

A STUDY OF SIGNS:

The Political Advertisements in Presidential Election Campaign of Indonesia 2014 based on the Peirce's Theory

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Abstract:

In general election especially presidential election, it will have a special thing like in using advertisements for doing a campaign. In 2014, Indonesia has two candidates for becoming the first position as president and vice president. It is interested in analyzing the signs of advertisements that becomes their personal branding using semiotics analysis. This paper focuses on Peirce's theory that is related to the signs which are able to be defined as three categories; Icon, Index and Symbol. There are many signs in personal branding of each candidate such as Prabowo-Hatta has a nationalist enthusiasm for Indonesia. Then, Jokowi-JK has an eternal spirit for working. Of course, the analysis is interested in analyzing to know more the meaning of signs because it is able to be an effective to use in campaign for getting many voters in a polling day. Therefore, as society has to be critical in this thing for choosing the right man as president and vice president of Indonesia.

Keywords:

Presidential Election, Advertisements, Signs, Peirce's Theory, Personal Branding

Introduction

Recently, Indonesia is carrying on the General Election for the period 2014-2019. In addition, Indonesia has done the General Election from 1955 that becomes the first election in the history of Indonesia from the 10 years old of proclamation¹. At that moment, the society will determine their choice to obtain a change for Indonesia. Those choices are like house of representative, vice president, and president. It is an

important thing for the society because there are many things that need a change by showing a fresh idea or thought in the new government's master plan. Thus, in this period, there are many parties who hope to all elements of society to use their right in the General Election.

First of all, there is the definition that said General Election is the process of selecting people to fill up the political positions particularly. Then, the positions are diverse, it is able to be the president, house of representatives at various

¹ Komisi Pemilihan Umum, *Pemilu 1955*, <http://www.kpu.go.id/>. Accessed on July 16th, 2014 at 02.30 PM.

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levels of government, etc². On the other hand, General Election is able to have a meaning as a formal decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office³. In another context, it is able to held in campus or school that is more commonly used the word 'election'. The second one, General Election is one attempt to influence people in a persuasive manner (not forced). The activities used like a rhetoric, public relations, mass communication, lobbying and other activities.

General Election is an important element in democracy because it is able to be seen that centrality of elections position becomes the focus point to distinguish whether democratic political system or not⁴. Then, it is clear from some of the definitions of democracy. As a simple way, it is able to be said that democracy is government from the society, by the society and for the society. It means as the people who create or build a government for the interest of themselves.

General Election is identical with campaign. There is a particular time for doing the campaign because it is used to socialize, persuade and invite the

society as *the voters* for knowing more about the candidate etc. The participants of General Election are able to do campaign in the designated time immediately to the polling day. All participants offer the promises and programs during the campaign by using many media. The purposes are like to make the society know who the candidate are, to socialize the master plan of candidates, etc. in order the society choose them at the polling day.

The unique thing of campaign is the using of media that is related to the advertisements to show their personal branding because it is specific activity. It is a media that creates advertisements as the end of product to be seen. According to Burke, states that advertising is a sales message, directed at mass audience that seeks through persuasion to sell goods, services, or ideas on behalf of the paying sponsor⁵. Then, it usually uses for the general activity. Besides that, advertisement is used to persuade the reader to buy the product or services. It is able to become media in order the consumer get information about the products or services that the consumers want.

There are many ways that is used for socializing each candidates doing a campaign like *creating billboard* as the advertisements on television, the road, or poster etc. Those are be able to

² Wikipedia Bahasa Indonesia, Ensiklopedia Bebas. *Pemilihan Umum*. http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pemilihan_umum. Accessed on July 16th, 2014 at 02.50 PM.

³ Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia. 2013. *Election*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Election>. Accessed on July 16th, 2014 at 02.55 PM.

⁴ Mohammad Najib dkk., *Pengawasan Pemilu Problem & Tantangan*, (Yogyakarta: BAWASLU PROV. DIY, 2014), Page. VI.

⁵ J. D. Burke, *Advertising in the Market Place: Second Edition*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1980), Page. 6.

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show the creativity on each participants of General Election in order to obtain many supporters. In this period, each candidate has created personal branding which are shared and used by the supporter during the campaign in advertisements. Of course, the advertisements contain many thing that is showed by signs to send a message for voters. Signs can be encountered in any context of communication including in advertisements.

