A Semantic Study of Connotative Meaning in Television Advertisement Messages

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Abstract. This study aims to explore the connotative meanings embedded in television advertisement messages through a semantic approach. As a form of mass communication, advertisements do not only convey messages directly (denotatively), but also imply additional meanings that can influence the audience's emotions, perceptions, and behavior. In this research, the author examines several television advertisements from various product categories—such as food, beverages, beauty products, and digital services—by focusing on the use of symbolism, word choice, and cultural context that shape connotative meanings. The research method employed is descriptive qualitative with content analysis techniques. The findings indicate that connotative meanings in advertisements are often used to build a positive image, evoke emotional responses, and enhance product appeal through associations with social, cultural, and psychological values. These results highlight the importance of understanding connotative meanings in order to foster media literacy and critical awareness of messages received through television broadcasts.

Keywords: Semantics, Connotative Meaning, Television Advertisement

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi makna konotatif yang terkandung dalam pesan iklan televisi melalui pendekatan semantik. Sebagai bentuk komunikasi massa, iklan tidak hanya menyampaikan pesan secara langsung (denotatif), tetapi juga mengandung makna tambahan yang dapat mempengaruhi emosi, persepsi, dan perilaku audiens. Dalam penelitian ini, penulis menganalisis beberapa iklan televisi dari berbagai kategori produk—seperti makanan, minuman, produk kecantikan, dan layanan digital—dengan fokus pada penggunaan simbolisme, pilihan kata, dan konteks budaya yang membentuk makna konotatif. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik analisis konten. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa makna konotatif dalam iklan sering digunakan untuk membangun citra positif, memicu respons emosional, dan meningkatkan daya tarik produk melalui asosiasi dengan nilai-nilai sosial, budaya, dan psikologis. Hasil ini menyoroti pentingnya memahami makna konotatif untuk meningkatkan literasi media dan kesadaran kritis terhadap pesan yang diterima melalui siaran televisi.

Kata kunci: Semantik, Makna Konotatif, Iklan Televisi

INTRODUCTION

Television advertisements are a powerful form of mass communication that significantly influence public perception and consumer behavior (Rauf, 2020). These advertisements not only present direct information about products but also convey connotative meaning—implicit messages that appeal to the emotional and psychological aspects of viewers. Through various visual and verbal techniques such as symbolism,

narrative, and cultural context, advertisements create deeper associations beyond their literal meaning (Berger, 2013) cited in (Kanwal et al, 2024).

Within the field of semantics, which focuses on the study of meaning and symbols in language, advertisement messages can be analyzed on two levels: denotative meaning, which is the explicit, literal interpretation, and connotative meaning, which includes the emotional, cultural, or subjective associations evoked by signs and symbols (Chandler, 2007) cited in (Handayani & Indah, 2022). In practice, television advertisements often rely on connotation to enhance product appeal by associating it with social, psychological, or aesthetic values (McQuail, 2010) cited in (Nuweihed & Trendel, 2023). For instance, a beauty commercial might not only highlight the product's effectiveness but also present an idealized image of confidence, success, or social status (Marsha, 1991) & (Rajendrah et al, 2017).

A semantic analysis of advertisements reveals that connotative meaning is not formed in isolation but rather shaped by the interaction between signs—both verbal and visual—and the cultural context in which the advertisement exists (I Gede Jody & Ni Wayan, 2024). Therefore, exploring connotative elements in advertising is crucial for uncovering the subtle messages that influence audiences indirectly (Elliott, 2013) cited in (Campbell et al 2022).

This study aims to examine the connotative meanings embedded in various television advertisements across different product categories, such as food, beverages, beauty items, and digital services. A descriptive qualitative method is employed, using content analysis to explore the use of symbolism, word choice, and cultural elements in shaping implicit messages. Additionally, this research emphasizes the importance of media literacy, encouraging the public to critically engage with advertising messages and recognize the persuasive strategies advertisers use (Levine, 2015) cited in (Yadav & Verman, 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the connotative meanings embedded in television advertisements. The primary method used is content analysis, which allows the researcher to examine the symbolic, linguistic, and cultural elements that contribute to the construction of connotative meanings in advertisements

(Masud et al, 2025). The focus of this research is to explore various product categories, such as food, beverages, beauty products, and digital services, with the aim of identifying implicit messages that can influence emotions, perceptions, and consumer behavior.

The content analysis technique used in this study involves systematically examining television advertisements to identify themes, symbols, word choices, and visual elements that evoke connotative meanings. This method enables the researcher to understand how advertisements utilize these elements to establish emotional connections with the audience and link products to social or cultural values (Berger, 2013). This study analyzes both verbal and non-verbal elements in advertisements, including the language used, imagery, and overall narrative structure to uncover underlying messages.

The advertisements selected for analysis are purposively chosen, meaning that ads from various product categories are deliberately selected for their potential to convey connotative meanings. A sample of advertisements is drawn from a range of popular television programs to ensure diversity in product types and target audiences. Each advertisement is analyzed in depth to identify the symbols, word choices, and cultural references that play a role in constructing connotative meanings. This approach allows the researcher to understand how advertisements not only convey explicit messages but also build emotional and psychological associations with products (Chandler, 2007) cited in (El-Dali, 2019).

