

## Sarcasm Found in Anti Greenwashing Movement Campaign Posters on Beverage Products: A Semiotic Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

The aims of this research is to reveal the meaning of signs that represent sarcasm in the Anti-Greenwashing Campaign Posters uploaded by an anti-greenwashing Instagram account called @greenwashmyballs with a semiotic approach. The semiotic theory used to support this research is Charles Sanders Peirce's (1931) theory. In addition to revealing its meaning, this research also reveals the types of sarcasm that are represented. The disclosure of sarcasm types is supported by Elisabeth Camp's theory (2012). This research uses descriptive qualitative method. Purposive sampling was used to select the sample. The researcher found 49 signs classified into 27 symbols, 13 icons, and 9 indexes and all of them represent sarcasm. In addition, the researcher found 3 posters using propositional sarcasm, 2 posters using lexical sarcasm, 2 posters using like-prefixed sarcasm, and 1 other poster using illocutionary sarcasm.

Keywords: greenwashing, Peirce, sarcasm, semiotics

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap makna tanda yang merepresentasikan sarkasme dalam Poster Kampanye Anti-greenwashing yang diunggah oleh akun Instagram anti-greenwashing bernama @greenwashmyballs dengan pendekatan semiotika. Teori semiotika yang digunakan untuk mendukung penelitian ini adalah teori Charles Sanders Peirce (1931). Selain mengungkap maknanya, penelitian ini juga mengungkap jenis-jenis sarkasme yang direpresentasikan. Pengungkapan jenis-jenis sarkasme didukung oleh teori Elisabeth Camp (2012). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif. Purposive sampling digunakan untuk memilih sampel. Peneliti menemukan 49 tanda yang diklasifikasikan ke dalam 27 *symbol*, 13 *icon*, dan 9 *index* dan semuanya mewakili sarkasme. Selain itu, peneliti menemukan 3 poster yang menggunakan *propositional sarcasm*, 2 poster yang menggunakan *lexical sarcasm*, 2 poster yang menggunakan *like-prefixed sarcasm*, dan 1 poster lainnya yang menggunakan *illocutionary sarcasm*.

Kata kunci: greenwashing, Peirce, sarkasme, semiotika

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### INTRODUCTION

Activities and human life require energy to carry it out. The energy that humans need comes from foods which are a basic of human right (Hossain et al., 2018). Because there are so many activities carried out, humans hope that they can use their time as effectively as possible. Humans, especially entrepreneurs, begin to innovate and create fast food restaurant business. With so many fast-food companies, competition arises between them. This competition encourages companies to

keep racking their brains to stay on top. Many companies continue to make changes and new innovations to become their attraction, such as conducting campaigns.

Conducting campaigns is one way for companies to create the attractiveness of their products. Campaign itself is a series of activities held by a group of people with specific intentions and goals, for example social or political goals. Campaigns are also carried out to voice an opinion, but on a larger scale as social marketing campaigns have a

wide range of audiences (Henley et al., 2011). Many media are used to support this campaign by creating and distributing posters. All the ideas to be conveyed are poured out in the poster. On the other hand, there is a phenomenon regarding how the earth began to get 'sick' has inspired many people to take action that can help make this planet better. Therefore, "save the earth" is the most loved theme by both the creators of the campaign and the targets of the campaign. With the great interest of customers to support all the things that appertain with "save the earth" thing, many companies are taking advantage of this phenomenon for the benefit of their companies, including advertising. In this case, companies tend not to pay any attention to the side effect and the worst thing that could happen. They only focus on the company profits and their marketing targets.

These companies voice how they really support to make the earth better. But in reality, they are actually one of the main causes of the destruction that occurs on this planet. Statista is an online portal that provides fact-based data from a wide range of sources include market researchers, trade organizations, scientific publications, 3 and government sources on over 600 industries. Based on data from Statista, America's production of plastic waste has always increased, even in 2021 it has reached 123,915 million pounds (Plastic Waste in the United States - Statistics & Facts | Statista, n.d.). This triggers catastrophic disaster. Just like global warming, there are a lot of natural disasters would happen due to the production and marketing process of their products. That is what we called as greenwashing phenomenon (Mengenal Greenwashing Dan Perusahaan Yang Diduga Melakukannya... Halaman All - Kompas.Com, n.d.).

