

VISUAL SIGNS ON THE BILLBOARD OF BALI ARTS FESTIVAL XLV YEAR 2023 : PEIRCE SEMIOTICS ANALYSIS

Gede Bayu Segara Putra^{1*}, I Kadek Jayendra Dwi Putra²

^{1,2}Program Studi Desain Komunikasi Visual, Fakultas Seni Rupa dan Desain, Institut Seni Indonesia
Denpasar,
Jl. Nusa Indah, Denpasar, 80235, Indonesia

E-mail : bayusegara@isi-dps.ac.id¹, jayendra@isi-dps.ac.id²

This study examines the visual signs found on the Bali Arts Festival XLV Year 2023 billboard using Charles Sander Peirce's semiotics approach. To understand how messages are communicated to the audience, an analysis is conducted on the icons, indexes, and symbols that appear in the design of the billboard. Through qualitative descriptive methods, the visual elements in the billboard are separated and observed, then analyzed using Peirce's semiotics framework. The results of the analysis indicate that the theme "Segara Kerthi" (Ocean of Harmony) is successfully represented in the billboard by using icons such as the illustration of Gajah Mina, which symbolizes the protector of the sanctity of the sea, indexes such as the rising sun, which depicts hope and a new beginning, and symbols such as government logos and social media icons that reflect support and technological advancement. These visual signs provide profound meanings related to protecting and appreciating the sea as a source of life and civilization. In conclusion, this analysis provides a deeper understanding of how the visual signs on this billboard create a strong cultural identity, educate, and capture the audience's attention. This research offers a positive contribution to the analysis of visual communication works and has the potential to be further developed with diverse theoretical approaches and disciplines.

Keywords: Visual Signs, Billboard, Bali Arts Festival, Semiotics

Received April 4, 2024; Accepted April 5, 2024; Published April 24, 2024

<https://doi.org/10.31091/lekesan.v7i1.2812>

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Pusat Penerbitan LP2MPP Institut Seni Indonesia Denpasar.

This is an open-access article under the CC BY-NC-SA license

Introduction

Billboards have become one of the promotional mediums frequently used to introduce art events to the general public. The Bali Arts Festival (PKB), one of the celebrations rich in cultural traditions and arts, utilizes various publicity media, including billboards, to play a significant role in disseminating information to the broader community. Although the advertising industry is currently in an era where technological advancements facilitate most information and transactions to be conducted digitally, the use of billboards persists due to their ability to expedite information delivery and reduce production costs of conventional visual communication media (Putraka et al., 2023). This does not diminish the significance of billboard usage as a publicity medium in Indonesia, especially in Bali. Billboards, large-scale publicity mediums, are still highly effective in conveying messages. This is evidenced by the presence of attention-grabbing billboards along roadsides and particularly at traffic intersections, enticing audiences to read information, promotions, and propaganda (Pendit, 2019). Engaging billboard designs can attract visitors, communicate essential information about event sustainability, and stimulate interest to attend and participate. With their large size and appealing layouts, billboards hold great potential to capture attention and convey strong messages to the audience.

However, the effectiveness of a billboard in conveying a message depends on the reader's ability to read and understand the visual signs presented. According to Zoest (1993), a sign is anything that can be observed or made observable. Reading visual signs, in the form of symbols, icons, or images, is a key skill in understanding visually presented information. This notion is reinforced by Peirce's assertion that human reasoning is always done through signs, meaning that humans can only reason through signs (Berger et al., 2000). In an era where visual media increasingly dominate communication and information, the ability to read visual signs becomes increasingly essential in everyday life, whether in educational, cultural, or social contexts.

Various visual communication media displays undoubtedly carry specific meanings intended for the wider public (Patriansah, 2020). Similarly, the visual display of the Bali Arts Festival XLV (PKB XLV) billboard in 2023 goes beyond merely presenting images with striking text. Every visual element within it, from images, text, and colors to layout, plays a crucial role in influencing how readers interpret and respond to the conveyed message. In other words, the billboard is merely a medium for delivering a message; what is more essential is the content of that message. The effectiveness of the message conveyed through the billboard can be measured by how well it communicates and interacts with its target audience.