Talking about signs, the society will not only see the content but also try to guess what the message is on the advertisements. Sometimes, the voters need a something for convincing themselves. In another side, it needs the knowledge that is related to the signs in order to know the meaning of them. In linguistic study, there is one of aspects that concerns to the signs. It is semiotics that means as the study of meaning-making, the philosophical theory of signs and symbols⁶. Then, semiotics is called the general science of signs. It is the study of signs conceived as the experts like a discipline or science (Peirce, Saussure) or theory (Morris) or doctrine (Sebeok)⁷. On other way, it is able to give a help to understand the meaning of the sign. By advertisements, the supporter are able to share in many

place like on the road, mass media (newspaper, television, etc.), or social media that more using by Indonesian people.

Futhermore, there are two candidates that will compete to obtain the first position on this nation to be president and vice president for period 2014-2019. The candidate of presidential election has a special signs on their advertisements that is spreaded to the society. It is not easy to know what the meaning of the message in the advertisements because the content has many message that is showed by signs in advertisements in order to persuade them especially to choose the candidate at the polling day. From the explanation above, it is able to be interested to discuss more about *the Study of Signs: The Political Advertisements in Presidential Election Campaign of Indonesia 2014 based on the Peirce's Theory*.

SEMIOTICS

In study of signs, it has relation to the semiotics that has *definition* to provide us with a conceptual framework and a set of methods and terms for use across the full range of signifying practices, which include gesture, posture, dress, writing, speech, photography, film, television and radio⁸.

⁶ Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia. *Semiotics*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semiotics>. Accessed on July 16th, 2014 at 08.30 PM.

⁷ Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio, *What is semiotics?*, (University of Bari, 2007), <http://vip.iva.dk/signs/WIS.htm>. Accessed on July 16th, 2014 at 09.00 PM.

⁸ Daniel Chandler, *Topic Strengths of Semiotic Analysis on Semiotics for Beginners*, (Aberystwyth: University of Wales, 1994). <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html>. Accessed on July 17th, 2014 at 12.00 PM.

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In addition, semiotics is able to help to make us aware of what we take for granted in representing the world, reminding us that we are always dealing with signs, not with an unmediated objective reality, and that sign systems are involved in the construction of meaning. On other word, semiotics is not only called by study of signs but also called by study of symbols and signification. Besides, all people have to know that semiotics is able to study how meaning is created, not what it is. Thus, semiotics is concerned to something that is able to be taken as signs.

The history of semiotics, it is from the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure as the father of linguistics and semiotics in his *Course in General Linguistics*, 1916. The other philosophers as the key figures in the early development of semiotics are Charles Sanders Peirce and then Charles William Morris until all people who care to the semiotics development. Those are behaviourist semiotics and semiotics framework. Moreover, modern semiotic theory is also sometimes allied with a Marxist approach which has stresses point to the role of ideology⁹. *In the latest development of semiotics*, the study of signs is dominated by the society of the American philosopher named Charles Sanders Peirce.

These are *the important figures in semiotics*¹⁰:

- Ferdinand de Saussure (founder of linguistics & semiotics) (1857-1913)
- Charles Sanders Peirce (American philosopher; say his name "purse") (1839-1914)
- Roland Barthes (semiotic theorist) (1915-1980)
- Umberto Eco (author of *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum*, among others) (1932-)
- Julia Kristeva (1941-)
- Claude Lévi-Strauss (anthropologist) (1908-1990)
- Jacques Lacan (psychoanalyst) (1901-1981)

In this time, talking about the modern semiotician that is founded by Charles Sanders Peirce stated, semiotics is not only study signs but also much deeper than that. *The important point in semiotics* is study to know how meaning is formed. Then, it studies how people first of all interpreted a sign. In addition, it studies how people then draw on cultural or personal experience to understand a sign that is showed. It is able to be interpreted as about communication.

SIGNS

In this point, signs has strong relevancy with semiotics. *From the dictionary*, semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation. As origin, the word semiotics derived late 19th century: from Greek *sēmeiotikos* 'of signs', from

⁹ Daniel Chandler, *Topic Introduction on Semiotics for Beginners*.

