

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF GOJEK ADVERTISEMENTS: CONSTRUCTING SOLUTIONS AND MODERN URBAN IDENTITY

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Keywords: Semiotic Analysis; Gojek; Advertising; Urban Identity; Digital Platforms; Indonesia	Abstract: This article explores how a Gojek advertisement uses signs and symbols to tell a story about solving everyday city problems and shaping what it means to live in a modern Indonesian city. Using well-known semiotic frameworks of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, this study conducts a close examination of the visual and textual elements found in the advertisement. The results show that Gojek carefully chooses signs (like visuals and language) to send clear messages about ease, speed, and helpfulness—presenting itself as an essential part of busy city life. The study highlights how Gojek does more than just offer services; it also helps define a modern lifestyle that’s digital, mobile, and ready to tackle daily challenges. This research gives insight into how digital ads persuade people and how ride-hailing apps like Gojek influence city culture in Southeast Asia.	
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INTRODUCTION

City life around the world has changed a lot thanks to mobile internet technology. One big change is the rise of ride-hailing apps (RHAs), like Uber and Gojek, which have transformed how people get around. These apps are now a major part of urban transportation, especially in Southeast Asia (Brail, S., 2020; Clewlow, R. R., & Mishra, G. S., 2017). In Indonesia, ride-hailing apps have taken off quickly, thanks in part to the common use of motorcycles and other informal vehicles, which fit well with local habits and road conditions.

These services have gone beyond just offering rides—they’re changing how people think about transportation, making it faster, easier, and more accessible in busy city environments (Kato, H., & Chalermpong, S, 2024; Chalermpong, S. (2019). RHAs make it simpler for people to move around, offering more reliability and often lower costs than traditional transportation. They’ve become a go-to solution in crowded cities, showing how society is adapting to digital ways of solving daily problems (Cho, N., & Anindya, F. J., 2021).



Gojek is a great example of how digital tools are reshaping urban life. Starting in 2010 as a simple motorcycle ride service, Gojek launched its app in 2015 and quickly expanded. Today, it offers more than 20 services through one app, including food delivery, payments, package delivery, and more (Cho, N., & Anindya, F. J., 2021). It has become a key part of daily life for many Indonesians. What makes Gojek stand out is how it focuses on the community. It treats

its drivers and merchants as partners, offering them benefits like insurance and financial support (PT Engine. n.d., 2025).

This strategy has helped Gojek connect deeply with local users, especially in places where digital payments were still new (PT Engine. n.d., 2025). The company has shaped itself as a solution to real problems—like traffic and limited banking access—making it not just useful, but essential for many people. Gojek’s evolution into a “super app” represents a bigger trend: the rise of digital platforms that help people manage daily life with ease. In 2019, Gojek rebranded with a new logo, “Solv,” and a slogan, “Pasti Ada Jalan” (“There’s Always a Way”), reinforcing its identity as a problem-solver and a symbol of modern, urban, tech-savvy living (Gojek. 2019).

Although there’s plenty of research about Gojek’s social and economic benefits—like job creation and ease of access—there’s still a lack of deeper understanding about how Gojek communicates these values in its ads (ResearchGate. (n.d.), 2025; Universitas Indonesia., 2019). Ads are more than just information—they use signs and symbols to shape public opinion and influence how people see the brand and even themselves (Solik, M., 2014; Oswald, L. R. (2012). This study aims to explore how Gojek’s advertising helps create its public image and connects it to the idea of being a modern Indonesian urbanite.

Research Questions

This study will answer these main questions:

1. How do Saussure’s ideas of ‘signifier’ and ‘signified’ alongside Peirce’s triadic model (icon, index, and symbol), help us understand the meaning behind a Gojek ad?
2. How does the ad tell a story about solving urban problems in Indonesia?
3. How does the ad help shape or reflect what it means to live in a modern Indonesian city?

Why This Study Matters

This research adds to the conversation about how ads use signs and meanings, especially in Southeast Asia where digital platforms are rapidly growing. By applying well-known semiotic theories to Gojek ads, it gives a clearer view of how companies use visuals and words to become part of people’s everyday lives and urban culture (FlexMR. n.d., 2025). The insights here will be useful for media and communication experts, marketers, and even urban planners who are interested in how technology is shaping the way cities and their identities are evolving (Asian Development Bank. n.d., 2025).

