The meaning of sign, contradiction between modern and tradition in visualization (Case study: Pocari Sweat TV Commercial)

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Abstract. Pocari Sweat is a Japanese beverage product. One of the TVC run by Pocari Sweat is in Japanese 2D animation style (anime) titled “High School Star. This paper aims to study the character visual style, place settings, and creative strategy plan with the intention of understanding the key visual of acculturation style between Japan and Indonesia, in this case Japanese anime style with Indonesian local culture. The methodology of this research uses Semiotic. In his theory, Saussure divides sign as signifier and signified. On the discussion and analysis section, we discovered that the Ad told a story of two high school students named Ayu and Reza while chasing their dreams. The “High School Star” is unique as it mixes two different cultures, displaying Indonesian characters and settings told in a form of Japanese animation. Yoshitosi Shinomiya used environmental art approach to draw the settings. He interviewed Indonesian high school students and showed the colourful life of Indonesian youth. The 2D animation made by traditional means. This Japanese themed ad shows the same meaning of sign on either enjoying the natural beauty of Bali or the exhaustion of modern city. What younger generation need is to have the spirit of life as if enjoying refreshing drink, Pocari Sweat.

1. Introduction
The latest Pocari Sweat television commercial (TVC) features Japanese 2D animation style. The story revolves around the life of two high school teenager from different background, Ayu and Reza. In visual, both came from different places, Ayu from Bali and Reza from Jakarta. Even though they live apart, both are personally close. They are constantly communicating via smartphone, discussing their involvement in a High School Star contest in Jakarta. After engaging with so many obstacles, both manage to meet and hold hands, run toward the horizon accompanied by “Zenriyoku Shounen” song, performed by Japanese band, Sukima Switch as background music. The theme song moves your heart, providing inspiration, encouragement and optimism to chase dream.

The ad brought contradictory narration between two major characters, both teenagers studied in different locations. Ayu’s scene representing the beauty of Bali beach and its cultural richness. While the next scene representing modern, big city along with densely crowd where everybody actively moving in order to keep productive. The concept of TVC in anime is to represent Pocari Sweat product, which is popular as Japanese brand. Animation has becoming popular recently as advertising tools.
Advertisers and consumers are very attracted by animated images [1]. Due to its ability to perform almost everything such as talking animals, moving objects or flying. It’s eye catching, low cost and became preferred way to advertise on various displaying media such television. Anime consisting of two definitions according to Gilles Poltras. Definition number one is a word used by Japanese in referring to any animation film regardless of where it (anime) came from. Second, the anime word is used by foreign country (outside Japan) to define animation film that came from Japan [2]. Popular anime characters can be seen all over Japan on T-shirts, toys, accessories and stationery. In addition, different companies use anime-style characters to attract young people to their brand [3]. Despite using anime as style, the ad utilizing characters and background that signifies Indonesia. Both characters represent Indonesian student accurately by having essential elements such as school uniform, gadgets and public transportation. The setting of this ad is present Indonesia. Does the ad intend to target the youth as each scene presented, identical to Indonesia’s high school student daily activities? Teenagers’ life mostly cheerful with excess of energy filled by sparkling creative ideas. Filled by romance, friendship and adventure. They also possess big curiosity that drives them to try many new things. Will mentioned (above) values, in terms of visual and story can create interest?

Figure 1. Contradiction the location atmosphere difference between Jakarta and Bali.

2. Literature review
According to Nur Hasanah and Lukito Edi Nugroho, an effective ad is an ad that contains a message that trigger recipient’s interest, apart from having precise creative strategy and persuasiveness [4]. While other definition consider advertising as a paid form of exposure or promotion that reach various traditional and modern media [5]. It covers television, newspaper, magazine to blogs, website, and social media even text messages. The main function of an ad is to deliver information of a product to the public; the media of submission could be verbal or nonverbal. Product presented in social context, while the consumption presented in a form of lifestyle. Along with its various strategies, advertisement always lean towards social reality. Advertisement is the utilization of mixed media by seller to communicate persuasive information in regards to products, services or organization and to be considered as powerful promotion tool [6]. An ad always tries to implement various commercial strategies that easily understood by the consumers so they are motivated to purchase the advertised product. The ultimate goal of advertising is to impact on buying behavior [7]. Consumer behavior are varied, depend on how the brand presented to the public. Referring to visualization creation process of augmented reality, the success of an ad visualization led by how the ad present the animation scene that plays with phantasy, beautiful scenery, bird view display style and other artistic elements. In the article of “Visual Fantasy in Children’s Learning through Virtual & Augmented Reality’ it’s said that photographic fantasy is created when the child is treated by colorful visual form, and interactive motion that tempts in the novelty of space and experience [8]. That the colorful visual play huge role on children interest, through colors attached and composition, the movement of animation object and the pattern responds interactively. The creation of photographic fantasy has sucked the audience to the novelty of space; awaken beautiful memories, a romantic moment in high school.
The two-dimensional illustration style equipped with expressive flow line accent has awaken the emotion during the acceptance process of cognitive logic. A lot easier for the brain to understand and to remember the message. Furthermore, there should be visual identity when creating animation as a form of self-expression, to expose identical foundation (stereotype).

