



## Identity Creation and Retention of UGM as an Iconic Brand

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to investigate how the iconicity of UGM is constructed, the underlying notion of UGM as an icon, and the reason behind the iconicity of UGM. The multiple interpretations of UGM as an icon are analyzed using Peirce's semiotic framework to show the relationship between the representamen, interpretant, and object. Blumer's concept of symbolic interaction is also applied to display the interaction mechanism between the representamen and the interpretant on the formation of the iconic sign. And mixed methods are used as an approach to explain the data. As a result, this article has collected 168 tokens of interpretations of UGM with 5 dominant tokens explained, namely Berkualitas (Qualified), Jogja (Yogyakarta), Terbaik (The Best), Pintar (Smart), and Keren (Cool). The representamen and the interpretant are interrelated through bidirectional interpretations. UGM is projected as an iconic brand to serve identity creation and retention. Identity creation and retention might potentially promote social class and disparity as a result of power relations and distribution regarding UGM as an iconic brand. Further study needs to be conducted to address the issues.

**Keywords:** UGM; icon; branding; peircean semiotic.

### ABSTRAK

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana ikonisitas UGM dikonstruksi, apa yang melatarbelakangi gagasan UGM sebagai ikon, dan alasan dibalik ikonisitas UGM. Multitafsir tentang UGM sebagai ikon dianalisis menggunakan kerangka semiotik Peirce untuk menunjukkan hubungan antara representamen, interpretant, dan objek. Konsep interaksi simbolik Blumer juga diterapkan untuk menampilkan mekanisme interaksi antara representamen dan interpretan pada pembentukan tanda ikonik. Dan metode campuran digunakan sebagai pendekatan untuk menjelaskan data. Hasilnya, artikel ini telah mengumpulkan 168 token interpretasi UGM dengan menjelaskan 5 token dominan, yaitu Berkualitas, Jogja, Terbaik, Pintar, dan Keren. Representamen dan interpretan saling terkait melalui interpretasi dua arah. UGM diproyeksikan sebagai merek ikonik untuk melayani penciptaan dan retensi identitas. Penciptaan dan retensi identitas berpotensi mengangkat kelas sosial dan disparitas akibat relasi kuasa dan distribusi yang menganggap UGM sebagai merek ikonik. Studi lebih lanjut perlu dilakukan untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut.

**Kata kunci:** UGM; ikon; merek; semiotika peirce.

### INTRODUCTION

In the new social structure, primordial relations are marginalized because many of their functions have been taken over by new groups (Coleman et al, 2021). Then another statement also states that society exists as a social construct of social categories, characteristics, and norms of the dominant culture. Social categories include race, gender, and class, and; social characteristics consist of social norms, language, and vocabulary of the

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dominant group (Knox, 2022, p.12). Inequality is one of the conditions or conditions that are not balanced in the socioeconomic life of society (Farida & Andalas, 2019, p.75). The economy has created an evolving and intensifying social class structure that requires a class perspective and class analysis tools to capture reconfigured social relations and new patterns of social inequalities in China (Jin, 2022). In Indonesia, ethnicity and social class are "as strong as ever" compared to the religious issue. Lan (2020) shows that access to social media has significantly contributed to the emergence of what he calls "class-based ethnicity". Booth's (2021) investigation of the relationship between economic growth and changing class structure in Indonesia, particularly in the post-independence era shows the rise of the middle class as a result of economic growth.

Social class and disparity in society can also be traced through language use and language policy. It is also proven by the research conducted by Golinkoff et al (2019) in a publication about finding is there any Gap in Language Exposure Between Children From Low-Income Versus Middle- and High-Income Families, scholarship has been done research on how variety in language use signifies social class and segregation in society. Linguistic disparities have impacts on many aspects of life ranging from access to healthcare (Ponce et al., 2006) shown in research by Scanlon et al (2019) there is currently limited research assessing equity across the cancer care continuum for culturally and linguistically diverse migrants living in Australia, and to bilingualism and multilingualism in business (Barakos, 2020). Since the establishment of Indonesian as the national and official language of the Republic of Indonesia language-related causes have been claimed as the trigger for social segregation disparity.