In 2023, the billboard for the XLV Bali Arts Festival featured visually rich symbols and symbolism. The selection of these signs was an effort to convey ideas and messages through visually appealing means that align with the characteristics of its target audience. In media representation, the choice of signs used to represent something undergoes a selection process. Those signs which are in line with the interests and communication goals are utilized, while others are disregarded (Dewi & Artayasa, 2019). Using images, colors, and text, the billboard for the XLV Bali Arts Festival in 2023 created an engaging visual narrative that captures attention and invites various interpretations. This makes it intriguing further to understand the interpretation of the visual signs within it. Semiotics can serve as a reference for understanding visual signs' interpretation and meaning. According to Noth (1990) in his book "Handbook of Semiotics," philosophers and linguists use the term semiotics to denote general theories about signs. In semiotics, signs can convey information, making them communicative. Their existence can replace something else, can be thought of, or imagined (Tinarbuko, 2003). Visual signs manifest a more extensive sign system, meaningfully referring to something beyond themselves. Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach provides a robust framework for analyzing visual signs.

According to Peirce, a sign is something that can represent something else within certain limits (Eco, 1979). A sign can only function as a sign if it can be captured and understood due to knowledge of the sign system within a social system. Furthermore, in reading signs in visual communication works, they can be identified into three types: icons, indexes, and symbols (Tinarbuko, 2008).

This research, adopting Peirce's semiotic approach, aims to provide a deeper understanding of how the Bali Arts Festival XLV Year 2023 billboard communicates messages to the audience through its visual signs. Reflecting on previous research that discusses the reading of visual signs in publication media such as billboards, only some consider Charles Sanders Pierce's semiotic approach, especially regarding cultural art events like the Bali Arts Festival XLV in 2023. This analysis provides a deeper understanding of visual signs when communicating specific messages to the audience. This understanding is expected to reveal the underlying meanings and delve further into how the appropriate use of visual signs can influence the perception and participation of the public in cultural events like the Bali Arts Festival.

Research Method

This research utilizes a descriptive method with a qualitative approach that emphasizes in-depth observation of the collected data. Its aim is to obtain a general and comprehensive overview of the actual conditions (Kriyantono, 2014). According to Moleong (2001), descriptive research methods focus more on analyzing data collected through words, images, and not numbers.

This study focuses on the analysis of visual signs found on the billboards of the Bali Arts Festival XLV in 2023. The selection of the object or research sample, in this case, the Bali Arts Festival XLV billboards in 2023, is based on several fundamental considerations. First, the Bali Arts Festival is one of the largest and most influential cultural events in Bali, attracting significant attention from both local and international communities. Therefore, analyzing the visual signs used to promote this event can provide valuable insights into how messages and cultural values of Bali are conveyed through visual media. Additionally, the selection of billboards as the research object is motivated by their integral presence in the urban landscape of Bali, thus having significant potential to influence public perceptions and attitudes towards the event. The next consideration is its relevance and contemporaneity in cultural and event promotion. With this event having recently taken place in 2023, analyzing the visual signs displayed on these billboards can provide a current understanding of how Bali's messages and cultural values are communicated through visual media in the context of contemporary art and cultural activities. By selecting the Bali Arts Festival XLV billboards in 2023 as the research object, it is hoped to better understand the dynamics of visual communication in the context of cultural and art promotion in Bali and its impact on the audience.

This research employs Peirce's semiotic approach, which classifies sign systems into three types: icon, index, and symbol. An icon is a sign that shares characteristics with the object it represents. An index is a sign with a cause-and-effect relationship with what it represents, also known as a sign of evidence. A symbol is a sign based on conventions, rules, or agreements agreed upon collectively (Tinarbuko, 2008). This approach is used considering that Visual Communication Design (VCD) works, such as billboards, contain many signs in both verbal and visual forms that signal or symptomize, and in interpreting them, one must observe icons, indexes, and symbols (Tinarbuko, 2008).

The data collection method involves three main stages: observation, interviews, and research documentation. Observation is conducted meticulously on every visual detail on the billboards, including images, colors, texts, and their placement positions around the location. Interviews are conducted with various stakeholders involved in the billboard creation process,

such as graphic designers and the Bali Arts Festival XLV creative team in 2023, to gain in-depth insights into the objectives, messages to be conveyed, and design strategies used.

Moreover, research documentation is also a crucial part of data collection, gathering various documents related to the event, such as billboard documentation at several placement locations, posters, and news articles. This documentation aids in tracking design changes and promotional strategies from previous years to 2023. By combining these three methods, this research aims to uncover the meanings contained within the visual signs on the Bali Arts Festival XLV billboards in 2023. Subsequently, the observation results are presented in descriptive form. These observation results are then analyzed by adopting Peirce's semiotic thinking, which is presented in tabular form. The subsequent observation results are interpreted to unearth the meanings within them.