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research approach, focusing on semiotic analysis to explore the hidden meanings in a selected Gojek advertisement. Qualitative methods are great for uncovering meanings that aren’t obvious at first glance. This analysis explores how both the visuals and text in the advertisement convey meaning, using the semiotic perspectives of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce (Sari, R. P., & Putri, A., 2020).



Research Design

This research follows a descriptive qualitative design, meaning it aims to explain and interpret the signs and symbols found in the ad in detail. This approach helps us better understand how Gojek communicates its identity, its value to users, and how it positions itself as part of modern city life in Indonesia (Hanifah, D. N., et al., 2021).

1. Analytical Frameworks

a. Ferdinand de Saussure's Dyadic Model

Saussure's theory sees each sign as having two parts: signifier: what we see or hear (like a word or image) and signified: the idea or meaning we get from it (Cho, N., & Anindya, F. J., 2021).

The link between the two is based on social habits, not natural rules. In this research, we'll apply Saussure's model like this:

- 1) Finding the Signifiers: We'll identify all the visual and written elements in the ad—like the motorbike, the green uniforms, the smiling people, the Gojek logo, and texts such as “Pasti ada jalan pake GoRide GoCar.”
- 2) Interpreting the Signifieds: We'll explain what ideas these things suggest to the Indonesian audience. For example, the green jacket might make people think of a trustworthy Gojek driver. The slogan could suggest that Gojek is a reliable solution in tough situations (Cho, N., & Anindya, F. J., 2021).
- 3) Exploring How the Meanings Are Formed: We'll look at how these meanings are shaped by shared culture and Gojek's consistent branding.

b. Triadic Model of Charles Sanders Peirce

Charles Sanders Peirce proposed a more detailed model of a sign, which consists of three interconnected parts: representamen (the sign): what we see or read, object: what the sign refers to and interpretant: what we understand or feel when we see the sign.

Peirce also divides signs into three types: icons: look like what they represent (e.g., a picture of a motorcycle), indices: are directly connected to what they refer to (e.g., smiling people showing happiness) and symbols: get their meaning from culture and agreement (e.g., the Gojek logo or the color green meaning Gojek) (PT Engine. (n.d., 2025)

This model will be used to identify each sign in the ad, figure out what each sign refers to, understand how people interpret these signs, classify them as icons, indices, or symbols, and study the ongoing meaning-making process (called semiosis), where signs build on each other to create new meanings (Cho, N., & Anindya, F. J., 2021)

2. Data Analysis Process

The data will be analyzed step by step:

- a. Breaking Down the Ad: All parts of the image and text will be separated for detailed analysis.
- b. Describing Literally (Denotative Analysis): We'll describe what's directly shown,
- c. without interpreting yet.
- d. Applying Saussure's Theory: Each part will be treated as a signifier, and we'll figure
- e. out what it means in Indonesian culture.
- f. Applying Peirce's Theory: We'll dig deeper into each sign's object and interpretant, and
- g. categorize it (icon, index, or symbol).



- h. Looking for Deeper Meanings (Connotative and Mythic Analysis): We'll explore hidden cultural meanings and stories—like how the ad suggests that Gojek offers solutions and helps build a modern city lifestyle (*Journal of Multidisciplinary Inquiry in Science, Technology and Educational Research*. (n.d.), 2025).
- i. Bringing It All Together: Finally, we'll combine insights from both theories to fully understand how the ad sends its message and builds Gojek's image as a reliable, modern solution for urban life in Indonesia.

Literature Review

1. Understanding Signs: Ferdinand de Saussure's Theory

Semiotics is the study of signs—how we use them and what they mean in our daily lives (Chandler, D., 2007; Britannica. (n.d., 2025). Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, was a major figure in the study of language. He viewed language as a system of signs, where each sign is made up of two parts: the signifier – the physical form (such as a word we hear, an image we see, or a sound we make) and the signified – the idea or meaning that comes to mind when we see or hear the signifier (Beasley, R., & Danesi, M., 2002).