For data analysis, this study uses a thematic approach, which focuses on categorizing and interpreting various symbols, metaphors, and associations present in the advertisements. By identifying patterns and similar themes across the ads, the researcher can draw conclusions about how connotative meanings shape consumer perceptions and behaviors. This approach also enables a deeper understanding of how advertisements influence cultural values and social norms through the strategic use of symbolic elements (McQuail, 2010) cited in (Yusnaini et al, 2025).

Overall, the descriptive qualitative research method, supported by content analysis, provides a strong framework for examining the relationship between language, imagery, and cultural context in television advertisements. By emphasizing connotative meanings, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how advertisements affect consumer decision-making and emotional responses, as well as the importance of media literacy in recognizing these subtle yet influential messages.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research investigated various television advertisements from different product sectors—such as food, beverages, beauty items, digital platforms, and automotive goods—to uncover how connotative meanings are conveyed using a semantic lens. Employing content analysis, the study aimed to identify how word selection, symbolism, and cultural cues are strategically utilized to shape consumer interpretation and emotional response.

1. Food Commercials: Emotional Symbolism of Family and Warmth

In food-related advertisements, messages often go beyond nutritional value, evoking themes of love, comfort, and familial bonding. For instance, a breakfast cereal ad showcasing a cheerful family meal subtly communicates a sense of togetherness and emotional warmth.

While the surface meaning is about eating breakfast, the deeper connotative message suggests a happy, connected family life. This reflects how semantic elements, such as imagery and phrases, are crafted to trigger emotional identification and cultural values (Chandler, 2007).

2. Beverage Commercials: Energy, Freedom, and Lifestyle Identity

Beverage ads, especially for energy or soft drinks, frequently use energetic visuals and motivational taglines like *"Refresh your freedom"* or *"Awaken your spirit."*

These messages go beyond physical refreshment, linking the drink to personal empowerment, freedom, and enthusiasm. The connotative meanings are embedded in both language and design, suggesting that consumption reflects a dynamic and independent lifestyle (McQuail, 2010).

3. Beauty Product Commercials: Self-Worth and Social Validation

In beauty advertisements, brands appeal to viewers' desire for confidence and social approval. Phrases like *"Your radiance is your strength"* imply that beauty leads to personal power and acceptance.

Such ads go beyond skincare or makeup, representing connotative associations with self-esteem and societal standards. This supports Leech's (1981) idea that language in advertising carries emotional and social meaning that connects consumers to broader identity narratives.

4. Digital Service Ads: Simplicity, Control, and Efficiency

Digital platforms—such as mobile apps or e-payment services—use slogans like *"Life in your hands"* to emphasize convenience and autonomy.

Though the literal meaning refers to technology use, the connotative implications point to control, self-sufficiency, and modern independence. This reveals how semantics in advertisements create associations with technological empowerment and contemporary values.

5. Automotive Ads: Aspiration, Power, and Social Prestige

Vehicle commercials often position products as extensions of the consumer's identity and aspirations. Lines like *"Drive your lifestyle"* or *"Unleash the road"* present the vehicle as a symbol of freedom, sophistication, and status.

These ads construct connotative meanings that reflect not just transportation, but ambition and achievement. Through symbolic visuals and strong phrases, advertisers utilize semantic strategies to link the product to prestige and mobility (Saussure, 1983).

CONCLUSION

This research investigated how television advertisements employ semantic techniques to uncover the connotative meanings hidden within promotional messages for various products, including food, beverages, beauty products, digital services, and cars. By focusing on the symbolism, language choices, and cultural context, this study demonstrated that advertisements go beyond literal meanings to affect consumer emotions, attitudes, and behaviors.

The results show that television advertisements commonly utilize connotative meanings to amplify emotional appeal, build brand identity, and connect products with wider social and cultural values. For example, ads for food often associate products with family, warmth, and shared moments, while beauty product ads focus on self-esteem, empowerment, and social approval. Commercials for digital services highlight convenience and empowerment, while automotive ads connect cars to freedom, social status, and sophistication. These deeper connotative meanings shape not only how the products are perceived, but also how consumers relate to them on a personal level.

This study highlights the importance of semantics in understanding how advertisements work. By examining both the denotative and connotative aspects of advertising, it becomes clear how semantic analysis offers valuable insights into advertising strategies. The connotative meanings within advertisements not only influence purchasing decisions but also play a significant role in shaping social and cultural expectations (Chandler, 2007; McQuail, 2010).

Additionally, this research emphasizes the need for media literacy. Given the constant exposure to advertising, being aware of the connotative meanings embedded in these messages is crucial for consumers to make informed choices. Media literacy empowers individuals to interpret advertising tactics critically, helping them avoid being influenced by persuasive techniques and encouraging decision-making based on personal values (Levine, 2015; Berger, 2013).

In conclusion, semantics is key to understanding how television advertisements function as cultural tools that influence consumer behavior, social norms, and identity formation. By analyzing the connotative meanings within advertisements, viewers can engage more critically with media and make more informed choices aligned with their true values.

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