Research on language planning and policy also have shown that linguistic advocacy through policy can display socio-economic inequality among different speakers of languages (Arcila et al., 2022; Ponce et al., 2006). Despite its position as a national and official language, Indonesian is being threatened by several foreign languages massively learned by Indonesian speakers such as English, Korean, Japanese, Mandarin, France, and Jerman (Zein, 2020), but mainly English in education (Mackenzie, 2022) creating "linguistic imperialism" that separates speakers of English from those who can speak English will help in the country development.

Given this wide spectrum of how language can be used as a sign of various mechanisms and practices in society, meaning-making activity as part of processes in a semiotic activity can also be utilized, to some extent, to decipher and provide a depiction of underlying discourse represented through language use. Consequently, words, phrases, and sentences can be used to access wider notions behind the interpretation as a semiotic activity.

On account of the linguistic data used in this study, it is crucial to emphasize that Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) in this article refers to a concept, a mental representation expressed through language rather than a physical building or a place. A concept as a linguistic

representation is constructed mentally yet expressed as the embodiment of abstract ideas (Shiryaeva et al, 2019). Thus, the sign referred to in this study is the concept of UGM used in creating lingual representations for abstract construction. However, this research particularly focuses on how UGM functions as a framing icon used to see that “by systematizing which values matter most, particularly when news presents issues competitively, we are able to distinguish arguments from issue frames and opinions from audience frames” (D’Angelo, 2019:15)

As this research also aims to investigate the signs used over a period of time in a community group, this study adopts Kress’ (2001) view that a sign is a motivated sign that is influenced by the sociocultural aspects of the community group. The innovation or retention that occurs in the signs used by a group or community to represent their experiences also shows how the framework used to create those signs modifies the beliefs or experiences of a group or community. By looking at the construction and modification of signs, this research will also show that human experience and understanding of experience is always in adjustment to the sociocultural environment that surrounds them. Carey in Clarke (2019) also proposes that humans are endowed with “core systems” for the representation of objects, numerosities, and agents. As she characterizes them, these are akin to paradigmatically perceptual systems in two ways: in being modular, and in producing representations with an iconic format.

In the Peircean theory the sign is constructed through semiosis in which the meaning is understood as an interrelation of *representamen* (the sign vehicle or the shape the sign takes which is not necessarily material), *object* (a referent the sign signals to), and *interpretant* (the meaning the sign means, the sense made of the sign). The sign is the unity of what is represented by the object, how it is represented by the representamen, and how it is interpreted as an interpretant (Chandler, 2002: 29). Peircean semiosis is drawn upon the interaction of these three aspects of sign. Merrel's (2001) diagram of the interaction displays a tripod model. However, the tripod model is just “three-way diadicity” (Chandler, 2002).

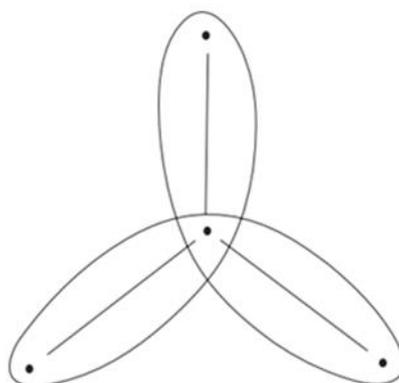
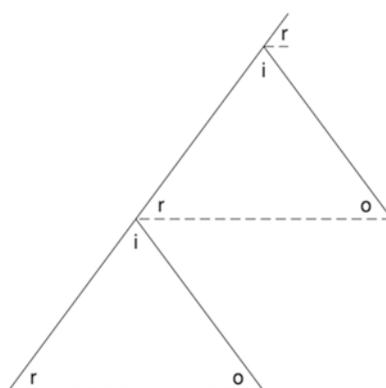