What's important in Saussure's view is that the link between these two is not natural—it's something agreed upon by a group of people or a culture. For example, the word "tree" doesn't naturally mean a tall plant—it just does because people have decided so. He also made a difference between *Parole* – the actual words people speak or write and *Languge* – the underlying system or rules that make communication possible (Britannica. (n.d., 2025).

In advertising, this theory helps us see how ads use signs—like images or slogans—to create specific meanings (Sri, S., 2007). For example, when Gojek uses a smiling driver or the slogan "Pasti ada jalan" (There's always a way), it's not just about transportation. These are signs meant to make people think of trust, reliability, and problem-solving. These meanings come from shared cultural knowledge and expectations.

2. Understanding Meaning: Charles Sanders Peirce's Theory

Charles Sanders Peirce, an American thinker, developed another powerful way to understand signs. His model includes three parts: the sign – the thing that carries the message (e.g., a word, picture), the object – the actual thing or idea the sign refers to and the interpretant – the meaning or idea that pops into someone's mind when they see the sign (Eye of Heaven., 2024).

Peirce also broke signs down into three types: icons – signs that look like what they represent (e.g., a picture of a motorcycle), indices – have a direct, natural connection to what they represent. For example, smoke is an index of fire, because the presence of smoke naturally points to the existence of fire and symbols – signs whose meaning is based on culture or agreement (e.g., a brand logo or traffic light) (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy., 2022).

Peirce saw meaning-making as a never-ending process, where one interpretation can lead to another, and so on. This helps advertisers build rich, layered messages (Eye of Heaven., 2024). For example, in a Gojek ad:

- a. The image of a motorcycle is an icon.
- b. A happy customer and driver are indices of good service.
- c. The Gojek logo and slogan are symbols representing trust and modernity (Cho, N., & Anindya, F. J., 2021).



By mixing these sign types, Gojek creates a strong message about convenience and urban life.

3. Semiotics in Ads and Marketing

Semiotics is especially useful in advertising, where every image, word, or sound is chosen to make us feel something or think a certain way. Ads don't just tell us about a product—they shape our desires, emotions, and even lifestyles (Oswald, L. R., 2012).

This is especially true in digital advertising. On social media and apps, brands use symbols, visuals, and stories to grab our attention and connect emotionally. Semiotic analysis helps researchers look beyond the surface and understand how these deeper meanings are created. By decoding these signs, businesses can better understand how customers think and feel, helping them design more effective marketing strategies (FlexMR. n.d., 2025). It also helps them adapt to changes in culture and predict trends. For advertisers, this means they can create campaigns that feel more personal, relevant, and persuasive.

4. Gojek's Marketing and Branding in Indonesia

Gojek's marketing strategy in Indonesia is all about community and problem-solving. The company sees its drivers and small business partners as part of a team—not just workers—and supports them with things like insurance and financial help. This has built strong loyalty and trust (PT Engine. n.d., 2025). Gojek also makes sure it understands local needs. For example, it introduced cash-on-delivery services in areas where digital payments weren't common yet. It tackles everyday problems like traffic and lack of access to banking with services that are useful and often life-changing for users (Cho, N., & Anindya, F. J., 2021). Its ads also tell emotional stories—celebrating drivers as everyday heroes, or helping families connect during Ramadan. In 2019, Gojek rebranded with the new slogan “Pasti Ada Jalan” and a new logo, “Solv,” to show its identity as a company that helps people find a way through life's challenges.

Researchers have looked at Gojek ads and found that they use signs cleverly. For example, in the ad “Jangan Sepelekan Kekuatan Jempol” (Don't Underestimate the Power of the Thumb), the thumb became a symbol of empowerment and efficiency. Other campaigns used Peirce's or Saussure's ideas to show how the ads communicated trust, safety, and cultural connection—especially during the pandemic (Hanifah, D. N., et al., 2021).

5. Digital Platforms and Urban Identity in Indonesia

In today's world, what it means to live in a city isn't just about buildings or roads—it's also about how we connect digitally. In Indonesia, digital platforms like Gojek are a big part of everyday urban life. With internet access growing and more people using smartphones, the government is also pushing for a digital future by 2045 (Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. (n.d., 2025). Apps like Gojek help cities grow in smart ways. They make it easier to move around, especially in places where public transport is lacking. Gojek's motorcycle service, for example, works well because motorcycles are already so common in Indonesia. It's also linked with public transport to make commuting smoother.