¹⁰ See, *Semiotics*, <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html>

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sēmeioun 'interpret as a sign'¹¹. Of course, there is a meaning in every sign that needs to be interpreted by all people who see the sign.

From the Semioticians, there are many statements that talk about signs as like these: the founder of modern semiotics, Peirce proposes that signs are able to be defined as three categories; Icon, Index and Symbol¹²; the father of modern linguistics, Saussure proposes a theory of signification (a "dyadic" or two part models of the signs). *It a simpler structure of what a sign* is based on Saussure¹³:

- a 'signifier' (*signifiant*) - the form which the sign takes; it is able to be stated as the word doing the representing, and
- the 'signified' (*signifi?*) - the concept it represents, the other word, it is the idea being represented.

ADVERTISEMENTS

In this era, there are many people who use the advertisements for

the campaign especially in presidential election because they think it is useful and very effective for spreading information about something. One of advertising is billboard, poster, or others. The *meaning of advertising* is the activity or business of advertising things on television, in newspapers etc¹⁴. It means that the advertising is a marketing communication for persuading other people. On the other hand, *advertisement* is a picture, set of words, a short film, or notice of something for sale or wanted¹⁵, which is intended to persuade people, or useful for giving information about a job that is available, an event that is going to happen etc. In short, advertisements are the act of advertising.

In general election especially presidential election, two candidates named *Prabowo-Hatta* and *Jokowi-JK* also have personal branding for publishing in television, radio, road, moreover in social media that is favorite media of Indonesian people by advertisements. The form of advertisements is able to be poster, billboard etc. There are many signs that are used for persuading the voters by seeing the advertisements. It will be interested in knowing more this one.

In advertisements, there are advantage and disadvantage. *The advantage of advertisements* usually

¹¹ See <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/semiotics> Accessed on July 17th, 2014 at 12.10 PM.

¹² Based on the Peirce stated that signs are able to be defined as three categories in Icons, Symbols and a Semiotic Web, as quote: "*Icon – an Icon sign is a sign that resembles something, such as photographs of people; Index – an Index signs is a sign where there is a direct link between the sign and the object; Symbol – an symbol has no logical meaning between it and the object.*" See Mark Boulton, *Icons, Symbols and a Semiotic Web*, 2005 at <http://www.markboulton.co.uk/journal/icons-symbols-and-a-semiotic-web> Accessed on July 17th, 2014 at 13.00 PM.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ -----, *Longman Handy Learner's: Dictionary of American English (New Edition)*, (England: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), Page. 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

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uses in conveying a campaign aim at introducing or reintroducing a candidate by reinforcing his or her positive image and qualities. The focus point of using advertisements, the user has to know the aim of viewers and the strategic place because it is able to be seen many times. It means the advertisements uses for persuading the voter for choosing the candidate. Then, *the advantage of advertisements* especially in general election like the statement below¹⁶:

Negative or attack ads have been studied for their effects on memory and ability to shape attitude towards candidates. Both variables are measured to determine the effectiveness of negative ads, which tend to be well remembered. The limitation of this technique is that it can sometimes be highly counterproductive as ads turn out to harm the attacking candidate.

In this paper, the focus point of print advertising. The successful team of candidate spread the personal branding like using poster, billboard or putting in mass media, etc as advertisements. Print advertising creates a medium for understanding how advertisers attempt to persuade potential receivers to move to active status that is mostly visual with picture contained a message. According to Fiske states that main elements of print advertising are divided into four¹⁷: *Headline, Copy, Illustration, and Logo*.

¹⁶ Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia. 2009. *Campaign Advertising*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campaign_advertising. Accessed on July 17th, 2014 at 20.30 PM.

¹⁷ J. Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies*, (London: Routledge, 1990), ---.

PEIRCE'S THEORY

There is the difference between Saussure and Peirce's sign relation. *Saussure's* sign relation is in signifier-signified relation. On the other hand, *Peirce's* sign is in sign (interpretant)-object-ground relation. The other word, from the difference of Saussure's model, Peirce formulated a three-part triadic model consisting of an interpretant, representamen, and an object. For Peirce, the sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. More explanation about definition of signs based on Peirce, as follow¹⁸:

A sign thus stands for something (its *object*); it stands for something to somebody (its *interpretant*); and finally it stands for something to somebody in some respect (this respect is called its *ground*). These terms, *sign, object, interpretant, and ground* can thus be seen to refer to the means by which the sign signifies; the relationship between them determines the precise nature of the process of *semiosis*.