Figure 1. Merrel's tripod model of Peircean semiosis

Semiosis perpetuates itself through such interaction, realizing the meaning potential in which "signs mostly function each between two minds, or theaters of consciousness, of which the one is the agent that utters the sign (whether acoustically, optically, or otherwise), while the other is the patient mind that interprets the sign" (Peirce, 1998: 403). Semiosis is also understood to refer to sign activity in terms of sign creation and interpretation via the "semiosis as the fundamental process of meaning-making implies, as its central aspects, learning, memory, and knowing; and that semiosis activity assumes and is framed by resources, competence, affordances, and scaffolding" (Campbell, 2019: 353). Peirce's representamen is similar to Saussure's signifier while the interpretant is quite comparable to Saussure's signified. It also shows that the meaning of the sign can be multi-interpreted "Spoken languages have shown that there is a rich variety of strategies to express quantificational meanings" (Khun, 2020: 320). This means that the interpretation of a sign can be used as a sign to be interpreted again. Thus Peirce's semiosis is a successive mode of interpretation (Chandler, 2002). What is considered interpretant can be a representamen in the successive semiosis and be reinterpreted. It can be seen in the figure below, where representamen stand as "r", interpretant "i", and object "o", it explains that the interpretation of a sign can be used or stand as a sign itself.



**Figure 2. Merrell's tripod model of Peircean semiosis**

In Peircean semiotic, signs may be grouped into three major categories: icons, indices, and symbols. Iconicity is a basic notion that explains a particular sort of sign representation. An icon is a sign that reflects its object by some likeness or comparison. In other words, an iconic sign resembles or has a feature that is intimately tied to the item it depicts. Physical likeness, visual resemblance, and intellectual analogy are all examples of resemblance. Iconicity is not restricted to visual representations (Peirce, 1998). It also applies to other sensory modalities as well as abstract thoughts. Peirce considered iconic signs to be the core of human cognition and meaning-making. They provide a direct link between the sign and its object, allowing for instant identification and comprehension. Icons allow us to draw more conclusions, generate mental images, and understand complex concepts than other sorts of indicators (Peirce, 1931-59: 147).

Peirce further stressed that iconicity can also appear in more oblique and abstract ways. Metaphors and analogies, for example, rely on iconicity to make linkages across various domains or concepts. Metaphors elicit mental pictures or connections that assist express meaning by creating comparisons between two seemingly unrelated items (Peirce, 1931-58: 2.299). The relevance of perception and interpretation in the semiosis is further highlighted by Peirce's idea of iconicity. While an iconic symbol may resemble the item it represents, its meaning is neither set nor predefined. The interpretative process is critical in establishing an iconic sign's precise meaning or importance. Based on their experiences, cultural backgrounds, and cognitive processes, different people may see and interpret the same iconic sign in different ways.

In essence, iconicity, as defined by Peirce's semiotic theory, refers to a sign's ability to describe its object by likeness or analogy. Iconic signs are visually, auditorily, or conceptually comparable to the things they represent. They are important in human cognition because they allow for instantaneous recognition, inference, and the creation of mental representations. Iconicity goes beyond explicit representations to include implicit and abstract forms such as metaphors. However, the meaning of iconic signs is not established and is subject to interpretation. (Peirce, 1931-58: 219) Based on their subjective experiences and cultural settings, different people may assign multiple interpretations to the same iconic symbol. The idea of iconicity developed by Peirce offers insight into the complex link between signs, meaning, and human perception.

The iconicity of a sign from Peircean semiotic put great emphasis on interpretative activity as the way by which humans and the sign interact with each other. This interaction is symbolic in nature as the interaction "*is interwoven with social interaction and influences that social interaction*" and "*by which human beings are able to form social or joint acts*" (Blumer, 2015: 178). Therefore, iconic signs are one of the operations in symbolic interactionism. Three assumptions underpin symbolic interactionism. First, humans respond towards things based on the meanings that things hold for them. Second, the significance of such items is drawn from or arises through social engagement with one's peers. Third, these meanings are processed and modified by a person's interpretative process while dealing with the objects he interacts with (Blumer, 1986).

