



The Study of Sign (Icon, Index, and Symbols) as Found in Sun Plaza Mall by Using Pierce’s Theory

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ABSTRACT

Semiotics is the study of signs and their meanings in various contexts, and this study explores the application of semiotic theory, specifically Charles Sanders Peirce’s framework, in analyzing signs found in Sun Plaza Mall Medan. The study categorizes signs into three types: icons, indexes, and symbols. Icons visually resemble their objects, indexes indicate cause-and-effect relationships, and symbols rely on shared cultural meanings. Using descriptive qualitative methods, data was collected through direct observation and documentation of signs, revealing a total of 10 icons, out of 26 indexes, and 4 symbols. Findings indicate that indexes are the most common, comprising 65% of the signs. Emphasizing the importance of warnings and instructions for visitor behavior. This analysis highlights how the strategic use of signs to improve navigation, safety, and the overall visitor experiences in the mall, demonstrating the importance of effective visual communication in public spaces by sign as a message for visitor message for warning, or designed to guide visitors, ensure safety, or more organized. safe, and accessible or prohibiting.

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INTRODUCTION

Semiotics is used as a sign system to find semiotic codes in a market places. The structure of signs, apart from being a second-level semiotic study, semiotic language is also used as a means of communication. In communication studies, semiotics is defined as the study of signs and how they work . As for signs or codes that are organized and represent the socio-cultural life of the existing community, they are one of the scopes of semiotic studies. As a cultural product that has many meanings, semiotic studies are very important as a source of representation. Semiotics can also be used to observe cultural life and its meaning to find a series of methods and terms in the broad scope of marking something (Dan et al., 2023) Semiotics is the study, of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation of language and how language becomes the

dominant influence that shapes human perception and thought. (Manik et al., 2022) Peirce was aware of the various overlaps among icons, indices, and symbols, and at some point proposed to call icons and indices with symbolic elements hypo-icons and subindices as a way of acknowledging this. However, in any case where more than one of the three elements is present, one will be most prominent. Consequently, we can think of Peirce's trichotomy as dividing signs according to whether they are predominantly iconic, indexical, or symbolic. (Monelle, 2020) According to Bergman and Paavola, Semiosis is carefully designed to assure its own survival. The object can either be (1) immediate to the sign, or the object as it appears in the sign, or (2) dynamic, or the object as it truly is, on which the immediate object is based. The object can be anything from a quality to a truth to a law to a fictitious figure (Mustofa & Pd, n.d.)

Mall is an example of a modern shopping center, which can all shopping activities in one building, in addition to the buying and selling process, visitors can enjoy entertainment and recreation facilities available in the Mall (Wawointana et al., n.d.) One of the malls in Medan that has a lot of different kinds of product ads is Sun Plaza Mall Medan (SPMM). In addition to showcasing food and drink, apparel, household goods, and cosmetics, these ads also serve as indicators that may be examined through the lens of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory. In this sense, product ads that use icons, indices, and symbols might be seen as signs with a deeper significance. The way these signals work in communication is explained by Peirce's theory, in which iconicity is the direct visual relationship between a sign and its object, index is the relationship that shows an object exists, and symbol is dependent on accepted social norms. As a result, SPMM ads serve for both marketing tools and a medium for influencing consumers' perceptions and meanings. Identifying and categorizing the mall's signs into the categories of icons, indexes, and symbols as well as comprehending how these signs serve to communicate with patrons are the goals of this study.

The semiotic theory of Peirce (1931–1958) is used in this study to analyze the signs in SPMM. Icons, indices, and symbols are the three categories into which Peirce divides signs. Icons are indicators that are simple to identify because they visually resemble the thing they stand for. Indexes have a direct connection to their object, often based on cause-and-effect relationships. Symbols, on the other hand, rely on shared cultural or social agreements to convey meaning. These classifications help in understanding how signs communicate effectively in public spaces. In SPMM, signs play a vital role in helping visitors navigate the area, ensuring safety, and promoting services or

products. Icons, such as restroom signs, provide straight forward visual representations that anyone can understand. Indexes, like signs prohibiting certain behaviors, use clear connections to guide visitor actions. Meanwhile, symbols, such as emergency exit markers and promote signs, communicate messages that are deeply tied to cultural or societal norms. This research uses Peirce's theory to analyze the design and purpose of these signs. It explores how they influence visitor behavior and contribute to a more organized, safe, and accessible mall environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research design employed in this study is a descriptive qualitative technique. The goal of descriptive qualitative research is to give a thorough and methodical explanation of the data findings. This approach is ideal for semiotic analysis since it enables in-depth investigation of the significance and purpose of signs. Based on Peirce's semiotic theory, a descriptive qualitative technique is utilized to explain the signs in SPMM and give a comprehensive understanding of their purpose and meaning.