Results and Discussion

Visual Description of the Bali Arts Festival XLV (PKB XLV) 2023 billboard The Bali Arts Festival has become one of the most anticipated art events in Bali. The Bali Arts Festival is a platform for enchanting and vibrant traditional arts every year. Billboards are used to inform and promote this event and attract public attention. In 2023, the Bali Arts Festival XLV carries the theme "Segara Kerthi" Prabhaneka Sandhi, Samudra Cipta Peradaban. The selection of this theme is part of the theme and concept promoted by the Bali Provincial Government, namely "Nangun Sat Kerthi Loka Bali". The theme "Sat Kerthi Loka Bali" is a concept of Balinese development. According to Koster, six noble things called "Sat Kerthi" become "Nangun Sat Kerthi Loka Bali". The core elements of Sat Kerthi are six, namely: Atma, Samudra, Wana, Danu, Jagat, and Jana Kerti (Swandi, 2023). Quoted from the official website of the Bali Provincial Cultural Office, the theme "Segara Kerthi" is interpreted as an effort to restore the sea as the source of universal welfare, which is the origin of civilization (<https://disbud.baliprov.go.id/pesta-kesenian-bali-ke-xlv-2023/>).

To convey messages related to the theme "Segara Kerthi", the visualization of the Bali Arts Festival XLV Year 2023 billboard uses an illustration of the Hindu mythology character "Gajah Mina" as the point of interest, prominently placed on the left side. The illustration of crashing waves, sunrise, rocks, and the orange-blue coloring in the background is one of the strategies in reinforcing the visualization of the "Segara Kerthi" theme.

Figure 1. Bali Arts Festival XLV Billboard



(Personal Document, 2023)

This is echoed by Rizky Tegar, one of the creative team members who designed the visual for the Bali Arts Festival XLV Year 2023 billboard, stating that all design elements used in the visual for the Bali Arts Festival XLV Year 2023 billboard are efforts to depict the "Segara Kerthi" theme to be better understood by the audience. Tegar added that the visual style typical of Balinese wayang reinforces local identity, considering that the Bali Arts Festival focuses on presenting Balinese traditional arts. Through strong visuals, the Bali Arts Festival XLV Year 2023 billboard presents a captivating depiction inviting viewers to experience Balinese cultural art's beauty and richness (Interview on March 3, 2024).

Visual Signs

Visual signs play a crucial role in conveying messages visually, appearing in various media, and significantly influencing the audience's perception and understanding of the conveyed message. The PKB XLV Year 2023 billboard has a vertical format with its layout arrangement divided into three sections: top, middle, and bottom. The top section places information about the communicator or the party wishing to convey information or messages, which in this case is the Bali Provincial Cultural Office under the auspices of the Bali Provincial Government. The visual signs at the top include the Bali Provincial Government logo, the Sat Kerthi Loka Bali logo, and the Bali Arts Festival logo. There is also verbal signage in the text "Bali Provincial Cultural Office." Furthermore, the headline "Bali Arts Festival XLV Year 2023" is displayed with verbal signs using serif font and Balinese script to reinforce local cultural identity.

In the middle section, verbal signage for the event theme "Segara Kerthi" Prabhaneka Sandhi, Samudra Cipta Peradapan, displayed in the script, sans-serif, and Balinese script fonts. The visual signs in the middle section illustrate the "Gajah Mina" character with a background of the sea, sunrise, and rocks, packaged in a Balinese wayang visual style. The body copy or message content displaying event information is at the bottom. The visual signs presented at the bottom include the logos of each district in Bali. Additionally, there are also social media icons for the organizing committee.






The dominant colors used are shades of orange-blue. Furthermore, the Gajah Mina character uses red, blue, and gold colors on decorative ornaments. The sea background uses blue and gold colors on the rock elements. The coloring technique used is sigar mangsi with digital techniques.


The layout design of this billboard uses the principle of asymmetrical balance. Asymmetrical balance gives the impression of instability, activity, dynamism, and informality, yet it can avoid monotony (Rustan, 2021). Asymmetrical balance in the visual of the PKB XLV Year 2023 billboard can be seen from the arrangement of visual elements that are different between the left and right sides, but overall, still maintain balance by placing the Gajah Mina illustration on the right side and the theme text on the left side, so the billboard visual still looks aesthetic.