In addition, Peirce called the relationship and interaction between the representamen (sign), the interpretant and object, 'semiosis' that is used for knowing what the meaning of signs is.

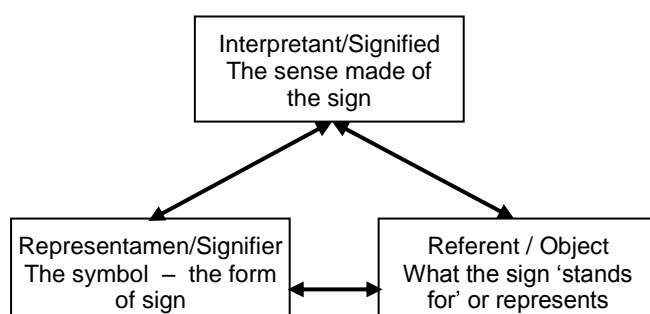
This is the picture about the Semiotics of the Element of the Triad:

¹⁸ Dennis Atkinson, *Art in Education: Identity and Practice*, (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), Page. 22.

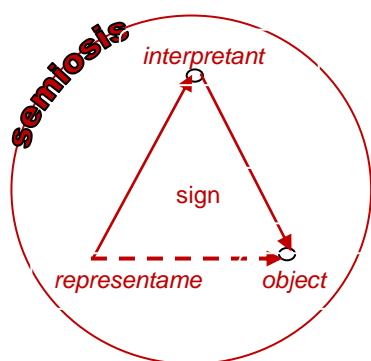
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Semiosis of the Elements of the Triad



Another explanation about the Peirce's Triadic Model, such as:



The detailed explanation of picture above is¹⁹:

Peirce used a different set of terms to describe sign functions, which for him were a conceptual process, continually unfolding and unending (what he termed "unlimited semiosis," the chain of meaning-making by new signs interpreting a prior sign or set of signs).

According to Peirce, there are *the foundational categories of semiotics* that are separated to the three categories. Those are necessary and sufficient to account for all of human experience and been designated as

¹⁹ Martin Irvine, *Structural Linguistics, Semiotics, and Communication Theory: Basic Outlines and Assumptions*, http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Semiotics_and_Communication.html. Accessed on July 17th, 2014 at 21.30 PM.

firstness (a conception of being that is independent of anything else); *secondness* (the mode of being that is in relation to something else); and *thirdness* (the mediator through which a first and a second are brought into relation). Meanwhile, the relationship between the triangular representamen, target object, and interpretant formed trichotomy on the basis of the distribution of signs that will elaborate below, such as²⁰:

- **The sign itself:** *Qualisigns, Sinsigns, and Legisigns*. Every sign is either (qualisign) a quality or possibility, or (sinsign) an actual individual thing, fact, event, state, etc., or (legisign) a norm, habit, rule, law.
- **How the sign stands for its denoted object:** *Icons, Indices, and Symbols*. Every sign refers either (icon) through similarity to its object, or (index) through factual connection to its object, or (symbol) through interpretive habit or norm of reference to its object.
- **How the signs stands for its object to its interpretant:** *Rhemes, Dicsigns, and Arguments*. Every sign is interpreted either as (rheme) term-like, standing for its object in respect of quality, or as (dicsign) proposition-like, standing for its object in respect of fact, or as (argument) argumentative, standing for its object in respect of habit or law.

The detailed explanation about *the three trichotomies*, for instances:

- **The sign itself is able to be** (1) a *qualisign*, meaning a quality that functions like a sign or which is a sign of a trait; (2) a *sinsign*, meaning a specific spatio-temporal thing or

²⁰ Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia, *Semiotic elements and classes of signs*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semiotic_elements_and_classes_of_signs. Accessed on July 17th, 2014 at 22.30 PM.

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event that functions like a sign or which is a sign of the reality on the basis of appearance or the type of sign that utilizes an event or object as a sign vehicle; or (3) *a legisign*, meaning a conventional sign or which is a sign on the basis of a generally accepted rule, a convention, a code.

