

# Semiotic Analysis on *Keine Wildtiere Im Zirkus* Advertisement Posters

Diva Azura Wardana<sup>1,\*</sup> Raden Muhammad Arie Andhiko Ajie<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> German Studies Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Linguistics Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia

\*Corresponding author. Email: [wardanazura@gmail.com](mailto:wardanazura@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

This study discusses the relation between text and picture elements and analyzes the semiotic signs that appears in anti-exploitation of wild animals in the circus advertisements. The methodology used in this study is a descriptive analysis methodology with a corpus of three poster adverts of *Keine Wildtiere im Zirkus* created by the collaboration of animal lover organization Vier Pforten, Tier im Recht, ProTier. The advertisements were published in 2016 and 2019. This study aims to show the relation of text elements and picture elements using the Stöckl type picture relation theory. The signs of semiotics used by advertisers to convey their message are analyzed using Peirce's theory of semiotics. The results of this study indicate that the relation between picture and text elements used in advertisements is relay. Existing signs of semiotics, i.e., icons, indexes and symbols are found in the corpus of data. An object in an image can not only be categorized as a semiotic sign, but there is a possibility that it can be categorized into more than a semiotic sign.

**Keywords:** Advertising, Semiotics, Icons, Indexes, Symbols, Image and Text Relations

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Keine Wildtiere im Zirkus* or translated as "No Wild Animals in Circus" is an anti-animal exploitation on circuses campaign mostly found in Europe. According to European Circus Association [1], Germany is one of the countries that still allowed animal circuses. Many animal welfare organizations in Germany like Vier Pforten, Tier im Recht, ProTier and Tierschutzbund had collaborated to stop this ongoing action. They made campaign posters with pictures of the animal used as performers in circuses and a slogan. According to an article called 'Circuses in Europe' published on Bornfree [2], there are already a few countries in Europe that banned wild animal circuses. However, countries with no regulations regarding wild animal circuses still exist, for example, France and Germany.

*Keine Wildtiere im Zirkus* advertisements are made to persuade readers to participate to stop these wild animal circuses in Europe. Using these advertisements, animal welfare organizations affect the readers to sign the petition that they had made. The three published ads discussed in this research are categorized as public service and non-profit advertisement because the primary purpose is not to gain financial profit, but to encourage people to participate in this movement.

This research discusses how the posters convey messages to readers and analyze the campaign posters' semiotic signs. Research like this has been carried out by Lathifa Noviansyah with the title *Semiotic Analysis on*

*the Noah-Menschen für Tiere Animal Protection Campaign Advertisement* [3] and Shahid, M., Bokil, P., & Udaya Kumar, D. with the title *Title Design in Bollywood Fil Posters: A Semiotic Analysis* [4].

This research is different from the two researches mentioned above. This research analyses and categorizes the semiotic signs using Peirce's semiotic theory, analyses the text element using Janich's advertisement theory and the relation between text and picture elements using Stöckl's picture relation type theory.

This study aims to understand the relationship between text and images in conveying messages. This research wants to show how text and image elements impact each other in conveying messages to readers. Finally, by identifying and analysing the semiotic signs in *Keine Wildtiere im Zirkus*' ads, this study shows how the advertisers use semiotic signs to convey a message.

### 1.1. Corpus

Posters discussed in this study are three posters published in the period 2016-2019 by the collaboration of Vier Pforten, Tier im Recht, and ProTier. The posters used illustrations of wild animals that appear in circuses such as tigers and lion. This poster not only shows pictures of the animals but also uses a different slogan in each poster.

### 1.2. Research Problems

1. What is the connection between the images and texts on the posters?
2. What are the semiotic signs that appear in the three posters?
3. How do the semiotic signs in the ad shaped the message that the advertiser is trying to convey?

### 1.3. Literature Review

Ramadan stated on his paper, that the word 'advertisement' comes from Greek, which means "to lead people to ideas" [5]. According to Shimp [6], advertising in general has five functions: providing information, influencing, reminding, adding value, and accompanying. According to Phil Astrid S. Susanto, quoted by Soemanagara & Kennedy [7], one of the reasons for the publication of advertisements is to make people aware and provide information about a product, service, or idea. According to Susanto, who was quoted by Hoed [8], advertising is divided into commercial and non-commercial advertisements based on characteristics and purposes. Non-commercial advertisements are ads like public service advertisements and political advertisements [8]. According to Kasali [9], public service advertisements contain social messages to raise public awareness of many problems faced.

