis, the study finds that visually children are represented as a naive person who is "pretending to know" adult life when in fact they are still a child through the use of setting, layout composition, and perspective (shot, gaze). Children are verbally represented through the use of mental and material processes as somebody who tells about their hope, obsession, and aspirations in the future, and their naive imaginations of how an adult life is. In relation to the product advertised the representation signifies that unlike other providers, using 3 *Indie+* is very easy; it is not as hard as to live as adults.

Keywords: advertisement, cellular phone, representation, semiotic, text, and visual grammar.

INTRODUCTION

Representation is the process which links between things, concepts, and signs. In other words, representation is the meaning production of the concepts in our minds through language (Hall, 1997). Danesi (1946, p. 123) defines representation as "the activity of making texts which is constrained by social conventions, by communal experiences, and by other contextual factor". The ideas basically mean that representation is the process in which people use language to produce meanings. Language served as the media to represent meanings. There are, of course

other media that can be used to represent meanings, for instance pictures and advertisement.

Advertisement is the non-personal communication of information which is usually persuasive about product, service, or idea (Bovee as cited in Taflinger, 1996). Goddard (1998) asserts that advertisement is not only about the commercial promotion of branded products, but can also encompass the idea of texts whose intention is to enhance the image of an individual, group or organization. The purpose of the advertisement is to persuade an audience and to bring about changes of

reader's attitude (Rowman, 2008; Varghese & Vilanilam, 2004). Moreover, advertisement can also influence the public, especially to increase or decrease the salience of an issue for the public (Gwiasda, 2001). Advertisement can also convey meanings or ideologies to the audiences, either implicitly or explicitly.

3 Indie+ advertisement is one of the creative advertisement which depicts children to convey the meanings and ideologies to the audiences. *3 Indie+* advertisement uses persuasive words to attract and make people forget that the advertisement is about cellular phone operator advertisement. Despite the fact that the advertisement was reprimanded by the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI), Subagijo, because the advertisement is inappropriate to display children that commented about an adult problems (Sinaga, 2013), the advertisement is still frequently aired on television. Thus, the present study investigates the representation of children in the *3 Indie+* cellular phone operator advertisement.

This study focuses on examining the representation of children in the cellular phone operator advertisement (*3 Indie+*). Therefore, semiotic becomes the basic theory for this study because it brings the notion about representation in the form of texts and media. The analysis of the data for the study is both visual and verbal analysis. The visual analysis is used to examine the images while the verbal analysis is used to examine the verbal texts. The study also uses multimodality, which is "the use of several semiotics modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which those modes are combined" (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001).

LITERARY REVIEW

Kress and Leeuwen (2006) argue that "reading images focuses on the structures of 'grammar' of visual design (color, perspective, framing and composition) and provides the reader with an invaluable 'tool-kit' for reading images, which makes it a must for anyone interested in communication, the media and the arts". They assert that visual structures of representation can either be a narrative process or conceptual process. Narrative process is presenting actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements, while conceptual process is representing participants in terms of their more generalized and more or stable and timeless essence, in terms of class, or structure, or meaning.

They believe that there is a relation between the represented participants in the images and the interactive participants. If the represented participants gaze at viewers, this relation is interpreted as a demand to the viewers, while if there is an absence of gaze at the viewers, it is interpreted as an offer made by the copywriters to the viewers.

There is another dimension to the interactive meanings of images, related to the size of frame. Kress and Leeuwen (2006) state that "the choice of distance can suggest different relations between the represented participants and the viewers". Size of frame is always defined in relation to the human body (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Thus, the close shot (close-up) which shows the head and shoulders of the subjects and the very close shot (extreme close-up) which shows anything less than that, construct an intimate and personal relation between the represented participants and the viewers. The medium shot

which shows approximately at the knees constructs a social relation between the represented participants and the viewers, while in the long shot constructs an impersonal relation between the represented participants and the viewers. Kress and Leeuwen (2006) said that camera angle is an important means of expression in cinematography. They argue that if a represented participant is seen from a high angle, then it indicates that the interactive participant has power over the represented participant. Meanwhile, if the represented participant is seen from a low angle, then it indicates that the represented participant has power over the interactive participant. If the picture is at eye level, then it indicates an equality and there is no power difference. The present study employs reading image to analyze the meanings of frame size, camera angle and the relation between the represented and the interactive participant in each print screen image investigated.