Peirce Semiotics Analysis

The visual analysis of the Bali Arts Festival XLV Year 2023 billboard using Charles Sander Peirce's semiotic approach, where signs are divided based on their objects into three parts: icons, indexes, and symbols. The relation between the icon, index, and symbol on the PKB XLV Year 2023 billboard visual can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Icon, Index, Symbol Relation
(Personal document, 2023)

NO	VISUAL SIGNS	DESCRIPTION	OBJECT	INTERPRETATION
1.		Bali Provincial Government Logo, Sat Kerthi Loka Bali Logo, Bali Arts Festival Logo	Index	The organization of PKB XLV is one of the events held by the Bali Provincial Government.
			Symbol	The three logos displayed are symbols that have received global recognition or agreement.
2.		Hindu Mythology Character "Gajah Mina"	Icon	Illustration of Gajah Mina
			Index	Strengthening of traditional values and Balinese Hindu culture
			Symbol	Gajah Mina is a character in Hindu mythology depicted as a fish with an elephant's head, which serves as the vehicle of the sea god, Baruna, the deity who rules the oceans. According to Hindu belief, Baruna, with Gajah Mina as his mount, is tasked with upholding the Law of Rta, the law of balance.
3.		Morning atmosphere by the seaside	Icon	Morning atmosphere by the seaside
			Index	Visualization of the sunrise by the seaside
			Symbol	Depiction of the beauty and tranquility of the seaside atmosphere is visualized with the roar of the waves and the sunrise
4.		Logo of each district in Bali	Index	The organization of PKB XLV is followed by all districts and municipalities in Bali
			Symbol	The displayed logos are signs that have been agreed upon or recognized globally
5.		Social media icon	Icon	Social media icons of the event and organizing committee
			Index	All information related to the event can be seen on the event and committee's social media
			Symbol	Social media is a symbol of technological advancement. In this era, social media has

				become a platform widely used to convey information to the public
6.		Gradient from orange to blue	Icon	Gradient from orange to blue
			Index	Visualization of the morning atmosphere
			Symbol	Twilight is the semi-dark time just before sunrise. During this time, the sky usually changes to a bluish-orange hue. Such a sky color is considered beautiful by most people.

Interpretation of Signs and Meanings

Analyzing signs and interpreting their meanings cannot be separated from the background, where the work will be born, where it will be placed, and who the target audience is (Patriansah & Sapitri, 2022). The visual of the PKB XLV Bali Arts Festival in 2023 serves as one of the media to introduce and inform the wider community, especially in Bali, about the existence of this annual event. In this visual, there are both verbal and visual signs that carry specific messages. Representative visual signs on this billboard are rooted in responding to the theme "Segara Kerthi".

The signs on the visual of the PKB XLV 2023 provide indications of a new beginning. The sunrise icon with a yellow-to-orange gradient framed with navy blue can be a reference to represent a new and more beautiful hope. The presence of the Gajah Mina illustration as the focal point is a sign that can represent a sacred animal in Balinese Hindu mythology, where most Balinese Hindus believe this character to be the protector and guardian of the ocean, providing spiritual value leading to a sacred nuance. This is an index that strengthens the image of the sanctity of the sea and must be honored.

The sun's emergence from the horizon line, erasing darkness, gives meaning to the beginning of a new day or a new beginning. A new day indicates that everything is starting anew with new energy and new hope. The illustration of Gajah Mina reinforces the positive energies that emerge in the visual signs on this billboard. Gajah Mina, a Hindu mythological animal, is believed to be the guardian and protector of the ocean in Bali. It can provide positive energy as a protector and guardian and has the strength and sanctity to carry out its duties. Thus, it can be interpreted that the visualization of the sunrise erasing darkness and the appearance of Gajah Mina in this billboard visual reinforces the meaning related to the overarching theme of the 2023 PKB, namely Segara Kerthi.

Segara Kerthi, which means an effort to restore the ocean/sea as the source of civilization's welfare, begins. The ocean/sea is a source of life, especially in Bali, where most ritual processes involve the ocean/sea. It must be sanctified again to give back more positive energy. The visuals on this billboard convey the interpretation of this theme well. Gajah Mina is a symbol of sanctity and positive energy, and the appearance of the sun signifies the beginning of something new. This visual means the emergence of positive values that bring all good energies to this life.

In this billboard's visual, several logos are included, including the Bali Provincial Government logo, the Nangun Sat Kerthi Loka Bali logo, the Bali Arts Festival logo, and the logos of all districts and municipalities in Bali. These logos are symbols that have been understood as symbols of official organizations. The organization of the Bali Arts Festival has received full support from various Bali Government agencies. Additionally, at the bottom of the billboard are several social media icons of the event and organizing committee, which can be read as an index that can convey the message that all event-related information can be seen on these social media platforms. Furthermore, adding these social media icons can also be interpreted as a symbol of technological advancement. In today's era, social media has become a platform widely used to convey information to the public.