- **How the sign stands for its denoted object**, the sign is called by (1) *an icon*, meaning as a sign that means as possibility, as potential equality of the things, or as a sign that resembles something; (2) *an index*, meaning a sign where there is a direct link between the sign and the object, then the relationship of signs and the object is concrete and actual; or (3) *a symbol*, meaning no logical meaning between it and the object, then happening when it refers to its object by virtue of a law.
- **How the signs stands for its object to its interpretant**, the sign is called, (1) *a rheme*, meaning as any sign that is not true and not false (2)

a dicisign or *dicent sign*, meaning as functions like a logical proposition or as informational signs; or (3) *an argument* or *reasoning*, meaning as a sign of reason for proving a truth.

ANALYSIS OF SIGNS IN POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS

In presidential election 2014, all candidates have own advertisements with special signs that has a message to the society. It will be interested in analyzing the signs because the advertisements contain many kinds of signs. The successful teams of each candidate create an imagination in advertisements that are showed by many signs for convincing or persuading the society as voters. The signs are like: the candidates, the characteristics each candidate, etc. The purposes make the society to remember the candidates. Thus, the society chooses the candidate in polling day. These are the advertisements on each candidate that is taken to be an example, such as:



The First



The Second

In this paper will be analyzed the signs in political advertisements based on the founder of modern semiotics because Peirce proposes that signs are able to be defined as three categories; Icon, Index and Symbol. In simple words, *icon* is a sign that is similar with objects or a sign that has a similar characteristic that is meant. Then, *index* is a sign that has causal relationship that is represented or a sign that is called as a proof. The last, *symbol* is a sign based on the convention, rule, or agreement that is agreed togetherness.

The first candidate: Prabowo – Hatta

This personal branding is simple but elegant. The picture shows that there are candidates as president (H. Prabowo Subianto) and vice president (H.M. Hatta Rajasa) that use a cap (*kopiah/peci*), a white shirt with a red eagle (*garuda merah*) as a logo, then the slogan of the first candidate. In addition, the background is red and white that show Indonesia's flag. There is a word PRABOWO-HATTA as the emphasizing with mentioning 'No.1'. Actually, there is a unique thing like in using a red eagle, the word 'Indonesia Bangkit' that has a deep meaning for knowing more. The analyzing of signs in the picture, as follow:

i. Icon:

This poster has an icon that shows the couple candidate as president

and vice president. Then, the next is a cap (*kopiah/peci*), a white shirt and an eagle (*garuda*) in right side on the shirt that is a sign to make the voters remembering them. In another side, the picture of candidate is so confident to show the great figure for voters. It gives the imagination that the candidate has a something special and charismatic. Thus, this candidate is suitable for becoming the winner at this election.

ii. Index:

The focus point is on the color of the shirt, cap and eagle used. It gives a message that the shirts try to remember the value of struggle, the freedom, and the patriot of this nation. Then, it tells about the characteristic of his party (Gerindra). In addition, the cap used that shows as a national identity not to be religious; moreover, it has relation to the characteristic of Ir. Soekarno as the patriot of this nation. The last, the eagle used that shows the nationalist enthusiasm for giving the best thing for the nation when the society gives the chance for them to be president and vice president.

iii. Symbol:

It is a thing that becomes a emphasizing by using the word 'Indonesia Bangkit'. It is able to be a spirit for the next period that needs the great master plan. They think that

it is the time for showing or giving a proof. Indonesia is a great nation that has many things for developing the nation in order to make the society better than ever. Moreover, there is exclamation mark at the end of 'Indonesia Bangkit'; it shows the emphasizing for them to create or reach the dream. In addition, the word 'Prabowo-Hatta' is as the initial of candidate to show the voters. The word 'No.1' is written bigger than other because it is a number of candidates in presidential election in order the voters do not false to choose.

Therefore, the personal branding of the first candidate would like to show that they have a something special or characteristic as like: the using of white shirt, black cap, and red eagle as a characteristic of them. It means that they ready for doing anything when the results show the winner is number one (No.1). They create an imagination to the society by showing the color what they put. Especially, they have a spirit for rescue a nation by their master plan. The nationalist enthusiasm is needed for creating this nation to be more dignified, fair, and prosperous, then being able to stand on its own feet. This is a dream of Indonesia.

