The metaphor of micin generation in an MSG product commercial

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ABSTRACT: Advertising, as a persuasive social strategy, is inseparable from the cultural context that surrounds it. The controversy that developed in the community surrounds the use of flavoring ingredients, or *micin*, and the *micin* generation that is assumed to be a presentation of the side effects caused by the product. The problems in the advertisement itself are related to the strategy of delivering the message, in this case it is about what is to be conveyed and how the message is interpreted by consumers or viewers of the commercial. Roland Barthes' semiotics with its order of the stages of meaning, i.e., denotation, connotation, myth, and ideology, were used as research methods in this study. The purpose of this research was to find out, through academic studies, how consumers or viewers comprehend and interpret the ideas and messages in commercials.

Keywords: commercial, micin, idea, message, micin generation

1 INTRODUCTION

The messages in commercials are a persuasive social strategy that intends to influence the way people perceive the purchase and consumption of certain goods. It is often interpreted differently by consumers or viewers. It relates to the cultural context behind them.

The commercial about *Sasa* food flavoring (*micin*) as a research object was chosen due to the television commercial some time ago that became a concern on social media (Sasa Melezatkan 2020). This commercial is considered as a breakthrough against the negative stigma of society toward *micin* (food flavoring) consumption and the *micin* generation.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Advertising is a commercial and impersonal way an organization can communicate with consumers and advertise its products to the target audience through mass media (Lee & Johnson 2018). In its development, advertising evolved into a form of a persuasive social strategy that intends to influence the way people perceive the purchase and consumption of certain goods. Positioning and creating images are the main techniques in producing a strong commercial. Advertisers emphasize not only the product, but also the social significance that is expected to be materialized from purchasing the product (Danesi 2010). Metaphor as a rhetorical strategy used in advertising to provide meaning to a certain product. In context of television, in which advertising serves as a communication media, advertisement creators serve as senders of messages or ideas; advertisement viewers serve as readers of ideas; and an advertisement serves as the medium through which the ideas are being conveyed. As the result of the relations between the verbal and symbolic elements in the advertisement structure, the message in the advertisement is conveyed in a narrative. Advertising on the television media has similar characteristics as film, consisting of its physical structure and constituent elements. The structure of the film consists of shots, scenes, and sequences. The constituent elements consist of narrative elements (story and plot, characterization, main elements, space, time, and story

information) and cinematic elements (mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, and sound) (Pratista 2008).

The message in advertising is the main element as object of research in semiotics. A commercial contains three elements: (1) a sign (text), the entity (object) being advertised; (2) context in the form of environment, people or other beings giving meaning to objects; and (3) text (in the form of writing) which strengthens the meaning (anchoring) (Piliang 2010). In the text significance, Barthes in Thwaites and Davis (2009) divided it into denotation and connotation order. Denotation appears to be something after true meaning, with a strong relationship between the signifier and the signified. The connotation, as the second order of significance of the text or signifier, appears as a rather less tangible, imaginary, or illusory meaning. Next, is the myth—the second stage of signification—which constitutes of a way of thinking of a particular culture toward some matters, a manner to conceptualize or comprehend matters (Fiske 2007), and ideology as an illusory belief in the form of pseudo-ideas and pseudo-awareness (Fiske 2007).

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The television advertisement *Welcome Back Micin SWAG Generation* was the object of the research conducted by the author. This is a commercial for an MSG (Monosodium Glutamate) product from the Sasa brand from PT Sasa Inti, the commercial has been broadcasted on television since early 2020, lasting for 59 seconds of duration (Sasa Melezatkan 2020). The analysis of MSG Sasa's commercial text was carried out toward the narrative and cinematic elements as a sign and sign systems. Text analysis was performed based on narrative, text elements, and cinematic elements.

The results of the text analysis denotatively showed that these commercials used the personification metaphor, wherein the Sasa's food flavoring product (MSG) was represented as *micin swag* generation's people. MSG which stands for Monosodium Glutamate is identified with *Micin Swag Generation*. The text element and narrative construction of the commercial were used to build the new comprehension and significance about the product.

Table 1. Text analysis: visual, film semantics, and meaning units.

No	Visual Narrative	Narrative and Text Element (Object, Context, Anchoring)	Cinematic Elements and Meaning Units
1		<i>Object:</i> a group of people in the room. <i>Context:</i> swag generation's socializing space	Subjective camera <i>angle</i> , <i>straight camera angle</i> viewpoint. The swag generation's closeness and relaxed atmosphere
2		<i>Object:</i> two swag generation girls holding a flag outside the room. <i>Context:</i> swag generation's socializing space <i>Anchoring:</i> We are MSG	Subjective camera <i>angle</i> , <i>straight camera angle</i> viewpoint, and it used symmetric composition. The MSG group's liberty and identity.
3		<i>Object:</i> a girl holding a megaphone <i>Context:</i> a room with a plastic background <i>Anchoring:</i> <i>We speak outloud.</i>	Subjective camera <i>angle</i> , <i>straight angle camera</i> viewpoint, and using symmetric composition. The declaration of identity and existence.