Circumstances in which companies deceive by claiming their products are environmentally friendly, but in reality, they are not. They do this only to advertise their products and find more consumers. An ecologist named Jay Westervelt coined the term "Greenwashing" phenomenon for the first time in 1986 (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020). According to Siano et al., (2017), they associated greenwashing phenomenon with symbolic behavior. Gallicano (2011) supports this idea by stated that the term greenwashing phenomenon has evolved as people identify contradiction between actual corporate behavior and eco-friendly claims (Gallicano, 2011). Choice (2010) also defines

greenwashing phenomenon as "misleading consumers about a company's environmental commitments and performance, as well as actively communicating about their environmental performance".

Greenwashing phenomenon is something that should be fought because it has a very bad impact. To prevent and stop this greenwashing phenomenon, anti-greenwashing phenomenon campaigns and movements have been held. This movement was created with the hope that people can be wiser in becoming consumers and more careful in choosing products, and not be easily tempted by advertisements for products claiming to be "ecofriendly". This movement also uses posters to do the campaign and voice their wishes. As people know, posters cannot contain what they want to convey in detail and clearly. This is because the poster has limited space due to the design used by the poster. Sel & Aktas (2019) stated that posters are typically lack of text and are instead adorned with vibrant, eye-catching, and occasionally unexpected visual elements. Therefore, there are many signs that represent certain meanings in the poster to fit the design and use the space more effectively. To define the messages on the poster, the researcher needs knowledge to unveil the meaning of every sign in the posters.

The study of signs is called semiotics. By utilizing this semiotic science, this research is going to reveal the meaning of every sign in the posters so that people can catch the intention more easily. Charles Sanders Peirce is a famous linguist who put forward his theory and is an important person in the field of semiotics. Danesi (2004) stated that Peirce's theory is a theory which states that there are three types of signs that are used commonly in all kinds of semiotic work recently called icons, indexes, and symbols. Every icon, index, and symbol contained in the poster represent something else, for instance, sarcasm. This sarcasm, besides making the poster more attractive, is able to convey its message but in a different nuance. Based on Elisabeth Camp's (Camp, 2012) theory, there are 4 types to classify the type of sarcasm, 5 namely propositional sarcasm, lexical sarcasm, like-prefixed sarcasm, and illocutionary sarcasm. With these two theories and knowledge, researcher can describe the meaning contained in the posters more easily.

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**METHOD**

This analysis used a descriptive qualitative method. Therefore, this analysis explains the data descriptively, accurately, and factually based on the objectives and research questions. The objects to be analysed in this research are eight campaign posters regarding greenwashing phenomenon uploaded by <https://www.instagram.com/greenwashmyballs/>. Since there were 248 posters uploaded by the account, researcher decided to only analyze the posters which uncover greenwashing phenomenon by beverage companies which are Innocent, Coca cola, Starbucks, and Sprite.



Researcher collected the posters as data with techniques according to Creswell (2014) that are observation and document analysis. After selected the data, the researchers analyzed the data using Charles S. Peirce's theory. After finish analyzed the data, the researchers provide results and discussion. The researcher observed and looked for the Instagram account that have posters about greenwashing phenomenon. After that, the researcher took notes and maps the required information as the result of the observations. Document analysis is the process of analyzing data source, whether printed or electronic content. In this research, researcher analyzed @greenwashmyballs as data source.

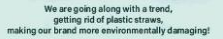


**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**A. Results**

**1. Starbucks Sarcastic Poster**

Table 1. Starbucks Sarcastic Poster Sign Elements




Elements of Sign	Data	Type of Sarcasm
Icon	 (Picture of the product)	Like-Prefixed Sarcasm
Index	 (Written text)	




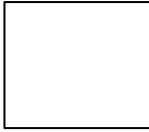
	 (Written text)	
Symbol	 (Starbucks logo)  (Deep Green color)	

Based on the results above, using Camp's (2012) theory, the anti-greenwashing poster aimed at Starbucks represented like-prefixed sarcasm. This type of sarcasm used a comparison between two objects to show the badness of one of the objects. In this case, the poster maker compared the new packaging with the old one to show the incompatibility of the company's claim with their business. This was shown by the icon in the form of two cups of Starbucks product packaging and the sentence that read "now". All the evidence was in line with Elisabeth Camp's theory of like-prefixed sarcasm.