The signs in SPMM were directly observed and documented in order to gather data for this study. The signs' visual components and the mall setting in which they were displayed and were captured on camera. Peirce's semiotic framework was used to classify the signs into icons, indexes, and symbols so that their meaning could be thoroughly examined. The author documented and classified the indications using photographs as part of the documentation method, which was employed as a data gathering methodology. Following the collection of data, the signs were examined to ascertain the most prevalent sign kinds in the mall as well as the relationships among the representamen (signs), objects, and interpretants.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research examines the signs found in SPMM's icons, index, and symbols through Peirce's semiotic framework. The data collected revealed a variety of visual signs, including restroom indicators, escalator safety warnings, and promotional signage. Icons, such as the restroom symbol, directly resemble the object they are intended for, making them easily recognizable. Indices, such as signs with prohibition signs, convey meaning, which guides certain behaviors. Symbols, including emergency exit signs and a discount advertisements, rely on shared cultural understandings to communicate their messages. This analysis highlights how these visual signs.

Icon

icon is a sign that resembles the shape of an original object. Meaning also the relationship of sign and likeness of the object. That the intent of an icon is to give a message of its true form. (Mitrayudasi and Geraldine).



Picture 1.

Icon of for women to use the restroom

The author found that the sign on the picture is the representamen [R] that stands for its object [O]: a women's restroom. The relationship between the representamen [R] and the object [O] produces the interpreter [I]: a clear indication for women to use the restroom. As a guide to visitor

This sign employs a simple icon of a woman, which serves as a universal symbol that is easily recognizable. The text "WOMEN'S RESTROOM" reinforces this message. The minimalist design ensures clarity, making it accessible to all users, regardless of language barriers.



Picture 2.

The icon of for men to use the restroom

The author found that the sign on the picture is the representamen [R] that stands for its object [O]: a men's restroom. The relationship between the representamen [R] and the object [O] produces the interpreter [I]: a clear indication for men to use the restroom.

This sign employs a simple icon of a man, which serves as a universal symbol that is easily recognizable. The text "MEN'S RESTROOM" reinforces this message. The minimalist design ensures clarity, making it accessible to all users, regardless of language barriers.



Picture 3.

The icon of the importance of maintaining balance to stand properly

The author found this sign functions as a representamen [R] that refers to an object [O]: the safe and comfortable use of the escalator. The relationship between the representamen [R] and the object [O] produces an interpreter [I]: a warning to stand properly when using the escalator.

The icon on this sign shows two figures standing side by side, emphasizing the importance of maintaining balance and safety when on the escalator. Its simple and clear design makes this message easy to understand, even without words.



Picture 4.

The icon of a warning to use the escalator safely

The author found that this sign functions as a representamen [R] that refers to an object [O]: the correct use of the escalator. The relationship between the representamen [R] and the object [O] produces an interpreter [I]: a warning to use the escalator safely and appropriately.

The icon on this sign shows a person in the correct position when using the escalator, highlighting the importance of following the rules when using this public facility. It's simple and clear design makes this message easy to understand, even without words.

Index

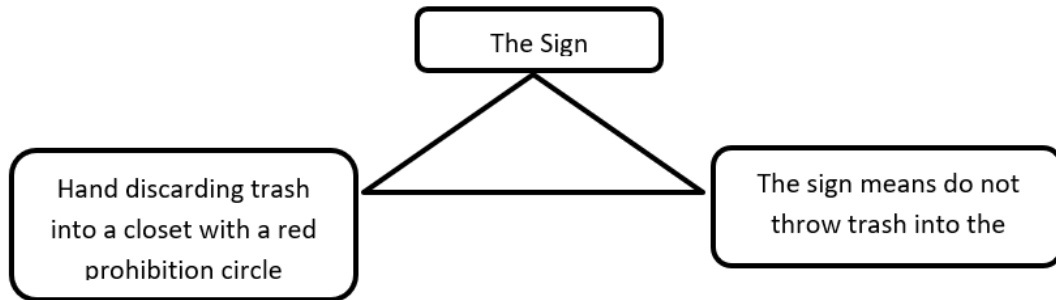
Index is a sign associated with things that are cause and effect. In this case, the sign has a relationship with the object objectively. That sign means the result of a message (Mitrayudasi and Geraldine)



Picture 5.

This Index means Do not throw trash into the closet.

The author found that the sign on the picture is the representation [R] that stands for its object [O]: a hand discarding trash into a closet with a red prohibition circle. The relationship between the representation [R] and the object [O] produces the interpretant [I]: Do not throw trash into the closet.



