Reading the meaning of shophouses facade in Dr Mansur street corridor at Medan City

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Abstract. The creation of shop house facade design appears as an effort to describe the function of space utilization. Shophouses facade is architecturally the only field that allows design creation in architectural art. This facade provides also provides an opportunity to communicate the meaning, content and function of shophouses through signs. This research aims to read the signs on the shophouses facade on the Dr. Mansur corridor and revealed the effectiveness of using these signs as a means of commercial advertising. With the method of Robert Venturi's version of semiotic interpretation and validation with the Charles Saunders Peirce version of the triadic concept of sign interpretation model, the interpretation results that there are four styles of shophouses with indexical, symbolic, iconic and exhibitionist characteristics. The results of the study show that the dominant commercial appeal is achieved with exhibitionist character and event / celebration as commercial meanings. This research is useful to give a deep meaning to the phenomenon of changes that occur in FASAD buildings that affect the creation of the face characters of cities that form urban vernacular architecture.

1. Introduction

Shophouses architecture as a building typology of commercial functions is an architecture that is widely designed in the city of Medan. Flexibility in accommodating mix-use functions is the main attraction for this building's typology. The diversity of such functions gave rise to the design creations on facade/view of the shophouses. The shophouses facade is the only field that allows design creation in architectural art. This facade provides an opportunity to communicate the contents and functions accommodated by the shophouses while providing an opportunity for the observer to interpret commercial communication in various interpretations through the application of certain signs. The meaning of the signs can be traced through the interpretation of the semiotic model.

The development of the Universitas Sumatera Utara (USU) campus has affected the development of shophouses along Dr. Mansur street corridor. The phenomenon that occurred was the change in the function of the house into shophouses which was triggered by the economic generation of needs and USU's teaching and learning activities. In the long run, this transformation triggered by economic factors changes the atmosphere of Dr. Mansur street as strip development is the development of urban sprawl that occurs along the lane [1][2], and is not controlled by the dominance of the current pop-art style.

Changes in building functions that occur in the corridor of Dr. Mansur has diversity, especially commercial functions that form an atmosphere with distinctive characters [3][4]. Along the corridor Dr. Mansur formed a strip development area with the appearance of facade as the main element in forming the character of the region.
This research aims to read the various signs created on shophouses facade that appear in the Dr. Mansur corridor and interpretatively reveal the effectiveness of using these signs as a means of commercial advertising. This research complements architectural research in the classification of the expressions of the face of the city. So far, academic studies of urban architecture have shown a tendency to focus on the shape and transformation of urban artifacts, regulation and building envelope or on building typologies [5]. Thus, this research paper presents an alternative way of reading the character of the face of the city mainly about building facades in an urban area.

The benefit of this study is to provide a profound meaning to the phenomenon of changes occurring in building facades that influence the creation of specific urban facade characters to form urban vernacular architecture. Furthermore, the semiotic approach carried out in this study is an alternative method in disclosing and interpreting signs and meanings of building facades.

2. Method

2.1. Disclosure of commercial marks on shophouses facade
In line with the purpose of this study to reveal the meaning of commercial signs contained in shophouses facade as well as variations in the design of tagging models that are applied as commercial communication devices in these shophouses, this study utilizes the reading of signs with the exchange of meanings referred to as semiotic models. Each sign has a correlation with the meaning of the tendency of phenomena including the meaning of architectural forms. Structurally the architecture can be interpreted by architects, users and observers interpretatively.

By referring to the science of Semiotics, each sign can be considered as a communication medium to build an exchange of meanings related to culture. The same applies to every architectural work, where certain structures can be found with underlying meanings for designers, users and observers involved [6].

2.2. Semiotic interpretation model as an interpretative research method
This research refers to the research conducted by Salura [7], which utilizes the semiotic interpretation model that Robert Venturi once carried out in Learning From Las Vegas [8], then validates the Charles Saunders Peirce version of the semiotic interpretation model [9] with the triadic concept of sign.

This study uses an interpretive descriptive qualitative research method [10] for meaning by using a joint interpretation model of Venturi-Peirce where if there are similarities or differences in the classification of commercial architectural meanings that are the object of research, the dominance of the results of the meanings is expressed as a category of architectural formation meaning. (with symbolic scales on one side and pragmatic functions of other side)
2.2.1. Venturi interpretation model.
By analogizing the meaning of the building interpreted in his book "Learning from Las Vegas" Robert Venturi designed a building that has the ability to be interpreted dynamically. The dependable element is the existence of a form that reminds the observer of the desired image as a marker. The existence of commercial signs that are explored to evoke meaning for the environment which is referred to by Lynch [11] as a landmark. Architecture is a communication tool to provide the desired signs to influence the image of the observer. The model that relies on formation as a character marker as a communication tool is one type of building that is able to communicate and give character to an environment.

2.2.2. Peirce interpretation model.
This model of interpretation proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce, a signatory Linguistic expert, presents the triadic concept of sign. In the architectural, sign and symbol context then with the relation of an object (in this case architecture) with its tagged image can be categorized into levels: distinctive sign (iconic), index (sequence of links), or pseudo-markers (symbols). An architecture is categorized as iconic as a marker if it has the ability to provide nuances or distinctive characteristics of an area. An architectural work can be considered as an indexical sign if the architecture is capable of causing an observer's interpretation of the relationship between a reference function mark to a sign that is simple and direct in the same sense. An architectural work can be categorized as a symbolic sign if the observer's interpretation of the architecture creates an image to another sign although not necessarily a building but based on an agreement or convention.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Identify commercial places in the Dr. Mansur corridor
The zoning shows that commercial shophouses are not so close around the USU campus but are located in an area that used to be a residential area that has been transformed since a decade into a commercial function building (from the bridge to the Setiabudi intersection).

