

JOY IN “HAPPINESS” SHORT MOVIE: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui makna kebahagiaan dalam film pendek “Happiness” oleh Steve Cutts. Dalam “Happiness” ini ada banyak kata kebahagiaan yang ditulis di papan iklan dan brosur. Kebahagiaan jarang digunakan sebagai tema atau titik utama dalam pekerjaan sastra. Hal ini biasanya hanya ditampilkan secara implisit, sehingga audiens tidak benar-benar memahami apa arti kebahagiaan dalam karya-karya tersebut. Dalam menafsirkan tanda-tanda, penelitian ini menggunakan teori Semiotika Saussure (tanda, penanda, dan yang ditandakan). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Diskusi penelitian ini dibagi menjadi empat kategori papan iklan dan brosur, yaitu papan iklan alkohol, papan iklan / brosur makanan dan minuman, papan iklan dan brosur fashion, dan papan iklan obat-obatan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kebahagiaan karena alkohol, makanan, minuman, fashion, dan obat-obatan bersifat sementara. Kebahagiaan yang diperoleh dari benda-benda, barang, atau makanan dan minuman ini hanya memiliki efek ketika kita membelinya atau memakan dan meminumnya. Efek kebahagiaan yang diperoleh instan, di mana kebahagiaan mudah didapat tetapi juga mudah hilang, tidak akan bertahan lama. Dari hasil penelitian ini, dapat dipahami bahwa makna kebahagiaan dalam kehidupan nyata dan bahkan dalam film pendek “Happiness” tidak dapat dianggap enteng. Karena menjadi bahagia adalah sesuatu yang kita rasakan, bukan hanya yang kita pikirkan. Kebahagiaan sejati datang dari dalam diri kita sendiri, bukan dari hal-hal yang tidak bertahan lama.

Kata kunci: alkohol; kebahagiaan; obat; pakaian; Saussure

Abstract

This study aims to determine the meaning of happiness in the short movie “Happiness” by Steve Cutts. In this “Happiness” there are many words of happiness written on billboards and brochures. Happiness is rarely used as a theme or main point in a literary work. It is usually only displayed implicitly, so that the audience does not really understand what happiness means in those works. In interpreting signs, this study uses Saussure’s Semiotics theory (signs, signifier, and signified). This study employed a qualitative method. The discussion of this study is divided into four categories of billboards and brochures. Those are alcohol billboards, food and beverages billboards/brochures, fashion billboards and brochures, and medicines billboards. The results of this study indicated that happiness because of alcohol, food, beverages, fashion, and drugs are temporary. The happiness that is obtained from these objects, goods, or food and drink only has an effect when we buy it or eat and drink it. The effect of happiness that is obtained is instant, where happiness is easy to get but also easy to lose, it will not last long. From the results of this study, it can be understood that the meaning of happiness in real life and even in the short movie “Happiness” cannot be taken lightly. Since being happiness is something that we feel rather than what we think. True happiness comes from within ourselves, not from things that do not last long.

Keywords: alcohol; drugs; fashions; happiness; Saussure

A. INTRODUCTION

Happiness cannot be specifically defined because the human mindset has been influenced by many things. Therefore, happiness is basically a subjective feeling. For some people, they will feel happy when they earn a lot of money, or when they get free food, or when all their efforts are successful. There are also people who feel happy just by seeing other people happy. Anything that makes life easier and more comfortable is called a source of happiness. In general, happiness is widely regarded as a feeling of gratitude and pleasure when life and all our desires are running smoothly and fulfilled. Furthermore, in Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle says that happiness is the ultimate goal that can make us feel satisfied (Pakaluk, 2005). Meanwhile, according to the “History of Happiness: Socrates” (2022), Socrates argues that apart from being the ultimate goal desired by humans, happiness can be found when we can choose wisely, which desires are worth satisfying and can provide the best results. From this definition, we can understand that happiness does not only come from an object, a person, or even an end goal, but happiness can also be born from a sense of self-satisfaction obtained from the success of the actions or things we do well. However, on the other hand, there are people who feel that they do not have the opportunity to be happy and

find it difficult to feel satisfied in their lives, and this is what is depicted in the short movie entitled “Happiness” (2017).