**2. Pepsi Sarcastic Poster**

Table 2. Pepsi Sarcastic Poster Sign Elements





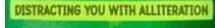

Elements of Sign	Data	Type of Sarcasm
Icon	 (Pepsi logo)	Illocutionary Sarcasm
Index	 (Pepsi brand name)	
Symbol	 DESTRUCTIVE	

	(Written text) 	
	(Written text) 	
	(Red color) 	
	(Blue color) 	
	(White color)	

Based on the data above, the type of sarcasm according to Champ's theory represented by the poster is illocutionary sarcasm. This was shown by the rude appeal and sadness at the situation caused by Pepsi. These characteristics were characteristic of illocutionary sarcasm. This feeling was clearly represented by the written texts on the poster. "100% Destructive" was an example of rude appeal which was represented as a characteristic of illocutionary sarcasm. Pepsi was the 2nd highest global polluter. According to Statista, an estimated 137,000 metric tons of mismanaged plastic waste was created by PepsiCo every year across these six developing nations. This was enough plastic waste to cover more than 22 football pitches a day (PepsiCo: Annual Plastic Waste per Country 2019 | Statista, n.d.). The many disasters caused by the accumulation of plastic waste, diseases in humans, and animals that had lost their habitat made the poster maker feel pity and poured it into the poster.

### 3. Glorious Greenwash Innocent Sarcastic Poster

Table 3. Glorious Greenwash Innocent Sarcastic Poster Sign Elements

Elements of Sign	Data	Type of Sarcasm
Icon	 (The picture of the product)  (Innocent's logo)	Lexical Sarcasm
Index	 (Innocent's brand name)	
Symbol	 (Written text)  (Written text)  (Apple green color)	


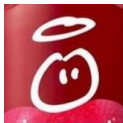


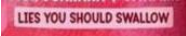

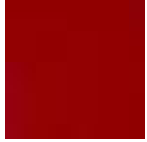
Based on the data, the sarcasm in the poster could be classified as lexical sarcasm. According to Elisabeth Camp's theory, lexical sarcasm was sarcasm that used a positive word but its meaning changed according to its usage. According to the Cambridge dictionary, glorious is deserving of great admiration, praise, and honor (GLORIOUS | English Meaning - Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). However, the praise to the Innocent that expressed in the poster by the maker was for doing greenwashing. Therefore, this poster used "Glorious" which was a positive word, but

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became negative after being used to satirize. So, this could be concluded that the sarcasm that contained in the poster belong to lexical sarcasm.

**4. Berry Bullshit innocent Sarcastic Poster**

Table 4. Berry Bullshit Innocent Sarcastic Poster Sign Elements







Elements of Sign	Data	Type of Sarcasm
Icon	 (The picture of the product)  (Innocent's logo)	Propositional Sarcasm
Index	 (Innocent's brand name)	
Symbol	 (Written text)  (Written text)  (Pink color) 	


	(Red color)	
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Based on the analysis described earlier, using Camp's (2012) theory, the sarcasm represented on that greenwashing phenomenon poster was a type of propositional sarcasm. This sarcasm was the frankest sarcasm because the poster used words like "bullshit" and "lies" which were clearly used to convey rejection of the greenwashing phenomenon that Innocent was doing. The poster was also containing self-contradiction. This was shown by how the poster maker took the original design of the Innocent advertisement, and turned it into a satire by turning it into its opposite.

**5. Sanctimonius Citrus innocent Sarcastic Poster**

Table 5. Sanctimonius Citrus Innocent Sarcastic Poster Sign Elements





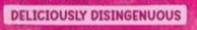
Elements of Sign	Data	Type of Sarcasm
Icon	 (The picture of the product)  (Innocent's logo)	Propositional Sarcasm
Index	 (Innocent's brand name)	
Symbol	 (Written text)  (Written text) 	



	(Yellow color)	
		
	(Orange color)	

Based on all the data above, the type of sarcasm in the poster was propositional sarcasm. The poster contained self-contradiction which was the main key of propositional sarcasm. This self-contradiction was shown by how the poster maker turned the original poster into a poster that contained sarcasm. The poster maker twisted all of Innocent's claims. In addition, it could be clearly seen that the poster aimed to satirize. This was in accordance with the clear nature of propositional sarcasm.

### 6. Lie-chee innocent Sarcastic Poster

Table 6. Lie-chee Innocent Sarcastic Poster Sign Elements



Elements of Sign	Data	Type of Sarcasm
Icon	 (The picture of the product)  (Innocent's logo)	Lexical Sarcasm
Index	 (Innocent's brand name)	
Symbol	 (Written text)  (Written text)	

		
	(Pink color)	
		
	(Fushia color)	


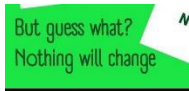

Based on the data above, the type of sarcasm, according to Elisabeth Camp used by the poster maker, was lexical sarcasm. Lexical sarcasm used a word that was positive, but had a different meaning. In this case, it could be seen in "deliciously disingenuous". "Deliciously" was the expression "very". The word "very" was literally a positive word. However, in its used here, the meaning changed. This was because the word "deliciously" was accompanied by the word "disingenuous" which made the meaning became negative. It was very dishonest.