Transitivity becomes an important element in analyzing verbal texts in this study. The verbal texts are analyzed based on types of processes in transitivity: material (process of doing and causing), behavioural (process of physiological), mental (process of sensing), verbal (process of saying), relational (process of being and becoming), and existential (process of existence) (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). The types of processes in transitivity are used to determine the position of boy or girl as the participant in each scenes.

The connotation in fashion is needed to identify connotative meanings of children's clothing in each print screen image. Barnard (2006) elaborates connotative meanings of fashion such as white collar suit signifies higher

economic earning or higher job position; blue collar suit signifies lower job position or manual job; opened collar signifies informality and incapability; fine suit signifies urban and gentlemen; glasses signifies smartness and intellectuality; tie signifies modern and professionalism; fabric shirt and sharp shoe signifies masculinity; jeans signifies democratic, rebellion, modernity, youth; mini trouser and high heel shoe signifies modernity and aggressiveness.

Connotation in color becomes an essential element in this study. This study examines how children are visually represented in the cellular phone operator advertisement (*3 Indie+*). Therefore, the connotative meanings of colors are needed to analyze the clothings of children in each print screen image.

Wilfred (1962), Linschoten & Mansyur (as cited in Kasali, 1995), and Fisher (2004), elaborate a connotative meanings of colors, such as the color of yellow signifies tolerance, light, fast, inspiration, happiness, hope, gold, cheeriness, cowardice, illness, deceit, warmth, excitement, enlightenment; the color of gray signifies independent, stability, seriousness, critical, masculine, and neutral; the color of brown signifies fertility, old, wealthy, melancholy, depression, warmth, and comfortable; the color of white signifies pure, naive, peace, goodness, clean, elegant, plain, and sporty; the color of blue signifies peace, spiritually calm, young, sportive, depression, introvert, delicacy, firm, mellow, science, infinity, transcendent, challenging, serenity, and sad; the color of black signifies formality, darkness, magic, mystery, grief, artist, elegance, conservative, and prestigious; the color of purple signifies royalty, feminine, expressive, young, sensitive, hope,

spiritual obsession, richness, elegant, and sophisticated; the color of green signifies natural, affection, emphatic, young, peace, envious, poison, fresh, wickedness, balancing, harmony, serenity, prosperity, clean, mold, and nausea.

In the present study, techniques of video shooting also become an important element. Techniques of video shooting are used to identify frame size, camera angle and color saturation in each print screen image. There are some technical aspects in the process of video shooting. Those technical aspects are created in order to convey some meanings. Selby and Coedery (1995) introduced some techniques of video shooting such as close up shot signifies intimate or close emotion; long shot signifies object with public or environment; low camera angle signifies being dominated, controlled, and un-authority; color saturation of warm (yellow, orange, red, and gray) signifies optimism, hope, desire, and agitation.

Previous studies which investigate advertisement and representation include the study conducted by Marcellus (2006) which shows that females are depicted to be courteous, faceless, and voiceless in the magazines. Females are also represented as the objects of appeal in the Pakistani magazines (Mahsud, Mirza & Riaz, 2009). Females are portrayed to be dependent, inactive, young and as a product user, while males are depicted to be independent, active and as a product authorities in television advertisement (Siu & Au, 1997; Neto & Pinto, 1998; Kim & Lowry, 2005). A study conducted by Stankiewicz & Rosselli (2008) indicates that females are displayed as a sex object and victims in media images. The findings also show that females are

depicted as targets of violence, manipulation, sexual aggression, lifeless, and in servitude.

In television advertisement, females are frequently depicted at home and social settings, while males at work, outdoors, and business settings. Females play roles of parents and homemakers, while males play roles of interviewers, narrators, celebrities, workers and laborers. Females are frequently displayed in under 30 (young) and as an unmarried, while males are frequently portrayed in the middle-aged. Females are associated with body, food, household, cosmetics/toiletries, clothing, and personal care products, while males are associated with automobile, sport, food/beverages, and electronics products. Females are represented with no arguments while males frequently offer an argument and make an end comment (Neto & Pinto, 1998; Uray & Burnaz, 2003; Kim & Lowry, 2005; Valls-Fernandez & Martinez-Vicente, 2007; Nassif & Gunter, 2008; Prieler et. al, 2011; Luyt, 2011; Arima, 2003). A study conducted by Chick & Hunter (2009) reveals that females are depicted as needy and helpless while males are portrayed as their (females) rescuers. Moreover, the percentage of male characters is higher than female characters in the advertisement (Chick & Hunter, 2009; Valls-Fernandez & Martinez-Vicente, 2007; Martinez et.al, 2013; Luyt, 2011).