The second candidate: Jokowi – JK

There is a different thing from this personal branding with the first candidate because the picture uses an effect that makes the face is not as usual. This is a personal branding from the candidate of president (Ir. H. Joko Widodo) and vice president (Drs. H.M. Jusuf Kalla) which use an imagination by wearing a different shirt, a special shirt that becomes a characteristic of Jokowi, a great philosophy to be a slogan, then using a large number '2' in the picture. There is important point in Jokowi – JK's personal branding from all candidates of presidential election in Indonesia because of their choice. Deep detailed information, as follow:

i. Icon:

At this personal branding is showed two people that become the second candidate. There is a special thing / different imagination that are created by successful team because it is the first time that is showed by the candidate in all of times. First of all, there is no cap (*kopiah/peci*) that is used by them; whereas, there is never candidate that is no using a cap. Secondly, the candidate uses the different shirt each other and it is different to the tradition of other candidate in presidential election that always uses the same shirt. The reason of all choices, they just would like to out of the box because

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Indonesia needs a fresh figure to lead this nation for the next 5 years. Then, the candidate shows the face or expression as like smiling, happiness and being confident to ready leading Indonesia better than ever.

ii. Index:

In picture of personal branding for second candidate, there is a unique thing in wearing a different shirt. Jokowi uses *kotak-kotak* of shirt with blue and red color but JK still uses as usual with a white shirt. The reason of Jokowi-JK is on the condition or showing that Jokowi looks like a young man with his identical shirt and the eternal spirit of work. However, JK uses a white shirt because of his experiences / senior in many things. Another reason of wearing shirt is on our nation that is multiple diverse. There are many culture, etc. Meanwhile, it shows that they fill in each other. In another thing, the philosophy is no using a cap because of the attitude to out of the box as usual. Then, they would like to make a change for Indonesia with a great master plan.

iii. Symbol:

The picture shows the symbol as simple but it has a special meaning for a candidate who is close to the society. The slogan of 'Jokowi-JK adalah KITA' is as the spirit of society that is showed by the candidate who

would like to be a government from the society, by the society and for the society. The philosophy of those words is above that is related to the nation with many culture, ethnic, etc. Another reason, it is our branding. The meaning of word 'our' is neither Jokowi nor JK but, Jokowi-JK is synergized. The last, the number '2' is large to show the voters that it is the number of candidate for Jokowi-JK. It is gotten from the committee of general election.

The focus point of Jokowi-JK branding is on their ways for becoming different than other but it still looks the rule or reasonable limit in presidential election. The examples as wearing a shirt and using a cap that is different from the all candidate of presidential election in Indonesia. They would like to try or give a something special and new to the society because all people need a new leader with a fresh idea and master plan for creating Indonesia better than ever. The slogan that has a purpose to show Jokowi-JK is a leader ideal for Indonesia. They would like to convince the voters with the creative branding. The ways of them use an imagination like color, effect of picture and awesome words as slogan. Thus, they try to give an imagination of our country as replica and then they are same with us.

Conclusion

In general election is identical with campaign because there is a particular time for socializing, persuading and inviting the society as *the voters* for knowing more about the candidate etc. Of course, each candidate needs advertisements for doing the campaign and spreads the personal branding. It means there is a sign that is used for sending a message to the voters. The theory of Peirce gives the ways of knowing more about the meaning of signs through three categories like Icon, Index and Symbol. Thus, from the advertisements that contain personal branding of each candidate, these are the results:

Prabowo-Hatta as the first candidate shows that they would like to reflated Indonesia as the good condition. Besides that, they come for Indonesia by nationalist enthusiasm, charismatic, great master plan to rescue Indonesia from bad condition in many fields without forgetting the value of patriotic in this nation.

In another side, Jokowi-JK as the second candidate shows that they would like to synergy the experience and eternal spirit of work because there are many leaders that always give a promise but it just a little in doing. Then, Jokowi-JK would like to change the usual things from the personal branding without a cap and different shirt because the focus

point is in changing the bad habitual of society. In addition, they ready to work for society and make a better condition for Indonesia.

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