The short movie “Happiness” by Steve Cutts heavily emphasizes the words ‘happiness’, ‘happy’, and ‘happi’. These words are clearly displayed on many billboards and brochures in the short movie, as if happiness is everything. However, this is not reflected in the main character who is always seeking happiness. The main character is depicted as a mouse who roams the city in search of happiness as much as it can. However, the happiness that it gained was only instant happiness that was easy to achieve but also easy to lose. It made the character insatiable and greedy to get the things it wanted, which the character thought would make it happy. Therefore, the word “happiness” is scattered throughout the short movie. Then, to find out the meaning of the word “happiness” in the movie, semiotic theory is needed.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Semiotics is a study that discusses how reality is described from a sign, and how the sign gives meaning. Similarly, what is defined by Umberto Eco that semiotics is related to everything that could be considered as a sign (Chandler, 2017). One of the most famous semiotic theorists is Ferdinand de Saussure. Ferdinand de Saussure, through his influential work *Course in General Linguistics* (1983), developed the idea of the sign as a fundamental element in semiotic analysis. He proposed that every sign consists of two interconnected parts: the signifier, which refers to the tangible aspect of a sign such as a word, sound, or image, and the signified, which is the concept or idea that the signifier represents in the mind. Saussure highlighted that the link between signifier and signified is arbitrary, meaning that their connection is not based on any natural relationship but instead shaped by societal agreements. Meaning is not derived from a single sign alone, but from how it differs from and relates to other signs within the same system. As he explained, “In language, there are only differences without positive terms” (Saussure, 1983, p. 120). Saussure emphasized that language is a sign system that plays an important role in constructing reality (Yakin & Totu, 2014). This semiotic model is highly useful for interpreting various forms of media, especially advertisements and visual content, where combinations of words and images create specific cultural meanings. By examining how signifiers and signifieds interact, deeper insights can be gained into the hidden messages and ideologies conveyed through media.

In the context of advertising, Saussurean semiotics is highly relevant, as advertisements operate by creating and combining signs to convey particular messages. Every visual and verbal element in an advertisement can be analyzed as a sign that generates specific meanings for its audience. For instance, the use of the word “Happiness” on a billboard does not merely signify the literal concept of happiness; rather, its signified meaning may refer to an emotional experience associated with a specific product—such as a beverage, clothing, or lifestyle. The meanings embedded in advertisements are not fixed; they are shaped through processes of social and cultural association. As Chandler (2007) notes, Saussure’s

semiotic approach reveals how signs in advertising construct meaning through systems of difference and symbolic relationships, rather than through direct correspondence with reality. A number of previous studies have examined the ways in which media and advertising construct meaning through signs. Barthes (1972), in *Mythologies*, expanded on Saussurean semiotics to explore how signs contribute to the formation of modern myths—for example, the myth of happiness being constructed through the consumption of goods. Similarly, Williamson (1978), in *Decoding Advertisements*, critiques how advertisements function as systems of signification that link products with abstract emotional values such as love, success, and happiness, thereby shaping consumer perception and desire. Therefore, applying Saussure’s theory in advertisement objects in a short movie analysis enables researchers to examine how concepts like happiness are constructed through the interplay of text and image within a billboard or other media forms.

The same theory, which is semiotic was also used in a study entitled *Saussure’s semiotics of animals in Zootopia* (2016) by Krisna Novendra Haris, Mia Fitria Agustina, and Ririn Kurnia Trisnawati. In this study, they showed that each sign, the animal characters they use, has its own meaning. Therefore, the animal characters in *Zootopia* are not only meant to entertain the audience but also have other understandings and intentions that are different from reality. In addition, the research entitled *Semiotic Analysis on Movie Posters of To All the Boys Trilogy* by Annisa Eka Putri and Nurochman used the same semiotic theory to find out the semiotic signs found on movie posters of *To All the Boys* trilogy and describe the meaning displayed on verbal and visual signs on movie posters of *To All the Boys* trilogy. Then, in a study entitled *A Semiotic Analysis Found on Movie Poster “Shutter Island”* by Ratih Utami, Eddy Setia, and Deliana also used Saussure’s semiotic theory, but they also used other theories such as verbal and visual concepts by Dyer and color term theory by Wierzbicka to analyze the semiotic signs and messages interpreted by verbal and visual signs on the movie poster “*The Shutter Island*” that the researchers tried to get the meaning of semiotic signs, color meaning, and verbal and visual aspects of the movie poster.