Studies on children representation in advertisement are rarely found. Mostly, studies on children investigated the impact of television advertisement on children's attitude (Nassar & Abdulaziz, 2012; Ahsan et.al, 2013) or studies on children investigated the effect of television food advertising on children's food intake and children's

food purchasing behavior (Halford et.al, 2008; Priya et.al, 2010; Haroon et.al, 2011). Therefore, this study is conducted to examine the representation of children in television advertisement.

METHOD

The study is aimed to examine how children are visually and verbally represented in a television advertisement of cellular phone advertisement (*3 Indie+*). This study employs a descriptive qualitative method since this study aimed at understanding the way children are visually and verbally represented in a television advertisement. The qualitative method aims to expand people's understanding of particular things in the world (Hancock et.al, 2009). Therefore, the study is expected to enact people to have a more profound understanding towards how children are represented in a television advertisement.

The data for the study are in the form of verbal and visual text. The visual data are two selected television advertisement of cellular phone operator (*3 Indie+*). Those selected television advertisement with 59 seconds in duration display children narrating about their own aspirations in the future. The verbal texts are the words and sentences accompanying the visual. In collecting the data, the study has used the following procedure. Firstly, determining what advertisement and what social issue represented in the advertisement will be examined. Secondly, collecting the primary data for the analysis by downloading the two videos of the related advertisement from the website (<http://youtube.com>). Thirdly, dividing the selected scenes into 23 print screen images (first video= 12 print screen images and second video=

11 print screen images). Fourthly, transcribing the monologue (one text accompanies one print screen image).

The analysis of the data are both visual and verbal analysis. Visual analysis consists of facial expression, layout composition, clothing, physical appearance, and techniques of video shooting which are based on Barnard (2006), Ekman (2003), Selby and Coedery (1995) and Kress and Leeuwen's theory (2006). Meanwhile verbal analysis relies on Halliday's theory of transitivity (1985). In conducting the study, the following steps have been taken. First, watching the two videos to have thorough understanding. Second, identifying facial expression, clothing, physical appearance, frame size, camera angle and color saturation in each print screen image. Third, analyzing the data using the framework theories. Fourth, making a conclusion based on the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion elaborate visual representation of children to answer the first research question; how children are visually represented in a television advertisement of cellular phone operator (*3 Indie+*); as well as verbal representation of children to answer the second research question; how children are verbally represented in a television advertisement of cellular phone operator (*3 Indie+*); and the explanation will be elaborated further to answer the third research question; what does the representation signify.

Based on the data analysis, the study finds that visually children are represented as actor in the social and outdoor settings. Children are represented with the use of yellow, white, and purple as the dominant

colors of clothing in the advertisement. Children are also represented through the emotion of sadness which is shown by facial expressions such as their open mouth, their down corner of lips, their raised cheeks, and their drooped eyelids. The study also finds that children are represented through the use of close-up

shot which shows their head and shoulders as the dominant frame size in the advertisement. Moreover, children are represented through the use of eye-level camera angle and through the use of warm and cool color saturation in the advertisement. The following picture illustrates this.



Picture 1. The Boy at the Building Construction in the First Version of *3 Indie+* Cellular Phone Operator Advertisement (Scene 4)

Verbally the children are represented as sayer (12 times), actor (9 times), carrier (7 times), senser (5 times), behavior (3 times), and token (1 time) from the total number of clauses in the verbal analysis (37 clauses).

In the study, the visual representation of children in the advertisement was revealed through the visual elements of the advertisement (background, clothes, facial expressions, frame size, camera angle, and color saturation).

In term of background, children are depicted in a classroom (2 times), at a top of a building (1 time), in a car (1 time), at a building construction (3 times), in a courtyard (1 time), at a corridor (1 time), at a food court (1 time), in a kitchen (1 time), at a golf course (1 time), at a roadside (1 time), in a balcony

(1 time), in a restaurant (2 times), in a supermarket (1 time), and unidentified settings because the children are represented with the use of close-up shot (6 times).