3. Methodology
This research uses semiotics methodology of Saussure Sign style, which divides sign as signifier and signified. According Saussure, language is a sign system and every sign are composed of two parts, signifier and signified, as quoted from F. D. E. Saussure book, “Basic Semiotics” [9]. He later explained language is a sign system and every linguistic sign, is stating a concept and sound image, not stating something with a name. A sound that appears as spoken word is a signifier, while the concept called signified. Two elements are inseparable. If it separated, it will destroy the word itself.

| Signifier | Signified |
|-----------|-----------|
| Visualization, colour | Definition, Meaning, |
| shape, composition, movement | and impression |

The intention of this research is to find the meaning of an ad. On Barthes semiology, denotation classified as signification system, level one, such as things seen by the eyes. While connotation is the level two, such as implied meaning [10]. In this case, denotation tend to be associated to closure of meaning. As a reaction to fight denotation literal, oppressive meaning, Barthes try to remove and reject it. He only believes in connotation. He then proceeds that the literal meaning is a natural known by signification theory.

4. Results and discussion
Earlier we have discussed that the TVS begins by showing the location setting of both main characters (Figure 1). Another scene showed the conversation between Reza and Ayu. It signified that both has known each other virtually and physically.

Figure 2, signified the relationship between Reza and Ayu vaguely. The picture also signified that majority of high school students has adopted social media. As for the middle picture, Ayu seen running on the beach after arriving from school. It signified that Ayu is passionate and persistent on reaching her goal. She likes to play and swim in the sea. According to her, the beach is her home and will always stay in her heart. At the far-right picture, Reza is riding MRT. He often used public transportation, unlike Ayu who walks most of the time.

Reza lives far from school. He accustomed to all technology advancement in Jakarta. Yet not accustomed to rural area where technology application is limited. The study of sign on human social life in this video pictured in semiotics sign. It shows that sign and meaning exist in social life and influenced by existing culture or newly formed culture.

Balinese offerings to Greater Being, representing the faith and tradition of Balinese and Hindu. It signified that Bali is a sacred place and identical to Hindu religion, by having many offerings scattered all over the place. Balinese believes by putting those offerings will bring luck or blessings, it shows gratitude, rejecting bad luck and helps granting all of their wishes. Center picture shows Ayu is on the plane heading to Jakarta. She travels alone, signified her as independent girl and not dependent to her parents. In the last picture Ayu was seen walking among heavy traffic jam. She feels the rush of big city and in a hurry to meet Reza.
Signifier: Majority high school student already have smartphone. Ayu and Reza has known each other and connected often times. High School student uses social media

Signified: A passionate Ayu. Lives in Bali, with its beautiful beach

Jakarta has advanced transportation mode such as MRT. Reza, like many big city boys, are used to sophistication.

**Figure 2.** Contradiction location atmosphere between Jakarta and Bali.

Figure 4. Reza is race against time to meet Ayu, signified how persistent and passionate he is as a youth to chase his dream. Both are finally met (center picture) and seeing each other, signified hidden feeling between them or the feeling of friendship that is happening for so long. The meeting is full of joy and they run together to chase their dreams. Japanese ad tends to be timid and polite; it rarely shows intimacy gesture.

This ad aim for teen segment. On the far-right picture, Ayu is pulling Reza and they hold hands while running. Ayu is pulling Reza’s hand as she is used to running on daily basis while Reza is used to riding public transportation. Both walks to the same direction, towards High School Star contest.