Symbolic interactionism is the interaction that takes place among the various minds and meanings that characterize human societies. It refers to the fact that social interaction rests upon taking oneself (self-objectification) and others (taking the role of the other) into account (Meltzer, et al., 2015). In this study, the Peircean concept of iconicity, successive interpretation, and Blumer's symbolic interactionism will be utilized as frameworks to investigate UGM as an iconic brand, how the interactions between UGM as an iconic brand with society expressed through the interpretations of UGM, and UGM as an iconic brand intervene the interpretation.

In addition to the theoretical frameworks, the present study also refers to some previous research with a similar approach to the signs. Rindell & Santos (2021) analyzes What makes a corporate heritage brand authentic for consumers? using Peirce's classification of signs: icon, symbol, and index. This research empirically advances the understanding of authenticity as socially constructed. Importantly, it highlights the temporal dimension of this construction and advances the current knowledge on corporate heritage brands by showing that uniqueness, credibility and consistency over time are key dimensions of corporate heritage brand authenticity assessments. Gretzel et al. (2019) highlight how brand elements embedded in websites communicate a brand identity and facilitate particular interpretations of smart tourism. Both brands use similar signs to promote a techtopian vision of smart destinations but employ different strategies to motivate stakeholder buy-in.

Argawala et al. (2021) investigate the effect of religious signs in advertisements for secular products and compare the results for religious icons and religious symbols. Both kinds of religious signs were found to positively impact brand evaluation and purchase intention. However, religious icons were found to have a higher positive impact than religious symbols on brand evaluation and purchase intention. The results also indicate that highly religious consumers respond more favorably to advertisements containing religious cues in comparison to less-religious consumers. The theoretical contributions and managerial implications of the studies in the domains of advertising, branding, and semiotics are discussed, and research limitations are also presented.

Apart from analyzing UGM's iconicity using the Peircean semiotic, this research also tries to investigate how UGM's creation and retention of meaning affect interpretation of the society. This article identifies that society's understanding of the iconicity of UGM influences UGM itself to maintain the interpretation that they expect from society. UGM as an iconic brand can also be considered as an endeavor to keep the *status quo* of itself. Hence, the endeavor, realized an iconic brand, and society's interpretation of UGM occurs as a symbolic interaction that "*is interwoven with social interaction and influences that social interaction.*" (Blumer, 2015:178).

Therefore, the central thesis of this article is that linguistic artifacts used in semiotic activity can be used to trace the underlying notions of interpretation with and through language use. Specifically, the following questions will be addressed: (1) How iconicity of UGM is constructed and expressed in the language use? (2) What is the underlying notion of UGM as an icon? (3) Why do people make UGM as an icon?

## METHOD

In this study, researchers use mixed-method research. This method is expected to assist researchers in classifying and making the highest percentage related to the interpretation of the data obtained. Then it can be explained in detail using a descriptive approach.

Creswell and Clark (Dawadi et al, 2021:27) stated that a mixed-methods research design is a research design that has its own philosophical assumptions and methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it includes philosophical assumptions to provide directions for the collection and analysis of data from multiple sources in a single study.

The process of collecting data in this study was in the form of questionnaires which were distributed and after collecting the data from the respondents, the researcher then segmented the data into each category, classified the percentage from the highest to the lowest, and did analysis in detail. The analysis was carried out on each interpretation of the symbols obtained from the respondents and finally presented in the form of analytical descriptive using triadic analysis in seeing the relationship between interpretant, object, and representamen. In this study UGM as an Icon interpreted by the society to endow it with the meaning in their very first encounter, as Peirce (1991:167) states that in particular, all signs convey notions to human minds\ but I know no reason why every representamen should do so. After seeing the relationship of the UGM as an Icon, this article also tries to see UGM as a brand and the effort of UGM itself in creating positive branding in order to affect the society and construct it into the goals that they want to achieve, in helping the analyze of this question, we used symbolic interaction by Blumer (1986).