Another study that utilizes semiotic theory is conducted by Ari Afidah, Mia Fitri Agustina, and Ririn Kurnia Trisnawati, titled “*Colorful God and Goddess as the Representation of Modern Greek Mythology in Lore Olympus*” (2022). In this study, they employed Peirce’s semiotic theory to analyze the meanings of colors and how they reflect the personalities of six god and goddess characters in the *Lore Olympus* webtoon. The study identified six characters, each associated with a distinct color: blue, pink, green, purple, yellow, and red. These colors carry both universal and specific meanings, which emphasize the unique traits of each character. The study aimed to explore the relationship between colors and their influence on human personality. The findings reveal that the colors assigned to the gods and goddesses in *Lore Olympus* significantly impact their emotions, behaviors, and overall characterization, with each color uniquely shaping and reflecting their personalities. Then, a study titled “*The Meaning of Inanimate Objects as Characters in the Film Payung Biru (2013)*” by Nur Alifia P.S. (2023) explored the symbolic meanings of inanimate objects in the short movie also used

semiotic theory. By applying Saussure’s semiotic theory, the study uncovers the deeper significance of objects such as black, blue, and red umbrellas. The black umbrella is portrayed as gloomy and depressing, symbolizing the majority of office workers or individuals from sexual and gender groups. Meanwhile, the red and blue umbrellas represent broader emotions and dynamic energy, symbolizing sexual and gender minorities. These findings highlight how inanimate characters can convey emotions and individuality, while also promoting diversity and the acceptance of differences from the majority. Furthermore, another study by Amanda, “Women in Mass Media in Under the Silver Lake (2018): A Saussure’s Semiotics Study,” used the same semiotic theory to analyze how women are portrayed in mass media, particularly in print advertisements and magazines, as depicted in the movie. The study found that mass media frequently objectify women, presenting them as sexual objects rather than as equals. These portrayals exploit and diminish women, reinforcing and perpetuating gender inequality. In addition, the study titled “The Whining Karen Meme on X: A Semiotic Analysis” by Yanuar, Agustina, and Februansyah used semiotic theory to explore how the “Karen” meme operates in online communication. The research shows that the meme plays a key role in expressing disapproval, sarcasm, and rejection, making it a significant part of digital conversations today. At last, “Emotions vs Colors: A Semiotics Study” (2024) by Hasiana, Agustina, and Trisnawati, used Barthes’ semiotic theory to examine the connection between colors and emotions in the animated film *Inside Out*. The findings suggest that the film portrays life as a mix of emotions, symbolized by different colors. It emphasizes that all emotions, including failure and anger, are essential for emotional growth, challenging the idea that happiness should always take priority.

Thus, these previous studies highlight that movies are not merely a source of enjoyment and entertainment but can also serve as an effective medium for gaining a deeper and broader understanding of various issues. They have the potential to broaden the perspectives of audiences, whether through characters, character personalities, objects within the movie, or even the movie’s promotional posters. Therefore, this research aims to reveal the meanings of the word happiness on the billboards or brochures in the short movie “Happiness”. From this research, it is hoped that it can provide an understanding of what happiness is based on the thoughts of most people in this modern era depicted through the short movie “Happiness” and make readers more aware and understand that happiness is basically a feeling that is difficult to measure because it is subjective. It is also important not to generalize its meaning because happiness is something we feel not what we think.

C. METHOD

This research utilized qualitative methods. Qualitative research is an interpretive approach, which attempts to gain insight into the meaning and particular behaviors experienced in a particular social phenomenon (Palme & Bolderston, 2006). To support this analysis, accurate information from several

relevant sources was collected. Thus, several steps to process this research data were carried out.

The initial step involved the short movie “Happiness” being watched and re-watched multiple times to comprehend the story. The second step required signs, billboards, and brochures featuring the word ‘happiness’ to be recorded for analysis. Next, unnecessary sign objects were reduced due to the abundance of similar signs in the movie. Subsequently, data sources pertinent to semiotic research on movies were gathered. The defined sign objects were then described and interpreted using the data. The analysis was centered on understanding the general meaning of happiness and its significance as a signifier and signified according to Saussure’s semiotic theory. Finally, a conclusion was drawn.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The discussion in this section is carried out by dividing the theme of the billboards and brochures in the short movie “Happiness”. There are four billboards and brochures that are going to be analyzed. Those are alcohol billboards, food and beverages billboards and brochures, fashion billboards and brochures, and medicines billboards.