Beyond transport, Gojek helps people manage their day—from ordering food to paying bills. It's also helping small businesses grow and encouraging the use of cashless payments through GoPay. This digital shift is improving lives but also brings challenges, like traffic, environmental concerns, and the need to protect gig workers. (Cho, N., & Anindya, F. J.,



2021). Still, Gojek's deep role in everyday life shows how much digital platforms shape modern urban identity. Today's city dwellers in Indonesia are connected, mobile, and used to solving problems through apps. That's a major shift in how people live and see themselves.

Data Collection



Chosen Advertisement

This study focuses on one Gojek advertisement image as the main data source. The ad was chosen because it clearly shows how Gojek uses visuals and words to communicate its message. It includes key features of the company's transportation services and its app interface.

Visual Details:

In the image, we see a bright and lively outdoor scene. A Gojek motorcycle is at the center, carrying a smiling driver and passenger. Both are wearing the company's signature green helmets and jackets. Behind them, there's a white car, most likely a GoCar. The background shows a road winding through a green landscape with trees, hills, and a blue sky—giving a relaxed, suburban vibe.

In the lower corner of the image, there's a smartphone screen showing the Gojek app. A red arrow points to the "Promo" section, with a percentage sign, suggesting discounts or special offers. At the top right, you'll spot the Gojek logo.

Text appears on the Ad:

1. The top-left side: "Pas tiada jalan ngirit ongkos" (When there's no way, save money).
2. Center: "Pasti ada jalan pake GoRide GoCar" (There must be a way using GoRide GoCar) (Cho, N., & Anindya, F. J., 2021) – a twist on Gojek's famous slogan "Pasti Ada Jalan."



3. Bottom left: “% Cek halaman Promo!” (Check the Promo page!).

4. On the phone screen: “Promo” (Promotion).

Why This Ad Was Chosen:

This ad was picked because it captures the essence of Gojek’s brand in one image. It brings together visuals and text in a way that tells a complete story. It shows both GoRide (motorbike) and GoCar (car) services, highlighting the variety Gojek offers. The phone screen and the “Promo” feature point to the app’s digital convenience and affordability.

The central line, “Pasti ada jalan pake GoRide GoCar,” reinforces Gojek’s core message: that it helps people solve problems and makes life easier. The happy, smiling faces suggest a smooth, stress-free journey—something that contrasts with the daily struggles of urban traffic. This contrast is important in understanding how Gojek presents itself as a helpful, everyday solution (Cho, N., & Anindya, F. J., 2021). Overall, the ad is visually clear and message-driven, making it ideal for a deeper semiotic analysis using both Saussure’s and Peirce’s theories.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This semiotic analysis of a Gojek advertisement shows how the ad cleverly delivers several layers of meaning. It presents Gojek not just as a transport app, but as a reliable solution for everyday city problems and a brand that helps define what it means to live in a modern Indonesian city.

Findings from the Saussurean Perspective:

1. **Positive Brand Image:** The green Gojek uniforms and happy faces of the driver and passenger suggest trust, professionalism, and satisfaction. This creates a positive image of the brand in people’s minds.
2. **Problem and Solution Message:** Phrases like “Pas tiada jalan ngirit ongkos” and “Pasti ada jalan pake GoRide GoCar” directly point to Gojek as the answer to transportation struggles and financial concerns.
3. **Modern & Digital:** The phone screen with the Gojek app highlights how easy and modern the service is—just a tap away.

Findings from the Peircean Perspective:

1. **Visual Icons of the Service:** The motorbike, car, and app on the phone clearly show Gojek’s services.
2. **Hints of Value and Action:** Smiling users show satisfaction. The red arrow and percentage symbol point to deals and encourage users to take action.
3. **Strong Symbolism:** The slogan “Pasti ada jalan” is more than just a tagline—it reflects Indonesian values like hope and persistence, positioning Gojek as a dependable partner in daily life. The logo “Solv” also reinforces this message of problem-solving.
4. **Visual and Text Harmony:** The ad brings together visuals (people, vehicles, app) and words (taglines, promo messages) to strengthen its message—Gojek is practical, helpful, and empowering.