Conclusion

The analysis of visual signs on the billboards of the Bali Arts Festival XLV in 2023 aims to understand better how these visual signs convey messages that can be interpreted through their presence. The analysis results indicate that the visual signs used in the design of the billboards for the Bali Arts Festival XLV in 2023 are representations of the theme "Segara Kerthi." Segara Kerthi is an effort to restore the sea as the source of universal prosperity, which is the origin of the birth of civilization. Using visual styles from Balinese puppetry is an effort to strengthen the values of tradition and local culture in Bali.

In the process of visual analysis, attractive signs were found, such as the illustration of Gajah Mina as a representation of the guardian of the purity of the sea, the illustration of the sunrise on the edge of the ocean depicting hope and a new beginning where the ocean is considered as the source of life. Signs such as related department logos and social media icons of the event and the organizing committee were also found. The relationship resulting from the arrangement of these visual signs conveys the meaning that the ocean is the source of life that initiates the birth of civilization, which should be preserved, protected, and honored.

The visual signs on the Bali Arts Festival XLV billboards in 2023 play a significant role in creating a strong cultural identity, educating, and attracting audiences. This intriguing research needs further development using various theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches. This is because one of the main weaknesses of semiotics is its subjective nature in interpreting signs. Due to its dependence on individual perception, semiotic analysis is vulnerable to diverse interpretations and can be influenced by the researcher's perspective, cultural background, and personal experience. This can result in inconsistent and subjective outcomes in understanding the meaning of visual signs on the Bali Arts Festival XLV billboards in 2023. However, to address this weakness, this research can be developed by applying other visual analysis theories, such as discourse analysis theory. With diverse approaches, researchers can further explore the social, political, and cultural contexts in which the billboards are produced and disseminated. Additionally, by selecting similar research samples or objects, such as promotional billboards for other art and cultural events in Bali or elsewhere, this research can expand the scope of analysis and compare the use of visual signs and their impacts in different contexts. These efforts hope to provide a deep understanding and positive contribution to researchers in analyzing visual communication works.

Reference

- Berger, A. A., Sunarto, Rosyidi, I., & Marianto, M. D. (2000). *Tanda—Tanda dalam kebudayaan kontemporer* (Yogyakarta). Tiara Wacana Jogja.
- Dewi, A. K., & Artayasa, I. N. (2019). Television Advertising As An Artwork In Representing National Identity. *Lekasan: Interdisciplinary Journal of Asia Pacific Arts*, 2(2), 80–87.

- Eco, U. (1979). *A Theory of Semiotics*. Indiana University Press.
- Kriyantono, R. (2014). *Teknik Praktis Riset komunikasi*. Prenada Media.
- Moleong, L. J. (2001). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif/Lexy J.Moleong* (bandung). Pt. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Noth, W. (1990). *Handbook of Semiotics*. Indiana University Press.
- Patriansah, M. (2020). Poster Analysis of Public Services Advertising by Sepdianto Saputra: Study of Saussure Semiotics. *Arty: Jurnal Seni Rupa*, 9(3), 203–214.
- Patriansah, M., & Sapitri, R. (2022). Tanda Dalam Komunikasi Visual Iklan Layanan Masyarakat: Analisis Semiotika Peirce. *Demandia: Jurnal Desain Komunikasi Visual, Manajemen Desain, Dan Periklanan*, 7(1), 101–120.
- Pendit, I. K. D. (2019). Strategi promosi melalui media desain poster dalam pencitraan publik. *Stilistika: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Seni*, 7(2), 192–210.
- Putraka, A. N. A., Janottama, I. P. A., & Putra, G. B. S. (2023). Interactive Media Eight Standard Public Service Procedures in Bureaucracy Reform at Indonesian Institute of Arts Denpasar. *Lekesan: Interdisciplinary Journal of Asia Pacific Arts*, 6(1), 1–8.
- Rustan, S. (2021). *Layout 2020 Buku 2*. CV. Nulis Buku Jendela Dunia.
- Swandi, I. W. (2023). ANALYSIS OF THE RELEVANCE, MEANING, AND CONCEPT OF THE MASCOTS OF THE BALINESE LANGUAGE MONTHS TOWARD SAT KERTHI LOKA BALI. *Journal of Southwest Jiaotong University*, 58(4).
- Tinarbuko, S. (2003). SEMIOTIKA ANALISIS TANDA PADA KARYA DESAIN KOMUNIKASI VISUAL. *Nirmana*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.9744/nirmana.5.1>
- Tinarbuko, S. (2008). *Semiotika komunikasi visual* (Yogyakarta). Jalasutra.
- Zoest, A. V. (1993). *Semiotika: Tentang tanda, cara kerjanya dan apa yang kita lakukan dengannya* (Jakarta). Yayasan Sumber Agung.