1. Happiness in Alcohol Billboards

Alcohol billboards are the first thing to be discussed. Alcohol billboards appear many times in the short movie. In general, alcohol is an addictive substance that can cause addiction and dependence. In addition, there are many negative effects caused by consuming alcohol, such as damage to the liver, damaged brain function, depression, heart disease, cancer, and the risk of death (Arnarson, 2018). Therefore, in the health sector it is not recommended to consume alcohol.

In some countries, alcoholic beverages are not traded in public places. For example, in Indonesia, alcoholic beverages are only traded in hotels, bars, and restaurants that meet the requirements in accordance with the legislation in the tourism sector (Rizki, 2021). Meanwhile, we should not be surprised to find alcoholic beverages sold in department stores, supermarkets, and convenience stores in South Korea. Even so, Korean still has the legal age to buy alcoholic beverages. There are no open-container laws in South Korea. Thus, we might see plenty of people enjoying their alcoholic beverages on the beach, picnicking in the park, or walking out of a bar (Fast Facts in South Korea).

In the application of Saussure’s semiotic theory, alcohol billboards in this short movie are considered as signs. According to Saussure, the sign is the unified whole that results from the association of a sound with a concept (Chandler, 2017). There are three alcohol billboards in this short movie. The three alcohol billboards have the word ‘happiness’ written on them. The first alcohol billboard says **‘Happiness Larger beer: Drink. Forget. Smile’**, then on the second billboard it says **‘Happiness: Drink the blues away’**, and on the third billboard it says **‘Absolute happiness: The purest happiness there is’**. The words written on the three billboards can be considered a signifier. Signifier is any material thing that signifies. Therefore, when applying the theory of signifier, this alcohol billboard is an advertisement posted to market alcohol products. The meaning of

the billboard itself is advertising displays placed on elevated boards that are typically roadside and visible to motorists and pedestrians (Blue Line Media).

In the short movie, the word ‘happiness’ appears on billboards set against a backdrop that feels far from joyful. The short movie portrays a society overwhelmed by overpopulation, where people act out of greed and selfishness, often putting others at risk just to get what they want. This harsh reality clearly contrasts with the word ‘happiness’ displayed on the billboard. Because of that, happiness in the short movie is shown not as something people already have, but as something they desperately seek—a dream or ideal that feels distant in the world they live in. Based on this, we noticed the signified or the concept of alcohol billboards that alcohol billboards depicted in the short movie is identified as a carrier of happiness, but it is only impermanent. These things come out as a reaction to the object by seeing how the main character reacts when he sees the alcohol billboards in the short movie. As Saussure said that the signified is the psychological part, the reaction to the object, the mental image evoked by the signifier; internal response to the signified (Zaimar, 2017; Haris, Agustina, & Trisnawati, 2021).

The existence of billboards in real life is usually ignored by people unless there is an object or brand ambassador that interests them. Not much different from the short movie “Happiness”, many billboards and brochures are displayed on the sides of the road. However, the difference is that in real life people will be attracted to the brand ambassador in the advertisement, while in this short movie on every billboard and brochure there is always the word happiness, either as a brand or just to attract people’s attention. There is a certain meaning why the word happiness is found on the alcohol billboard in this short movie. This short movie tries to provide a point of view where happiness is the thing that many people seek. Therefore, where there is something that offers happiness and satisfaction, people will flock to get it. As we know, the side effect of alcohol is intoxicating, where the drinker will feel fly and forget all the problems that befell him. This is what is called by momentary happiness.

The momentary or temporary happiness of drinking alcohol was used as research led by a social policy expert at the University of Kent. The research shows that people are momentarily happier when they drink alcohol - but over a longer period of time, drinking more does not make them more satisfied with life (University of Kent, 2016). According to Stephen Braun, alcohol can make the body feel light and the mind become calm. In the first hours after drinking alcohol, someone will experience the effects of joy and euphoria. However, the situation did not last long. When someone is addicted to alcohol, the negative effects will attack them more (Dhani, 2017). Therefore, the words written on alcohol billboards on “Happiness” seem to offer happiness. On the first billboard, **‘Happiness Larger beer: Drink. Forget. Smiles’**. It means they want to give the thought that people who drink beer or alcohol will be able to forget their problems and can smile as if their life is not burdensome. While on the second billboard, **‘Happiness: Drink the blues away’**. The words imply that by drinking alcohol, happiness will come, and sadness will disappear. Then, on the third billboard,