According to Chandler [10], Peirce's semiotic theory is used to identify these signs from a linguistic perspective. Signs, according to Pierce's trichotomy, are classified into [10]:

- a. Icons: refers to representations that are similar to the original objects, for example, sculptures, paintings of animals and humans.
- b. Index: refers to objects whose representative relationships are based on their association; for example, smoke indicates fire.
- c. Symbol: is conventional, where an individual must first learn before understanding it, for example, Morse code.

Janich [11], explains that there are two main elements in advertising, the image element and the writing element. These elements are related to one another. According to Behrens [11] image is one of the main elements in advertising. Images are essential because of their usefulness as the centre of advertising communication. Conveying information with pictures is more comfortable to be accepted and remembered than text elements [11].

This study uses the picture relation type (PRT) to analyze the function and connection between text and images in advertisements. PRT is an analytical method to analyze the connection between text and images in an advertisement. Stöckl [12] explained two types of relations between text and image: anchorage and relay.

Anchorage means that the text element is very dominant compared to the image. The image is considered only as an attachment or just an illustration that repeats the verbal text's meaning. An example is a text in newspapers because of its objectivity and redundancy. Relay is a condition in which the connotations of verbal and visual texts are related to one another. Text and images have their respective portions, so they have a reciprocal relationship.

### 1.4. Methodology

The descriptive analysis method used in this research is a research method conducted to determine the existence of independent variables, either only in one or more variables without making comparisons and looking for relationships between these variables and other variables [13].

First, to analyze a text element in an ad, the ad is described. According to Janich [11], there are two main elements in an advertisement: the image element and the text element. After that, the relationship between text and images (PRT) was analyzed using Stöckl's [12] theory. Based on this theory, the connection between text and images can be described, and their function in delivering advertising messages can be explained.

The next stage of analysis is the analysis of image elements. This analysis examined the semiotic signs in the advertising image. Analysis of semiotic signs, namely icons, indices, and symbols, in the data corpus is based on Peirce's trichotomy theory. In the analysis of semiotic signs, the writer wants to show that an object is not only fixed as a semiotic sign, but there is a possibility that it can become several semiotic signs. Analysis of semiotic signs aims to reveal the meaning that potentially appear in the recipient's mind.

## 2. ANALYSIS

### 2.1. First Advertisement Poster



**Figure 1** Circus Tiger in Front of a Mirror

This ad from 2019 depicts a tiger wearing a conical hat. The tiger sits in front of a mirror in a circus tent—the ad's backdrop is blue, white, and red stripes. Inside the circus tent, there is a rectangular mirror with a red frame and surrounded by lights. The mirror depicts a reflection of a tiger not wearing a conical hat with a forest background. The tiger's expression can be seen clearly in the reflection of the mirror, staring intently at the tiger itself. On the upper right side of the first ad is an inverted triangle decoration, and on the lower right side is the Vier Pfoten, Tier im Recht, and ProTier logos. It is also clearly visible short red text with the words "*Lebenslang für eure Unterhaltung*" (a lifetime for your entertainment).

According to Stöckl [12], the picture's position determines how fast the recipient captures the message through the text or image. Stöckl explained that reading or processing information in advertisements tends to start from the top left to the bottom right. If an image appears first in the upper left than text, readers are more likely to pay more attention to the ad's image than if the image was in another position in the ad.

Vestergaard (1986), quoted by Stöckl [12], argues that the position needs to be recognized by the advertiser. After all, if the image object is located along the ad's diagonal line (from top left to bottom right), it will be captured effectively by the recipient. His view will immediately be attracted to the image [12]. This is due to the human's reading habit, which is generally from left to right and from top to bottom. Image size and format, of course, also have an impact on this visual capture.

In this ad, text elements appear before image elements from top left to bottom right. The position of the image is in a diagonal line, and the image size is large. Nearly half of the advertising posters depict a tiger in a mirror to immediately draw the reader's eye to the image. Because in addition to the striking image, the image position is also within this diagonal. This indicates that the advertiser wants his readers to process the written message directly. Advertisers want people to participate in this movement with a short text that can invite empathy for readers. The image's focus diagonally is the tiger in the mirror, which is depicted in the wild. In addition to being positioned at the bottom left, a tiger in the wild is depicted in bright light. In contrast, a tiger in a circus is depicted in the dark. This lighting makes it easier for recipients to focus on well-lit images.