Signifier: Rushing to meet Ayu

Signified: Reza and Ayu seeing each other signified hidden feeling between them

Signified: Reza dan Ayu has similar purpose and romantic story

**Figure 3.** End scene of trailer.

Above pictures (Figure 3) speaks many thing. Were they established a romance relationship? The idea of romantism story has become favourite among teenagers [11]. Psychologically, teenagers have tendency to fall in love to opposite sex within their age [12]. The depiction of emotion in youth romantic relationship closely related to how the love being described [13]. Robert J. Sternberg raise a Triangular Theory of Love, stated there are several components in love such as intimacy, passion and commitment. Intimacy involving emotion that covers closeness, interest and bond. While passion is a component that relates to romantism interest physically and sexually [14]. Youth were asked to wait for sequel.

When uploading an ad via social media and went viral, it has tendency to be popular. The virality will make it memorable. The memorability element lies in the power of anime visual, romance, and the popularity of Bali tourism and Jakarta as the capital city. The level of memorability of art and design lean to social media platforms that exist in cyberspace than by experience in the physical field. The structure of visual irregularities of art and design will not be impactful if not many people look at,
accidentally see it or stare at the sculpture. The visual irregularities that followers perceive shared on social media [15].

As the visualization aspect, the TVC utilizing the power of Japan 2D anime visual. Visual identity described as gaunt face character, wide eyes and soft colorization. This type of visual are favored by youth since it’s the major pattern of Japan animation film, that possess strong interest in a form of Anime as a popular culture (Study on Anime community in Yogyakarta) [16]. It triggers fantasy as it feels in dream. The narration on the TVC are more imaginative to strengthen the fantasy element. Despite of different location, Bali and Jakarta, but both contains similarity in terms of imaginative culture. This fantasy concept is identical to findings on the article “Visual Playability in Jogja Video Mapping” stating: 1). Visual playability as a text presented in fantasy style, surreal 2). Building the relationship between video and the public by creating a playing field. 3). the ideology is to entertain the public in the playground [2]. Setting the animation style by adjusting camera angle, super close up the scene landscape. The playability of visual are meant to entertain the audience.

The mixture between Japanese music and animation style as background with Indonesia setting is an interesting visualization style. It does not directly correlate, but show absurdity values by presenting all favored elements by youth in a more interesting manner. A postmodern ad style from Japan easily accepted by Indonesian. It tries to fuse Japan product and culture into Indonesian cultural identity.

This article also discusses lack of misunderstanding in meaning which resulted from unusual visual ideas presentation to describe or to deny existing social reality phenomena. Imagination played central role on nature-based tourism in the era of current ecotourism, and how the nature being pictured to awaken particular imagination and perception. Performance art start from interpretation and assumption. Assumption is a personal belief based on the experience of the creator, which constantly produced, until several alternatives present for the creation of fantasy world. Sometimes the presence of fantasy without experience could only be a dream and delusion. This fantasy will lead to a decision for the consumer whether he/she is interested to purchase the product.

5. Conclusion

Based on visual and semiotics analysis, it can be concluded that the ad of “Pocari Sweat: High School Star” is matched to its high school segmentation. Pocari Sweat took the concept of anime by offering the story that revolves around high school student daily life by putting fantasy elements which is typical to anime. This ad not only popular among teenagers but also viral due to its unique concept. The virality of this ad mainly due to majority high school student exploit social media where the ad displayed, not only on TV. This ad tells a story on two high school students, lives in Jakarta and Bali. Ayu and Reza planned to meet in Jakarta to participate in High School Star contest together. The utilization of anime style is to show the origin of Pocari Sweat brand, Japan; that are famous for its anime industry, which also loved by Indonesian teen. This ad raises curiosity to its audiences on how the story will ends. The producer has created the type of modern anime, full of colour; exaggerate shape and beautiful background as those elements appealing to youth. Indonesian high school student are becoming the target of this ad, where the protagonists participating in “Pocari Sweat: High School Star” contest. Reza and Ayu is the representation of high school students all over Indonesia.

Furthermore, it discovered that this ad displays the sign (signifier) contradiction of nature beauty and Balinese tradition, and another sign (signifier) that shows the exhaustion, traffic jam and chaos in Jakarta as modern city. Even though both are contradicting in visual, yet they share similarities where passion is needed to enjoy life whether you live in a place close to nature or live in a crowded, big city. It similar to the pleasure of enjoying fresh beverage from Pocari Sweat. The similarities of spirit by both protagonists shown by characters, style and gesture within the ads surrounded by the background of their habitation. While Japanese animation style and soundtrack has strengthen the unification of spirit, which is now a trend among teenagers.
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