‘Absolute happiness: The purest happiness there is’. The words written on the third billboard are really words that are suitable to be displayed in advertisements, where advertisements usually display or offer something that is really needed or in great demand by people. In this short movie the main character is really trying to find happiness, and this alcohol offers absolute happiness, the purest happiness, which can be obtained by drinking alcohol, where it is just a word that will not actually come true because it is like an explanation. As previously explained, alcohol only gave momentary happiness.

2. Happiness in Food and Beverages Billboards/Brochures

The second is food and beverages billboards/brochures. Food and drink are basic needs for humans. Food is defined as a material consisting essentially of protein, carbohydrate, and fat used in the body of an organism to sustain growth, repair, and vital processes and to furnish energy (Merriam-Webster). In addition, beverage is a drinkable liquid (Merriam-Webster), such as tea, coffee, milk, juice, beer, or soft drinks.

The food depicted in “Happiness” which brings joy is hamburger. Hamburger billboards and brochures with the word happiness are often displayed on the roadside walls in the movie. Meanwhile, the beverage depicted in the short movie is a coffee and logos of two soft drink products. “Happiness” displays a coffee product logo and logos of two soft drinks products that are very similar to a coffee brand logo and two soft drink brand logos in real life.

In this second discussion, there are four signs, which are billboards and brochures with hamburgers logo, billboards and brochures bearing the coffeehouse company logo, and brochures that use two soft drinks brand logos that are similar to the logos in the real world. In using the semiotic Saussure theory, the signifier is about the physical part; or tangible we see or hear (Zaimar, 2017). The signifier in this second discussion are the word **‘happiness’** and the logos on those food and beverages billboards and brochures.

Sometimes, when we see a logo or font that resembles that of a more well-known brand, we immediately recognize that the brand is imitating or drawing inspiration from the established one. This is because logos and fonts serve as visual representations or identities of a brand, especially in the case of widely recognized and established brands. The logos in the short movie “Happiness” are very popular in real life, and these four logos in the food and beverage sector are often associated with consumer behavior. According to Smriti Chand (2022), consumer behavior is the study of how individual customers, groups or organizations select, buy, use, and dispose ideas, goods, and services to satisfy their needs and wants. Meanwhile, according to Belch and Belch (2017), consumer behavior is the process and activities people engage in when searching for, selecting, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services to satisfy their needs and desires. Food-related consumer behavior is a complex phenomenon determined by a multitude of factors that extend beyond hunger or nutrition, and often include personal, cultural, and religious values and ideals (Furst et al., 1996; Kokkoris and Stavrou, 2021; Lindeman and Sirelius, 2001; Rozin, 2007; Sobal et al., 2006). This is because two of the four logos are

brands of junk food companies, and coffeehouses/roastery companies, which are recognized for their high prices.

In the short movie, there is no interaction with the main character in food and beverages billboards/brochures. Even so, the billboards and brochures appear quite often in several scenes. Thus, the signified or the conceptual meaning of the signifier is happiness in consumer behavior and happiness derived from food. As previously mentioned, there are two logos that resemble famous brand logos which, in real life, are associated with high prices. People, especially teenagers, often visit such places to eat and have fun. Some even come just to take pictures of the food or the place itself—merely to show off. They feel and believe that they have a higher social status because they can afford something from such places. As a result, they feel proud and happy. However, there are also individuals who tend to force themselves financially in order to satisfy their ego, willingly spending beyond their means to dine at upscale establishments. This behavior is often driven by a desire to project a certain social image or to experience a temporary sense of fulfillment. Nevertheless, the happiness derived from such consumption is often fleeting, as it is followed by the realization of the financial strain it imposes. Consequently, the initial sense of joy is replaced by stress or regret when they are confronted with the reality of their everyday financial needs.