In addition to determining the position of the image, Stöckl [12] argues that interaction between the connotations of verbal text (text elements) and visuals (picture elements) must be known to know how the overall message from two coding systems (images and text) is derived. The terms used by Stöckl are anchorage and relay. Anchorage is a condition in which text is more dominant than images and is considered only an illustration that repeats the meaning in the verbal text. Meanwhile, a relay is when text and images have their respective portions to have a reciprocal connection.

The interaction between text and images in this ad is a relay because images do not repeat the information contained in the text. The text and images in the ad complement each other. The text contains a message, and the image in the advertisement adds information. For example, in the advertisement, there is an inscription of "*Lebenslang für eure Unterhaltung*," (a lifetime for your entertainment) and the tiger is in a circus tent. However, in his reflection in the mirror, the tiger sees himself in the forest. The text element emphasizes the tiger's plight, and the pictures provide a snapshot of how they live in a circus, where their life is mostly confined in a tent when these animals should live in their natural habitat, forests. The dark lighting on the tiger on the front side of the mirror, which is in the circus, gives a negative impression. This depiction contrasts with the tiger's reflection in the mirror, where the tiger is in the forest, depicted as receiving adequate light.

Baumgart (1992) and Bajwa (1995), quoted by Janich [11], explain that the slogan is a short text element that functions to explicitly or implicitly summarize the advertising message in a short form. Janich argues that slogan refers to ad content that is easier to recognize and remember because of the repetition.

In this ad, there is a short text element "*Lebenslang für eure Unterhaltung*". This text is categorized as a slogan because it conveys a short, concise, and repeated in another *Keine Wildtiere im Zirkus* advertisement. The addition of the word '*lebenslang*' (lifelong) makes the message even more robust because it gives a message that what the circus tiger sees in the mirror will never be experienced in his life.

During their time in the circus, wild animals live only to entertain the audience. Wild animals taken for circus performances are usually separated from their parents since they were young. Often, wild animals that have lived in the circus for a long time cannot return to their natural habitat because they are accustomed to circus life.

One way to communicate and convey a message through ads is by illustrations; that is why image elements are essential and cannot be ignored [11]. The image attracts attention and is easier to remember than text or writing. Behrens argues that this element also creates a better emotional feeling, especially when associative relationships appear with other elements in the ad, causing personal attention so that an image is usually easier to accept than text [11].

Image as one of the main elements in advertising is also a sign. Peirce's trichotomy theory is used to understand the sign in this advertisement. The image of a tiger is an icon because of its similarity to the animal tiger. The next icon is a mirror icon, an object used to see the reflection of an object. For example, what performers used to see their faces, especially before appearing on stage, complete with light bulbs to see facial makeup more clearly. Then, the image of bright green trees in the mirror is classified as a forest icon because of its similarity to a forest where there are many green trees and

is the original habitat of tigers. The cone hat is also classified as an icon because it resembles the hat worn when there is a celebration. The decoration behind the mirror in the shape of an inverted triangle is also classified as an icon.

The index in this ad is the expression of a tiger. This expression signifies the tiger's sadness and disappointment because it is used as entertainment in the circus environment and cannot get out of the environment. Then, the cone hat is also classified as an index because this hat is usually worn during celebrations, so this hat indicates an event or celebration, entertainment, and joy. So, the tiger wearing the hat gives the impression that the tiger must appear because there is an event and must be entertaining, but the tiger felt no joy when doing so. Dark lighting and the absence of other people or animals can also be seen as an index. It shows that the circus event is over and that the crowd and excitement have gone into loneliness for the tiger. A tiger who remains in a conical hat even though the event has passed can be seen as an index: A tiger still wearing a hat outside of a circus event suggests that the tiger has lost his natural character. Outside the circus, he is depicted as submissive, not as free as a tiger in the mirror reflection.

The tiger's reflection in the mirror is categorized as a symbol. The mirror reflects a tiger in the forest and not in a circus tent. In the article 'The Symbolism of Mirrors in Literature', the mirror is the boundary between the conscious mind and the subconscious mind [14]. By looking in the mirror, one can see inside their subconscious. This indicates the tiger unconsciously misses and wants to be in the jungle instead of being in a circus environment [14].