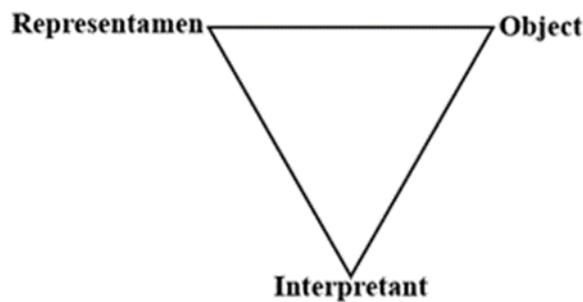


Figure 3. Peirce Semiotic Triad

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### The Construction of UGM As an Iconic Brand

After getting the data from 45 respondents, the data is classified based on the respondents' interpretations of "UGM". There are 165 words associated with UGM. After being classified there are 58 words used to represent UGM as shown in the graph below:

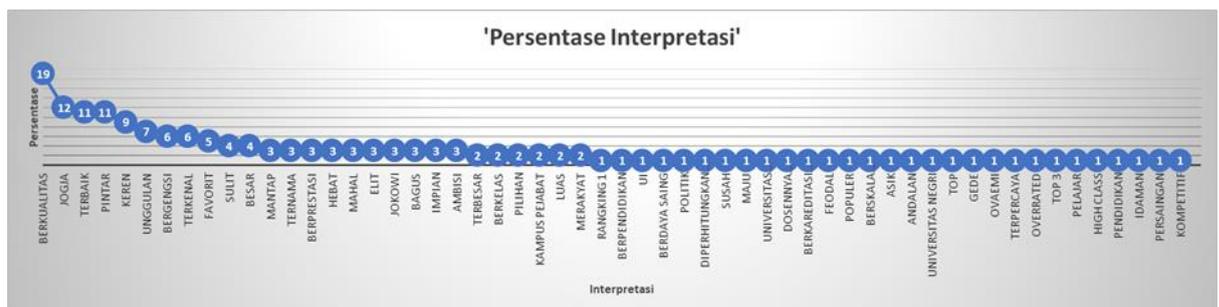


Figure 4. Interpretation Percentage of UGM as an Icon

There are multiple interpretations developing in society regarding UGM as an icon. namely: *Berkualitas* (Qualified), *Jogja, Terbaik* (Best), *Pintar* (Smart), *Keren* (Cool), *Unggulan* (Superior), *Bergengsi* (Prestigious), *Terkenal* (Famous), *Favorit* (Favorite), *Sulit* (Difficult), *Besar* (Big), *Mantap* (Steady), *Ternama* (Famous), *Berprestasi* (Achievement), *Hebat* (Great), *Mahal* (Expensive), *Elit* (Elite), *Jokowi, Bagus* (Good), *Impian* (Dream), *Ambisi* (Ambition), *Terbesar* (Biggest), *Berkelas* (Classy), *Pilihan* (Choice), *Kampus Pejabat* (Officials Campus), *Luas* (Spacious), *Merakyat* (Populist), *Rangking 1* (Ranked 1st), *Berpendidikan* (Educated), *UI, Berdaya Saing* (Competitiveness), *Politik* (Political), *Diperhitungkan Masyarakat* (Considered by Society), *Maju* (Advanced), *Universitas Gadjah Mada, Dosennya Profesional* (Professional Lecturers), *Berkreditasi Tinggi* (Highly Accredited), *Feudal, Popular, Berskala Internasional* (International Scale), *Asik* (Fun), *Andalan* (Mainstay), *Universitas Negeri* (State University), *Top, Gede* (Huge), *Ovaemi, Terpercaya* (Trusted), *Overrated, Top 3, Pelajar* (Students), *Status tinggi* (High Class), *Pendidikan* (Education), *Idaman* (Ideal), *Persaingan* (Rivalry), *Kompetitif* (Competitive).

Since the sign UGM is expressed as a linguistic sign in data, the representamen obviously does not take the material or physical form but in words which are the result of people's interpretation. Here, the sign UGM needs to take the sign vehicle or the representamen. Therefore, it is suggested that the representamen of the UGM sign is the UGM as a branding concept. The interpretant is the answers from the respondents considered as the interpretation of the sign UGM. The linguistic data obtained from the respondents display how language becomes an interpretative means. Most of the words the respondents choose to represent UGM are adjectives. Those adjectives are used to attach characteristics to UGM based on their interpretation. This tendency aligns with the Peircean concept of an iconic sign. An icon is a mode of relationship in which the representamen and the interpretant show resemblance (Chandler, 2002).