On the other hand, food and beverages billboards/brochures can represent the happiness of food. Of course, we know that poor people do not have the same luck and opportunities as others and may even struggle to earn money to buy food. Additionally, for some people, food can help improve their mood. Usually, some young people who feel sad, bad, or stressed distract themselves from the problems they have with eating. This is known as emotional eating. Emotional eating is the tendency to eat in response to negative emotions. As quoted from the Mayo Clinic, “emotional eating is eating as a way to suppress or calm negative emotions, such as stress, anger, fear, boredom, sadness and loneliness” (Mayo Clinic, 2020). This usually happens because someone wants to escape from the emotional stress they are experiencing. Therefore, many teenagers like to eat when they feel they are in a gloomy mood. By eating, they think they may have a new spirit that can erase all the pain that they feel or take away all problems they may solve.

To strengthen the understanding that food can make people happy, the science of happiness has discovered why certain foods make us happy. Because some foods are made of compounds that have been shown to influence our mood, which makes us feel good just by eating them (Clark, 2009). This is corroborated by the expression of Jill Uchiyama, a conscious eater, on the Quora site. She revealed that Food is essential for creating happiness and for allowing it to develop. Without food there is happiness, growth, or life itself (Uchiyama, 2017).

In Maslow’s hierarchy, food is the bottom rung, coupled with other physiological needs such as water and shelter. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is a theory of motivation which states that five categories of human needs dictate an individual’s behavior. Those needs are physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs (staff, 2020). In fact,

according to an article in *Archiv Fur Kiminologie*, quoted on the health line website, it states that the body can survive for 8 to 21 days without food and water and up to two months if there is access to an adequate water intake (Silver, 2019). Therefore, the word ‘**happiness**’ in these billboards and brochures can illustrate that food can bring happiness.

3. Happiness in Fashion Billboards/Brochures

The third is fashion billboards and brochures. According to the editorial policy of *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, “fashion is defined as the cultural construction of the embodied identity” (Steele, 2022). In this short movie, there are two kinds of fashion brands in the billboards and brochures shown. Seen from what is illustrated in the brochure, they take a logo that is similar to a brand that exists in the real world. The first is a shoe brand. Shoes are generally included in the outfit category. Normally, people who love fashion pay attention not only to how they dress, but also how the shoes fit them. Time and technology are advancing, so that in the field of fashion is also increasing. Many shoes have unique motifs and are limited edition. Therefore, some people really like to collect shoes. And the second is a fashion brand that produces clothes, dresses, outerwear, bags, and even shoes.

In “Happiness” is not really described how the effect of this fashion brochure on the main character. However, in real life, fashion is very important for some people. Even each appearance can give a different meaning. For example, according to Vanessa Friedman, fashion critic of the *New York Times*, the use of formal garments affects our behavior and makes us feel more powerful (Pettenazza, 2019). This means that formal garments mean strong and authoritative. Even appearance or clothing can represent status and acceptance, as well as self-expression. People dress up according to their age or status level, so that they are accepted by their social environment and friends. Generally, rich people will wear clothes with famous brands to be accepted and considered. In addition, some people also dress up according to their character, even to express themselves, they often wear unique clothes. According to Johnson, Francis, and Burns, they explained that the importance of clothing and appearance emphasis variables in revealing a person’s personality (Johnson, Francis, & Burns, 2007). Rose Turner, a fashion psychologist at the London College of Fashion, also emphasizes it by saying “Clothing impacts how people think and behave. Putting on a ‘work’ outfit might help with motivation and concentration and wearing something special might help to break the monotony of lockdown, and lift people’s mood” (Jacobs, 2020).

In Saussure’s theory, there is such a thing as a sign, signifier, and signified. The signs in this third discussion are fashion billboards and brochures, where in this short movie, the fashion billboards and brochures displayed are shoe billboards/brochures and billboards/brochures that have a logo that is similar to the logo of a well-known brand in real life. Meanwhile, the signifier is commonly interpreted as the material (or physical) form of the sign – it is something which can be seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted (Chandler, 2017, pg.14). In this

third discussion, the signifier is the word ‘happiness’ and the logos in fashion brochures. A brand’s logo serves as the image of that brand; therefore, when we see a brand’s logo, we can often determine whether the brand has a good or bad reputation, whether it is well-known or not, and whether it is considered expensive or affordable, based on the image that has been established in society. The logos and the word ‘happiness’ carry their own meaning, which is the happiness derived from the satisfaction of being accepted in society. That meaning is indicated as signified. In this short movie, it is depicted that the main character of the mouse is wearing an office suit, while several other mice are wearing t-shirts, dress, hoodie, and so on. It illustrates the level of social status in the short movie, and these fashion billboards and brochures reinforce that.