The symbol in this advertisement is the slogan "Lebenslang für eure Unterhaltung" because, as stated by Peirce, symbols are conventional signs; they must be studied to be understood. The language used for this advertisement slogan is German because the primary target audience is countries that use the German language to communicate.

The tiger figure is also a symbol, not only an icon. In an article entitled "Tiger as Symbols" published by Animal Planet [15], it is stated that tiger symbolizes determination, courage, and strength within oneself. However, there are two depictions of tigers in this advertisement: a tiger sitting in front of a mirror and a reflection of a tiger. The depiction of a tiger in mirror reflection is consistent with an article published by Animal Planet. Yet, a tiger sitting in front of a mirror symbolizes the opposite.

## 2.2. Second Advertisement Poster



Figure 2 Circus Tiger in Front of a Police Line-Up Wall

This second had the same background as the first ad. In the second ad, the tiger is seen sitting in front of a board with numbers written on it, which on the top right of the board is a conical hat hanging upside down. On the neck of the tiger is a board containing a number. To the left of the tiger is the inscription of "Lebenslang für eure Unterhaltung" in red. The upper right has an inverted triangle decoration. At the bottom right are the Vier Pfoten, Tier im Recht, and ProTier logos.

The board behind the tiger is called the police line-up wall. The police line-up wall is the background for a suspect being photographed holding a board containing their data before entering a detention cell or prison. In this ad, it can be seen that the expression of a tiger looks flat; the body posture is not upright, so that it looks tired. The lighting effect is dark; only a small amount of light focuses on the tiger.

In the second ad, the text appears before images; this indicates that the ad creator wants recipient not to miss the text's message. The image is placed at the bottom right, which means that it is still in the diagonal geographic center. Images also dominate advertising posters, so the recipient who sees them will tend to see the images immediately, and the messages will be easier to capture and process by the recipients.

Stöckl [12] argues that if one wants to know how the overall message is derived from picture and text messages, then the relationship between the connotations of text elements and image elements must be known. The PRT in this ad is a relay because the text and image elements complement each other. Text elements do not just repeat the information conveyed by image elements. The text element in this ad is short; The images in this ad are not just repeating the written meaning. The text element in this ad helps to explain the message the advertiser conveys by explaining how bad the life of wild animals in the circus is.

Like in the first ad, there is a text element on the top left side of the ad, a slogan "Lebenslang für eure Unterhaltung".

The police line-up background in this ad is categorized as an icon. The police line-up is a setting used to take pictures of suspects before entering custody. The suspect stands in front of this backdrop, holding a board that contains his identity. On the left side of the board, some numbers measure the height of the suspect. The tiger in the advertisement can be categorized as an icon because it resembles the figure of a tiger animal. The hanging cone hat is also categorized as an icon because it resembles the hat worn during celebrations such as birthdays. Decorations are also categorized as icons because they are similar to decorations used to decorate when there is a celebration or festival.

The first index in the second ad is the expression and posture of the tiger. Tiger facial expressions look disappointed, and body posture is classified as an index because these are two things that can be observed by the reader. The tiger's facial expression looks disappointed, and the tiger's posture looks like he is exhausted. Besides, the identity number necklace worn by the tiger is also categorized as an index because it indicates that wild animals living in a circus are likened to living like a prisoner. Their identity was removed and replaced with numbers. The photo-taking phase was closely linked to being confined or the loss of freedom. This tiger is depicted as losing its freedom because it looks like a figure caught by the authorities and is not in the jungle. When depicted as a depressed criminal who looks lethargic, the tiger loses his manliness and authority. This shows that what a tiger experiences in the circus is something terrible, something sad for the tiger. The word 'lebenlang' in the text element emphasizes this.

The first symbol is the German language used for slogans. The second symbol is a tiger. Tiger symbolized strength, cunning, confidence, majesty, independence, protection and immortality [15]. However, the depiction of the tiger in this advertisement emphasizes the misery experienced by wild animals in the circus environment. The strength, cunning, confidence, majesty, independence, protection and immortality that the tiger symbolizes are entirely invisible when a tiger has been turned into a circus animal.

### 2.3. Third Advertisement Poster



Figure 3 Male Circus Lion on a Podium

The third ad was published in 2016 by the same organization as the previous two ads. However, in this third ad, there is no logo of the organization that made the ad. This ad's background is pitch black with the words "für deinen Spass leide ich ein Lebenlang" in red. Under the text element is the inscription of *Keine Wildtiere im Zirkus* in white, which is a campaign against circus wild animals' practice. On the right side, there is a depiction of a male lion standing on a circus podium in red and blue with a white star, which is a circus property.