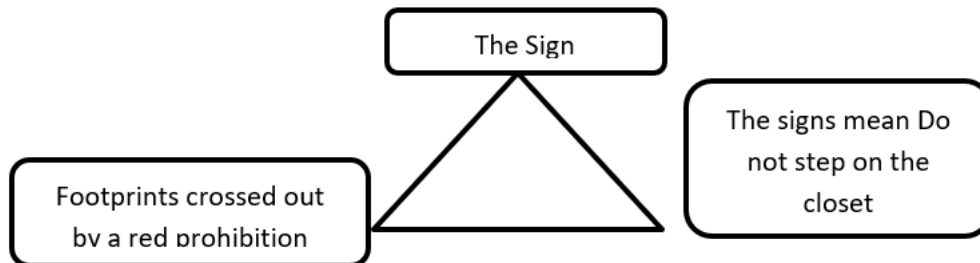
The message conveyed by this sign is a strict prohibition against disposing of non-flushable trash into the toilet. It encourages individuals to maintain proper waste disposal practices to avoid plumbing issues and environmental harm. The use of a bold red circle universally signifies prohibition, ensuring the message is easily understood across different cultures and languages.



Picture 6.

Index of Do not step on the closet

The author found that the sign on the picture is the representation [R] that stands for its object [O]: footprints crossed out by a red prohibition circle. The relationship between the representation [R] and the object [O] produces the interpretant [I]: Do not step on the closet



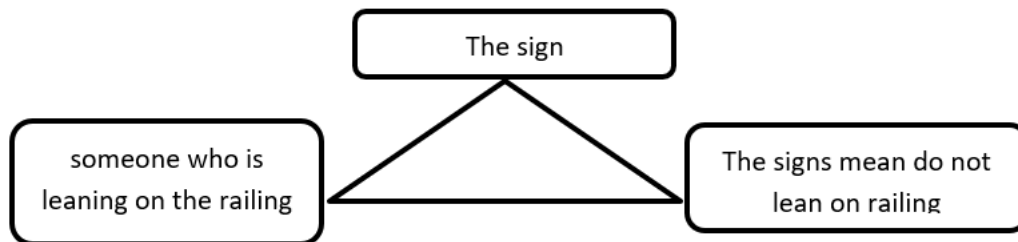
The message delivered by this sign is a prohibition against standing or stepping on the toilet seat. It aims to ensure safety and proper usage of the facility. The red prohibition circle serves as a clear visual cue, universally understood to mean "do not."



Picture 7.

this sign is to prohibit people from leaning on the guardrail

The author found that the sign in the picture is the representation [R] that stands for its object [O]: a prohibition against leaning on the railing, indicated by a black illustration of a person leaning with a red circle and line crossing over it. The relationship between the representation [R] and the object [O] produces the interpretant [I]: This sign warns individuals not to lean on the railing, highlighting the importance of maintaining safety and preventing accidents in the area.



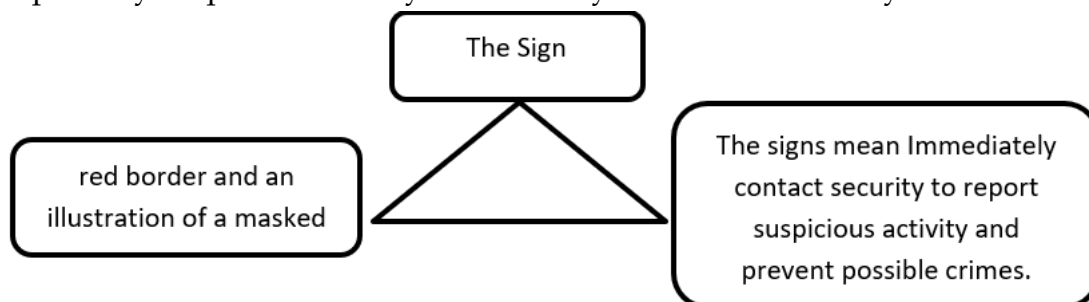
The meaning of this sign is to prohibit people from leaning on the guardrail. This sign indicates that leaning can potentially be dangerous, both to personal safety and to others. Thus, this sign aims to raise awareness of the risks involved and encourage people to keep their distance from the guardrail for safety.



Picture 8.