4		<p><i>Object:</i> a young man in a room</p> <p><i>Context:</i> a closed room</p> <p><i>Anchoring:</i> the Sasa's product banding</p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>straight angle</i>, <i>close-up</i> camera viewpoint</p> <p>The declaration of identity.</p>
5		<p><i>Object:</i> a young man walks upon the wall</p> <p><i>Context:</i> doing parkour</p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>low angle</i> camera viewpoint</p> <p>Traversing the obstacles efficiently and as quickly as possible</p>
6		<p><i>Object:</i> a group of young men jumped and broke through the lettering</p> <p><i>Context:</i> outdoor</p> <p><i>Anchoring:</i> <i>We break boundaries</i></p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>straight angle</i> camera viewpoint, and using symmetric composition.</p> <p>Breaking through the boundary together.</p>
7		<p><i>Object:</i> a woman slicing vegetables</p> <p><i>Context:</i> moving from the kitchen to an open space</p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>high angle</i> camera viewpoint, and using <i>over shoulder</i></p> <p>Routine</p>
8		<p><i>Object:</i> a woman in the kitchen</p> <p><i>Context:</i> moving from the kitchen to an open space and the costume changed.</p> <p><i>Anchoring:</i> <i>We live the life</i></p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>low angle</i> camera viewpoint</p> <p>Breaking through the boundary</p>
9		<p><i>Object:</i> white text</p> <p><i>Context:</i> a dark lane in a building</p> <p><i>Anchoring:</i> <i>We follow our passion</i></p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>straight angle</i> camera viewpoint, and using symmetric composition.</p> <p>Moving, affirmation.</p>
10		<p><i>Object:</i> two young women confidently crossing the road</p> <p><i>Context:</i> public space</p> <p><i>Anchoring:</i> <i>We are confident</i></p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>straight angle</i> camera viewpoint, and using symmetric composition.</p> <p>Confident.</p>
11		<p><i>Object:</i> a group of people in a room</p> <p><i>Context:</i> swag generation's socializing space</p> <p><i>Anchoring:</i> the Sasa's product banding</p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>low angle</i> camera viewpoint, dynamic, neutral <i>screen direction</i>.</p> <p>The swag generation's closeness and relaxed atmosphere with the product's identity.</p>

12		<p><i>Object:</i> a young woman walks in front of three old men</p> <p><i>Context:</i> in the office space</p> <p><i>Anchoring:</i> <i>We lead the way</i></p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>straight angle</i> camera viewpoint.</p> <p><i>Leader.</i></p>
13		<p><i>Object:</i> a text in front of a fast moving background</p> <p><i>Context:</i> outdoor, evening</p> <p><i>Anchoring:</i> <i>Welcome Micin SWAG Generation</i></p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>straight angle</i> camera viewpoint.</p> <p>The brisk change in welcoming the Micin Swag Generation.</p>
14		<p><i>Object:</i> a group of young people of swag generation walking together</p> <p><i>Context:</i> outdoor</p> <p><i>Anchoring:</i> <i>#EnjoyLifeFully</i> and <i>We are MSG</i></p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>high angle</i> camera viewpoint.</p> <p>The declaration and identity of Micin Swag Generation</p>
15		<p>Narrative: MSG made of the molasses that fit for human consumption</p> <p><i>Object:</i> text, packaging, and product brand</p> <p><i>Anchoring:</i> <i>We are MSG</i> dan brand product</p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>straight angle</i> and symmetrical camera viewpoint.</p> <p>Declaration and product's identity.</p>
16		<p>Narrative: ...As long as the wrapper isn't eaten.</p> <p><i>Object:</i> text</p> <p><i>Anchoring:</i> MSG made of the molasses that fit for human consumption, as long as the wrapper isn't eaten.</p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>straight angle</i> and symmetrical camera viewpoint.</p> <p>Declaration and product's identity.</p>
17		<p><i>Object:</i> text</p> <p><i>Anchoring:</i> PDGKI (Indonesian Clinical Nutrition Doctors Association): the subtle consumption of seasoning is not harmful to health.</p>	<p>Subjective camera <i>angle</i>, <i>straight angle</i> and symmetrical camera viewpoint.</p> <p>The statement of authorized institution.</p>

Meanwhile, connotatively it opened up possibilities for dialectical interpretation of messages related to the use of the *Micin Swag Generation* tagline. *Micin* generation and *swag* generation are included in Generation Z, whose characteristics are varied. The *swag* generation is more likely to be considered to have positive values, while the *micin* generation was given a negative stigma. The word *swag* is another word for *cool* or *gangster fashion style*. *Swag* is assumed as an acronym of “*style with a little bit gangsta*”. The *micin* generation, however, is used to judge the strange, unearthly, unreasonable, difficult to understand, love to show off on social media, and oblivious

behavior. The *micin* generation is assumed to be a generation that has consumed too much *micin* or MSG, as if their level of intelligence is decreased.

The results of the myth analysis relating to the positive values in the Generation Z characteristics are: (a) confidence in expressing opinions; (b) mastering technology and having the potential to lead in the future; and (c) like social activities and enjoy life. Sasa's MSG products delivered an ideology of pseudo-awareness through a metaphorical narrative that represents the positive values of *micin swag generation* through the products offered.

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it can be concluded that there is a mythical dialectic of positive values in the cultural system and values represented in the advertisement of Sasa's MSG products. Through the narrative of personification and metaphor, the commercial of the very product offers an ideology of pseudo-awareness to the consumers, wherein the product is a representation and is only identified by positive values of the *micin swag generation*. These commercials formalize a pseudo-awareness that by consuming the product, people can obtain (only) the positive values of the *micin swag generation*, and put aside the negative stigma of society toward the *micin generation*.

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