The text element in the third ad appears before the image, which is on the left. Unlike the two ads previously analyzed, the text element is more extensive, so it is located on the left. Because of its position on the left, text elements are usually captured before the recipient focuses on the image.

In terms of position, the text elements take up more than half the frame, and the images in this ad are also a bit dark. Images are not as influential as in the first and second ad, explaining and providing more information about the circus situation and presenting the animals' perspective. It was like the animals were made to speak and think like humans through illustrations. The illustration of the lion is accompanied by unique text elements, as if the text elements are the words of the lion. This ad's image and text relationship can be called a relay because the text element conveys something new to complement the image element, not merely describing what the image element displays.

The phrase 'ein Leben lang' (a lifetime) and the black background color is related. It seems like the ad creator wants to contrast text elements so that they stand out against the dominant black background of the image. Elliot & Maier's [16] study entitled 'Color Psychology: Effects of Perceiving Color on Psychological Functioning in Humans' black and dark colors are usually associated with negative things such as death and crime [16]. In this study, there is no statement that they refer to one culture only. Elliot is a researcher from the University of Rochester, New York, while Maier is from the University of Munich, Germany.

On the left of this ad is the large red "für deinen Spass leide ich ein Leben lang" (for your pleasure; I suffer all my life). The word "you" here refers to humans or circus spectators, and "I" refers to the lion. With this text element, the readers will accept the message: wild animals are suffering for the entertainment of circus audiences.

There are two prominent icons featured in the third ad, namely the male lion and the podium. The circus podium and the male lion are classified as icons because of their similarity to the circus podium used at circus performances as props and male lions.

The male lion on the circus podium can also be seen as an index. A wild male lion submits to the handler's orders and sits quietly on the podium. Usually, the podium figure is great or accomplished, yet the male lion

on the podium is a submissive figure and has lost his prestige as the jungle's king.

There are several symbols in the third ad, namely the text elements' language, the black color used on the background, and the male lion. Color is a medium to convey messages. According to Frank & Golvich, black color is associated with negative things such as crime and death [16]. The black as background gives the impression that the advertiser tries to emphasize that what the wild animals had experienced in the circus is a horrible thing. Then, Claims' language is a symbol because it has to be learned to be understood.

The next symbol in this ad is a male lion. According to Elliot and Maier [16], lion is a sign of courage, strength, royal family. However, in this ad, the male lion who is present is a figure who seems to lose the courage and strength because he submits to the circus master.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The combination of image elements and advertising writing elements makes the message more straightforward for the recipient to accept and understand. The slogans and claims in these three advertisements have a message; the image also helps add information to achieve the purpose that the advertisers want to convey. Not only relying on writing that seems to be the heart's content, or the complaints of circus animals being displayed, but the right image elements with the use of dark, dominant colors also make the advertisements more touching on the recipient's empathy side. The connection between images and texts (PRT) in the ad are all relays. Text and image elements in ad are complementary; The text element does not describe the image element but is a complement to convey the message the advertiser wants. Without text elements, it is difficult to understand the image. On the other hand, elements of a text image alone will not function properly if the recipient does not know who stated the text element.

Image elements in advertisements are analyzed by identifying semiotic element. Namely icons, indexes, and symbols. After identifying the signs in an image, it will be seen that the image holds its meaning and is displayed in advertisements for a particular reason. In conducting semiotic analysis, it is known that there is an object that can be understood as several forms of semiotic signs. An object can not only be categorized as an icon, index, and symbol but can be categorized into more than one semiotic sign. For example, a tiger can be an icon as well as a symbol at once.

Objects that can be categorized into more than one semiotic sign are found in the first, second, and third posters. In the first and second ad, the tiger is categorized as an icon and a symbol. In the third ad, the male lion is even categorized into icons, indexes, and symbols. The selection of circus animals, which are also symbols of strength, namely tigers and male lions, are also

considered by the advertisers. These two animals, which are considered vicious and intense, turn out to be helpless if they have been turned into circus animals. This message certainly will not appear if the selected circus animal that is featured in the advertisement does not symbolize strength.

### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection, and analysis were performed by Diva Azura Wardhana and Raden Muhammad Arie Andhiko Ajie. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Diva Azura Wardhana and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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