How the Ad Shows Gojek as a Solution:

1. It acknowledges the problem: “When there’s no way.”
2. It offers a clear solution: “There’s always a way with GoRide and GoCar.”



3. It highlights benefits: Motorbikes suggest speed, cars suggest comfort, and the promo offers suggest saving money.

How It Shapes Urban Identity:

1. Digitally Savvy: The smartphone signals that modern users are comfortable using tech for daily needs.
2. Positive Outlook: Smiling riders and an upbeat slogan show an attitude of confidence and optimism in city life.
3. Smooth Lifestyle: Even with challenges like traffic, the ad shows travel as easy and pleasant—something city dwellers value.
4. Cost-Aware: By showing ways to save money, the ad speaks to smart, budget-conscious urban users.

Discussion

This analysis helps us understand how Gojek uses visuals and language to promote its services while also shaping how people see themselves as modern city dwellers in Indonesia. Using both Saussure's and Peirce's semiotic theories helps us look deeper into the message, not just what it says but how it connects with culture and emotions.

1. Gojek as the Answer to Urban Problems

The heart of the ad's message is that Gojek is a practical solution to city life struggles—like traffic and high costs. The phrase “Pas tiada jalan ngirit ongkos” directly speaks to those problems and shows how Gojek is there to help. Past research also shows Gojek fills the gap in areas where public transport is lacking, especially with motorbike rides that are quick and affordable. Peirce's idea of signs helps explain this. The motorbike and car aren't just vehicles—they stand for flexibility and choice. Combined with the slogan “Pasti ada jalan,” they symbolize Gojek's promise to help you get where you need to go. The red arrow and discount sign reinforce this by showing there's real value, not just words. These signs all work together to deliver a message of support, savings, and smart solutions.

2. Building a Modern Urban Identity

The ad also helps shape how people see themselves in today's city life. The phone and app show users as tech-savvy and connected—fitting in with Indonesia's fast-growing digital culture. The happy riders and peaceful background suggest a lifestyle where movement is smooth and life is manageable, even if that's not always the reality in traffic-heavy cities. This creates an aspirational identity—it paints a picture of what urban life could look like with the right tools. It reflects a new mindset where people use apps like Gojek to take control of their lives, stay efficient, and keep a positive attitude. The phrase “Pasti ada jalan” becomes a powerful symbol for this hopeful, empowered way of thinking.

3. Bigger Picture

This shows how much influence ads have beyond selling a service. Gojek's success isn't just because of what it offers, but how it tells its story. By connecting with everyday struggles and cultural values, it becomes more than just an app—it becomes part of daily life. These ads act like cultural snapshots, showing what people care about and how they see themselves. Future studies could look at how this strategy is used in other Gojek campaigns or adapted in different parts of Southeast Asia.



CONCLUSION

This study looked at a Gojek advertisement using the classic semiotic approaches developed by Saussure and Peirce to understand how the brand tells a story about solving everyday city problems and shaping what it means to live in a modern Indonesian city.

By breaking down both the visuals and the text in the ad, the analysis revealed how Gojek uses clear signs—like its green uniforms, friendly driver and passenger smiles, and its mobile app—to send strong messages of trust, satisfaction, and digital ease. From Peirce’s perspective, these elements were seen as icons (pictures of real services), indices (signs of user happiness and action), and symbols (deeper meanings). One of the strongest symbols is the slogan "Pasti ada jalan" ("There must be a way"), which connects with Indonesian cultural values of persistence and finding solutions.

Overall, the ad doesn’t just promote Gojek as a ride-hailing service. It presents Gojek as a real, helpful part of city life—especially in solving transport and money-saving challenges. It also reflects and shapes a new urban lifestyle in Indonesia—one that’s tech-savvy, optimistic, and focused on ease and efficiency. This research shows how useful semiotics can be for understanding how modern brands influence our culture and everyday identities.

Even though this study focused on just one Gojek ad, future research can explore more ads, including video campaigns, to see how their messages evolve over time and in different formats. It would also be helpful to compare Gojek’s strategies with those of other ride-hailing services across Southeast Asia to see how they build their brand stories in different local cultures.

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