### 7. Sprite Sarcastic Poster

Table 7. Sprite Sarcastic Poster Sign Elements

Elements of Sign	Data	Type of Sarcasm
Icon	 (The picture of the product)	Illocutionary Sarcasm
Icon	 (Picture of product)	



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Index	 (Sprite's brand name)
Symbol	 (Written text)  (Written text)

Based on all the explanations above, it could be seen that the sarcasm on the poster was like-prefixed sarcasm. This sarcasm was sarcasm that included comparison of 2 objects. In this case, the poster maker expressed a comparison between the previous and the new bottle. This was shown in the icon on the poster, there were 2 pictures of the bottle of Sprite. This comparison showed us that there was no differences and the poster maker assumed that Sprite was only restyling their packaging.

8. Coca cola

Table 8. Coca Cola Sign Elements

Elements of Sign	Data	Type of Sarcasm
Icon	 (The picture of the product)	Propositional Sarcasm
Index	 (Written text)	

Symbol	 (Written text)
	 (Written text)
	 (Red color)

Based on the explanation above, it could be seen that the sarcasm used was propositional sarcasm. It was because the poster maker changed the original design of their advertisement into a sarcastic poster. This showed self-contradiction which was the main key of propositional sarcasm. The poster maker clearly indicated the change in the original design from "taste the magic" to "taste the pollution". In addition, the poster maker also changed the writing on the product label to the word "gas" and "oil".

B. Discussion

The researcher found 13 signs that were included as icons and represented sarcasm. They were classified as icon because the researcher found similarities between the shape of the objects and how they were intended to be made, such as the original image of the product and some logo of product. Index was the next sign found on the research. Index has causal relationship between the idea of the intended object and the object and also as connection between icon and symbol. Based on that idea, the researcher found 9 indexes on all of the data. They were the name of the brand and company and the written text. Symbol was the last sign that were analyzed. Symbol conducted meaning that was based on general knowledge and agreement. Based on that statement, the researcher found 27 symbols. All of the symbol contained meaning that needed to be explored because they were based on virtue of law. The symbols on this research were the written text and the used of the colors. The discovery of icon, index and symbol that represented sarcasm in the results

of this study showed the alignment between this research and Peirce's theory.

The second objective was to identify the type of sarcasm used. It was found that 3 posters contained propositional sarcasm, 2 posters used lexical sarcasm, 2 posters used like-prefixed sarcasm, and 1 poster used illocutionary sarcasm. Propositional sarcasm as the most common type in this thesis. Propositional sarcasm was the most straight forward type of sarcasm. This showed that this type was in line with the aim of the posters. These results also showed the correlation between the linguistic science of semiotic and the language of sarcasm.

This research explained the meaning of the poster in more detail. If it was not analyzed, the poster would not be able to be conveyed correctly and could cause misunderstanding. This research applied semiotic study to reveal the meaning of sarcasm contained in each sign. This research showed that semiotic study could be utilized as a means of communication by representing sarcasm. The limitations of the results were influenced by the limitations of the data or sample. Therefore, this limitation made the researcher couldn't explore more widely. However, this could be used as a lesson for further research that would be conducted. The lack of this research can be used as a discussion of other subsequent research that wants to deepen and discuss this research.

The followers of this Instagram account until this thesis was made amounted to 5,977. This showed that there were 5,977 audiences who saw this movement and not a few of them who participated. The number 5,977 was a small number because this account can be accessed by all humans in this world. So, considering the number of followers of the account, the company did not feel any threat. Therefore, the relevant companies had yet to respond.

## CONCLUSION

The poster makers use the point of view of society as a framework to create each poster. It shows that there is concern from the community. The process is in line with the semiotic process in which each sign is interpreted for the general public by considering the meaning it contains. All posters used as data contain meanings that are intended as awareness to the public and as satire for the company. The researcher finds 49 signs that are classified into 27 symbols, 13

signs that were included as icon, and 9 indexes on all of the data that are represent sarcasm. From the analysis, the researcher finds 3 posters using propositional sarcasm, 2 posters using lexical sarcasm, 2 posters using like-prefixed, and 1 other poster using illocutionary sarcasm. Therefore, propositional sarcasm is the most common type of sarcasm in the data.

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