In real life, most people will feel admitted when someone else compliments them. Like when other people praise how cool the clothes you wear, how luxurious your dress is, or how authoritative your suit is. Compliments like that certainly cause feelings of joy and happiness because other people notice him and think he is cool. In addition, by wearing goods with well-known and expensive brands, people will feel that their status has increased. They will feel that they are different from the average person because not everyone is able to provide goods with well-known brands. It can also create a false sense of happiness and a sense of pride in owning goods with well-known brands. Satisfaction will arise from the feeling of happiness the person gets. However, humans have unlimited satisfaction, so they will continue to try to find happiness from buying or making their own fashion style to be praised, so that they get the goal of their satisfaction.

4. Happiness in Medicines Billboards

The last is medicines billboards. According to MNT, medicine is the field of health and healing. It includes nurses, doctors, and various specialists. It covers diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease, medical research, and many other aspects of health (The MNT Editorial Team, 2018). In “Happiness”, there are several billboards of medicines which are named **‘Happimeds’**. The billboards appear several times in this short movie, but the most notable thing is that when the main character wakes up from his stupor after drinking alcohol and falls, he gets a sheet of recipe paper for happiness. He also went to a clinic where there were many signs that read **‘Happimeds’** there. He walked over to a medicine bottle with the word happiness on it and entered it. Because of the drugs, he felt flying and happy. He was hallucinating in a very beautiful place. However, again and again, it was only temporary.

In this last discussion, not only medicine billboards are the sign, but medicine bottle as well. Then the signifier is the word **‘happi’**, the word **‘happiness’**, and the medicine bottle. Medicine is generally consumed when a person feels unwell or is suffering from an illness. Its typical characteristic is a bitter taste, yet it helps relieve or cure the ailments people experience. However, in this short movie, a medicine bottle is depicted as offering happiness when consumed. The implied meaning of the words **“happi”** and **“happiness”** found on the billboards and medicine bottle in the short movie is that happiness can be achieved through medical assistance and medications that help a person forget their problems. This

meaning is identified as the signified. It can also be interpreted that a person can feel happy or at least more relieved when they have a solution to their problems. This is illustrated in “Happiness” when the main character has gone through many things to find happiness but could not find it, he finally goes to a clinic that offers a happiness prescription.

In real life, a clinic or hospital must be in contact with doctors or experts who can be trusted. Therefore, the diseased person, whether physically or mentally ill, will go to the doctor to get a solution in the form of treatment. Through that way, they will feel a little calm because they feel they have been handled or helped by experts. For example, people with anxiety disorder will feel anxious all the time. However, in consultation with a therapist or commonly referred to as psychotherapy, talk therapy, or psychological counseling. Then, it is possible that the therapist will give medicine to reduce the patient’s anxious feeling. It can be an effective treatment for anxiety (Mayo Clinic, 2018). Therefore, the serenity they experience often leads them to return to drugs again and again because people enjoy how they feel. People will continue to take drugs despite the many negative consequences they will have in their lives, because they want to continue to pursue the calm, happy feeling that the drugs produce. When they feel peaceful then they will feel happy. However, just like the happiness caused by alcohol, food, or clothing, the happiness produced by drugs is only temporary. Once people become addicted to drugs, the happiness they feel from taking the drug will wear off more quickly, unless they increase their dose of the drug. Instead of getting peace, there are people who will feel anxious and emotional if the dose of drugs they need is unsatisfied.

E. CONCLUSION

In the short movie “Happiness” various billboards and brochures feature the word ‘happiness,’ yet they represent only temporary forms of happiness. Alcohol billboards imply that happiness is achieved through drinking, but it fades quickly. Similarly, food and beverage billboards suggest that happiness is tied to consumerism—people feel proud and happy when showcasing expensive items or indulging in emotional eating as a way to cope with problems. Fashion billboards portray happiness as derived from social status, where the right attire leads to recognition and pride. Lastly, medicine billboards present happiness as a quick solution to problems, offering relief through shortcuts such as consuming drugs.

These representations show that the happiness depicted is fleeting and superficial. True happiness, however, comes from within—through self-acceptance, gratitude, and a positive mindset, independent of external validation or material possessions. True happiness is lasting and self-sustained, not dependent on temporary external factors.

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