Concerning the colors of clothes that are used by the children in the *3 Indie+* cellular phone operator advertisement, the children are represented through the use of yellow (5 times), gray (4 times), brown (2 times), white (6 times), blue (3 times), black (1 time), purple (3 times), green (1 time) and no clothing (3 times). The dominant colors found in the advertisement are yellow, white, and purple. According to Wilfred (1962), Linschoten & Mansyur (as cited in Kasali, 1995), and Fisher (2004), the color of yellow signifies tolerance, light, fast, inspiration, happiness, hope, gold, cheeriness, cowardice, illness, deceit,

warmth, excitement, and enlightenment. In the context of the advertisement, the color of yellow signifies hope; the hope of children for their future. Meanwhile, the color of white signifies pure, naive, peace, goodness, clean, elegant, and sporty (Wilfred, 1962; Linschoten & Mansyur as cited in Kasali, 1995). In the context of the advertisement, the color of white signifies naivete; naivete of children in expressing their opinion about adult life. According to Wilfred (1962) and Fisher (2004), purple signifies royalty, feminine, expressive, young, sensitive, hope, spiritual, obsession, richness, elegant, and sophisticated. In the context of the advertisement, the color of purple signifies obsession; the

obsession of the children to achieve their goal and aspiration. Moreover, the obsession of being adult.

In connection with facial expressions, the children are depicted with the emotions of sadness (15 times), fear (1 time), enjoyable emotion (2 times), and without facial expressions because they do not face the camera (5 times). Children are mostly displayed with the expressions of open mouth, down corner of lips, raised cheeks, and drooped eyelids. According to Ekman (2003), those facial expressions signify the emotion of sadness. Thus, children in the advertisement are frequently represented with sad emotion. Picture 2 illustrates this.



Picture 2. The Girl with Sadness Emotion in the Second Version of 3 *Indie+* Cellular Phone Operator Advertisement (Scene 6)

In relation to frame size, children are represented through the use of close-up shot (16 times), medium close-up shot (1 time), long shot (5 times), and medium shot (1 time). Children are frequently represented through the use of close up shot which shows the head and shoulders of the children as the dominant frame size found in the advertisement. According to Kress and Leeuwen (2006), close-up shot indicates personal relationship between the represented participant and the viewers.

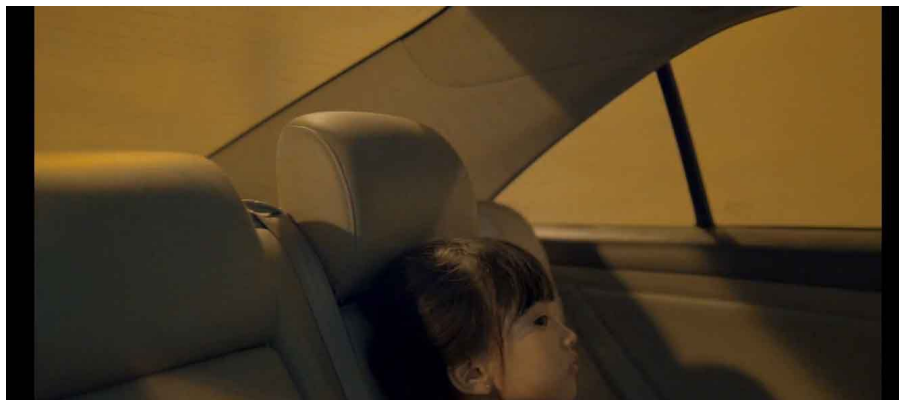
Thus, children are represented with close up shot to construct an intimate and personal relationship with the viewers.

In term of camera angle, children are represented through the use of eye level (22 times) and high camera angle (1 time). Children are represented through the use of eye level as the dominant camera angle found in the advertisement. According to Kress and Leeuwen (2006), an eye level indicates an equality and there is no power difference between the

represented participant and the viewers. Thus, children are represented to show an equality between the children and the viewers. Equality of having desire, hope, obsession to achieve goals and aspirations.

In relation to color saturation, children are represented through the use of warm color saturation (12 times) and cool color saturation (12 times). Children are represented through the use of warm

and cool color saturation (gray and green). According to Selby and Coedery (1995), color saturation of gray indicates optimism, hope, desire, and agitation. In the context of the advertisement, gray color as the color that envelops the whole images accentuates desire; the desire of the children to attain their goals. Picture 3 below shows the warm color saturation used in the advertisement.