Figure 2. Shophouses at Dr. Mansur corridor, Medan.
In the corridor of Dr. Mansur between the USU campus, namely the intersection of Struggle to the intersection of Selayang Swimming Pool, dominated by commercial stalls, cafes, restaurants and places to trade tools and stationary needs in various forms. Between intersections Swimming pools to the Setiabudi intersection are dominated by open and outdoor restaurants. The appearance of commercial premises is quite diverse as a result of the transformation of residential housing into commercial trading places in the form of distinctive architecture according to commodity commodities and those that only attach signage to store names and commodity commodity advertisements.

3.2. Classification of shophouses
Marking commercial places that indexically show real and striking commercial functions as a whole architectural design shows commodities. Marking commercial premises that are only plastered with billboards or signage advertisements as markers of commercial functions (not commercial iconic massive formations).

![Figure 3. Indexical shophouses facade at Dr. Mansur corridor, Medan.](image)

Marking commercial premises with creations that show iconic appearance using elements of vernacular architecture that are easily recognizable and familiar with the cultural buildings that exist in North Sumatra. In this case the reference is Malay architecture with a curved roof icon and yellow listplank carvings.

![Figure 4. Iconic shophouses facade at Dr. Mansur corridor, Medan.](image)
Marking commercial premises that display signs of symbolic meaning using the creation of modern architectural designs without reference to local references is global in nature.

![Symbolic shophouses facade at Dr. Mansur corridor, Medan.](image)

**Figure 5.** Symbolic shophouses facade at Dr. Mansur corridor, Medan.

Marking commercial places that show the activities of commercial service interiors (exhibition services, visitor drinking activities) exhibitionist as an attraction.

![Exhibitionist shophouses facade at Dr. Mansur corridor, Medan.](image)

**Figure 6.** Exhibitionist shophouses facade at Dr. Mansur corridor, Medan.

From the identification of the marking of commercial architecture above, there were obtained four types of marking models representing all commercial buildings in the Dr. Mansur street corridor, Medan. This marking is an expression of advertising for commercial activities which is a function of architecture offering merchandise.

Identification of the commercial and shophouses facade design type shows the dominance of the use of exhibitionist markers while the use of indexical markers shows a trend that is quite widely used in this corridor (figure 7).
The use of exhibitionist design is a concretization of the behavior and habits of users who have a tendency as a social society. Visitors are generally students with close communal system behavior. The habit of studying together, socializing, discussing and the closeness of the tribe makes a commercial place with a group atmosphere (unregulated individually) an attractive and crowded choice. For managers of commercial premises such a crowd of community groups is a promotional tool that effectively invites visitors with crowd images is a place that signifies a successful community.

While the use of indexical refers to how to communicate the delivery of classical information to visitors as a place marker in the form of visual and reading. The calm tragic type of traffic flow on Dr. Mansur street is quite in accordance with the facade model which relies on indexical markers as a place of attraction.

The meaning of shophouses and commercial buildings facade in the Mansur corridor shows that observers are more interested in facade with the exhibitionist meaning factor in the form of a special attraction presented by the managers of the shophouses. While the indexical meaning factor in the form of signage installation shows the effectiveness of secondary facade attractiveness. Iconic and symbolic meaning factors are not enough to provide effective attraction even though they are designed by utilizing the local atmosphere (figure 8).

![THE TYPE OF DESIGN FACADA](image)

**Figure 7.** The type of shophouses facade at Dr. Mansur corridor, Medan.

| Signage | Branding | Locality Sign | Monumental | Form | Myth | Legend | Ritual | Event | Attraction |
|---------|----------|---------------|------------|------|------|--------|--------|-------|------------|
| 23.0%   | 7.0%     | 6.0%          | 1.0%       | 1.0% | 1.0% | 4.0%   | 8.0%   | 10.0% | 39.0%      |

**Figure 8.** The effectivity of meaning factor at shophouses facade at Dr. Mansur corridor, Medan.
4. Conclusions
Based on the results of semiotic interpretations of the strip development section of the commercial segment, Dr. Mansur street corridor revealed that USU appeared as a growth center for commercial activities which is seen in the shifting of residential functions into commercial functions only in a relatively short period of time. Commercial activities that accommodate the needs of USU campus students make the architectural formation display a design that means inviting young students provocatively to make the character of the region typical of pop-art style.

By utilizing a semiotic interpretation model, four styles of commercial shophouses can be expressed that are distinctively meaning facade characters that are indexical, symbolic, iconic and exhibitionist. Domination on indexical meaning style. Overall, the appearance of the shophouses facade in Mansur's corridor shows a commercial meaning with a focus on attracting attention through various forms of facade design.

The results of the study show that the dominant commercial appeal is achieved with exhibitionist character and event/celebration as commercial meanings. This research is useful to give a deep meaning to the phenomenon of changes that occur in buildings facade that affect the creation of the face characters of cities that form urban vernacular architecture.

Interpretation of changes in regional phenomena should be carried out continuously considering the acceleration of changes in regional functions so dynamic. This interpretation model can be an alternative model of regional analysis qualitatively to be used as a forecasting tool and anticipating changes in the face of the city to complement the quantitative model of development evaluation that occurs in an area in the future.

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