The sign a suspicious person

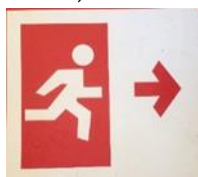
The author found that the sign in the picture is the representation [R] that stands for its object [O]: a suspicious person, indicated by a triangular warning sign with a red border and an illustration of a masked figure. The relationship between the representation [R] and the object [O] produces the interpretant [I]: Report any suspicious activity immediately and contact security for assistance.



as a warning of suspicious people, which can indicate potential danger. The use of masks and red prohibition lines emphasize that suspicious actions must be watched out for. This reminds the public to report suspicious activities to security in order to maintain environmental security.

Symbol

Symbols are signs connected with the signifier and the signified. That something was symbolic by the sign agreed upon by the signifier as a common reference. (Mitrayudasi and Geraldine).



Picture 9.

The symbol of the nearest emergency exit in case of danger

The author found that the symbol in the image is a representation [R] that represents its object [O]: the emergency exit sign, which is depicted as a figure running toward an exit with an arrow pointing to the right. The relationship between the representation [R] and the object [O] yields the interpretant [I]: This symbol serves as an important safety indicator, guiding people to the nearest emergency exit in case of danger. The running figure indicates urgency, while the arrow indicates direction, ensuring that people can leave the area quickly and safely.

The image of the gateway symbol has a unique purpose, as a vital feature that separates the gateway from the usual path. The symbol functions as a visual cue that can immediately draw attention during an emergency, evoking panic and panic. The image is intended to be used in the context of emergency protocols, so that it can be used to communicate various communication elements.



Picture 10.

The symbol of alluring offer to customers, enticing them to buy

The author discovered that the symbol in the picture is a representation [R] that stands in for its object [O]: a discount poster with the bolded wording "30% off ON 3rd PAIR." The interpretant [I] is the result of the relationship between the representation [R] and the object [O]: By emphasizing the substantial savings possibilities, this symbol acts as an alluring offer to

customers, enticing them to buy. The discount is highlighted by the wide, strong text, which makes it instantly noticeable and alluring.

Images of promotional symbols have a number of significant functions, one of which is to operate as an incentive that sets the offer apart from competing pricing schemes. They act as an eye-catching feature that can draw clients in and entice them to make more purchases. Unambiguous communication of the discount percentage clear indications of the discount percentage communicate value and savings, increasing the perceived affordability of the product being sold. They reinforce the promotional appeal of the offer, making them an effective tool for driving consumer interest and action.

Finding

Types of Signs at Sun Plaza Mall:

Icons: There are 10 icons used, such as sign for women's and men's toilets.

These icons function as direct representations of the objects in question.

Indexes: There are 26 indexes, such as signs prohibiting littering in the toilet and signs prohibiting standing in the toilet. The index provides more consequential instructions regarding undesirable actions.

Symbols: There are 4 symbols, emergency door signs and promotional advertisements. This symbol has a more abstract and conventional meaning.

Dominance of Sign Use in SPMM:

$$p = (f \times 100) / n \%$$

$$\text{Icon} = (10 \times 100) / 40 = 25 \%$$

$$\text{Index} = (26 \times 100) / 40 = 65 \%$$

$$\text{Symbol} = (4 \times 100) / 40 = 10 \%$$

Where by:

P= Percentage

F=Frequency

N= Overall Number

Tabel 1.
Icon, Index and Symbol

Icon	Index	Symbol
25%	65%	10%

The most dominant sign is the index, with a percentage of 65%. This shows that most of the signs at SPMM functions to provide warnings and instructions to visitors, compared to icons and symbols.

Discussion

The sign at SPMM demonstrates a strategic approach to visual communication, carefully designed to meet the diverse needs of visitors. By applying Peirce's semiotic framework, it becomes clear that each type of signage icon, index, and symbol serves a specific purpose. Icons provide direct and universally understood representations, making it easier for visitors to navigate, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background. Indexes guide behavior through clear instructions and warnings, ensuring safety and proper use of the facility. Meanwhile, symbols convey messages related to cultural context and promotions, such as emergency guidance or special offers. These findings suggest that the mall's signage system not only supports functionality but also enhances the overall visitor experience by creating a coherent and inclusive environment

CONCLUSION

The results of this research indicate that signage at SPMM plays an important role in facilitating communication and ensuring visitor safety. The analysis shows that the majority of signage is indexical, providing clear warnings and directions that are essential for navigating a busy public environment. Icons serve as effective visual representations, such as restroom signs, which help visitors quickly identify facilities.

In addition, the use of symbols reflects a focus on practicality, which aligns with the need for direct communication in commercial spaces. This study emphasizes the importance of utilizing a variety of signage types to create an effective visual communication strategy. By prioritizing easily accessible indexes and icons, the importance of thoughtful signage design in promoting safety and enhancing the overall shopping experience is highlighted.

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