Picture 3. The Girl with Warm Color Saturation of Orange in the First Version of *3 Indie+* Cellular Phone Operator Advertisement (Scene 3)

Lastly, boys are more frequently appeared than girl in the *3 Indie+* cellular phone operator advertisement. Boys in the advertisement are 61% from the total number of children, while girls in the advertisement are 39% from the total number of children. In relation to the previous studies about representation, the present study proves that the percentage of boy characters is higher than girl characters in the television advertisement.

As mentioned, verbally children are represented as sayer (12 times) as the dominant participant with verbal process. According to Gerot and Wignell (1995), verbal process is process of saying or symbolically signalling. In the context of the advertisement, children are represented as someone who tells

about things that commonly happen in adult's daily life. For instance, at the end of the month, they only eat an instant noodle for either breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Other examples, when they do not have money, then cannot buy a voucher to call someone, and they can only make a missed call.

Children are represented as actor (9 times) with material process. Material process is process of doing and causing (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). In the context of the advertisement, children are represented as actor who want to hangout with other young entrepreneurs and discussing a big project.

Children are also represented as carrier (7 times) with relational process. Relational process is process of being and having (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). In

the context of the advertisement, children are represented as carrier who become adult and imagine how hard it is to live up.

The study also finds that children are represented as senser (5 times) with mental process. Mental process is process of sensing and perceiving through the five senses (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). In the advertisement, the children are represented as senser who want to work in a multinational company and at a high building. They also want to be a young entrepreneur and a boss.

Moreover, children are represented as behavior (3 times) with behavioral process. According to Gerot and Wignell (1995), behavioral process is process of physiological and psychological behavior. In the advertisement, children are represented as behavior who grow up and become adult.

CONCLUSIONS

This present study has investigated the representation of children in *3 Indie+* cellular phone operator advertisement. The study answered the following research questions: how children are visually represented in a television advertisement of cellular phone operator (*3 Indie+*); how children are verbally represented in a television advertisement of cellular phone operator (*3 Indie+*); and what the representation signify.

Children in the *3 Indie+* cellular phone operator advertisement are represented through some ways. The representation of children in the advertisement was revealed through the visual elements of the advertisement (background, clothes, facial expressions, frame size, camera angle, and color saturation) and the verbal analysis (transitivity).

Overall, from the ways of *3 Indie+* cellular phone operator advertisement represent children, it can be inferred that children are visually represented as somebody who we know; somebody we are close to. They are equal with the viewers in terms of desire, hope, and obsession to achieve their goals and aspirations. Children are also visually represented as being a naive person who is "pretending to know" adult life when they are still a child and they do not having the experiences of living an adult life. Their facial expression; the sad emotion, expresses sympathetic gesture towards the hardship they think is experienced by an adult.

Children are verbally represented as somebody who tells about their aspirations in the future; their naive imaginations of how an adult life is; having to face many problems, especially contributed by the financial problems. They imagine when they grow up and become adult, they have to face many problems because live as a child is not as hard as to live as an adult.

Thus, in the context of the advertisement, children are represented as a bridge between provider and consumer of what the customers want. The message sent by the operator can be understood that unlike other provider, using *3 Indie+* is very easy, it is not as hard as to live as an adult, because *3 Indie+* advertisement gives a convenience to the consumer with the service of 'use it first and pay it later', without reservation and blockade. Hence, *3 Indie+* facilitates the consumers, especially adults who usually face the financial problems, in using the cellular phone operator.

In regard with the findings, for other researchers who want to conduct study on the same issue are suggested to

explore the representation of children in other kinds of advertisement. The other researchers can compare the representation of children in some kinds of cellular phone operator advertisement or the other researchers can conduct the analyses to other kinds of advertisement, because studies on children representation in advertisement are still rarely found.

The other researchers are suggested to compare the representation of girls and boys in the advertisement with the representation of man and women in the advertisements and the other researchers are suggested to reveal the ideologies behind the comparison of those representations.

Moreover, the other researchers are suggested to conduct the visual analysis of children representation with focus on using one of the visual elements (setting, facial expression, frame size, camera angle, color saturation) in order to get a deep analysis in the visual analysis.

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