The interpretant, predominantly expressed as adjectives, links certain characteristics to representamen which takes brand as a form. This linkage is also a symbolic interaction. The interpretant shows how UGM as a sign "*interwoven with social interaction and influences that social interaction*" (Blumer, 2015). The respondent's interpretation of UGM as the iconic brand depicts reciprocal interpretation as a mechanism influencing the symbolic interaction. The interpretation of UGM does not occur purely as a discursive activity of the respondent. The iconic brand itself, UGM, actively motivates such interpretations. The reciprocity can be shown by the tendency of the interpretation of the data.

### **Bidirectional Interpretation of UGM as an Iconic Brand**

In Peircean semiosis, signs mostly function between two minds, or "*theaters of consciousness*". This means that interpretation occurs simultaneously as bidirectional activity. Various interpretations found in the data are not the result of one-sided interpretation. As a symbolic interaction, the representamen (UGM as an iconic brand) and

the interpretant (respondents' answers) display reciprocity. The 5 dominant interpretation of UGM, *Berkualitas* (Quality), *Jogja* (Yogyakarta), *Terbaik* (Best), *Pintar* (Smart), and *Keren* (Cool), will be used to reveal this bidirectional interpretation which also become the underlying notion of UGM as an iconic brand.

The token "*Berkualitas* (Qualified)" appears 19 times, "*Jogja*" appears 12 times, "*Terbaik* (The best)", "*Pintar* (Smart)" appears 11 times, and "*Keren* (Cool)" appears 9 times as interpretations of UGM. Before giving their interpretations of UGM, all respondents have already had information and/or knowledge about UGM. UGM is one of the most well-known universities in Indonesia. Given their previous encounter with UGM and the status of UGM, their interpretation cannot be considered as purely their ideas. The previous knowledge and information about the representamen is also constructed by the institution, UGM itself. Both the representamen and the interpretant use each other's interpretation for different purposes. The representamen has its brand purposes and the interpretant has its personal purposes.

In dominant interpretations, out of 5 there are 4 tokens of UGM that use adjectives to represent UGM as an iconic brand, and 1 token uses a noun that refers to the location of UGM. *Berkualitas* (Qualified) is the most representative characteristic of UGM. As one of the top universities in Indonesia, the respondents' interpretation of UGM is influenced by the representamen. Efforts to make UGM as a qualified university are made in all sectors ranging from buildings, lecturer, facilities, to the opportunity to get jobs. Therefore, token *Berkualitas* (Qualified) appears to be the most dominant interpretation of UGM due to the ongoing efforts from the representamen itself to develop and enhance itself as the qualified brand.

As a qualified brand, the token "*Terbaik* (Best)" and "*Pintar* (Smart)" which appears 11 times can be seen as the extension of the token *Berkualitas* (Qualified). "*Terbaik* (Best)" and "*Pintar* (Smart)" are desirable qualities that need to be possessed by a university. "*Terbaik* (Best)" can refer to many thing, but particularly to the ways UGM as an iconic brand equip itself with facilities and access for people who study or work in UGM, while "*Pintar* (Smart)" is more related to academic value attached mostly to UGM students, as well as its alumni and lecturers. As the interpretant, the appearance of "*Terbaik* (Best)" and "*Pintar* (Smart)" are also motivated by the representamen's works to brand itself as a trusted educational institution.

The interpretant "*Keren* (Cool)" is the quality attached to people who study at UGM. From the representamen perspective, this is related to how UGM designs the curriculum, supplementary activities, and partnerships with other "qualified" brands (institution). There are some things that can only be done or obtained if a person is part of or affiliated with the brand UGM. Then the implication of the factors above as a trigger in affecting interpretant

development in society, those triggers also becomes a prestige status and makes anyone who uses the iconic brand looks "Keren (cool)."

"Yogyakarta " becomes one of the dominant interpretations, and it is associated with the location of UGM. This can be seen in the data above, showing that this interpretation appears 12 times from different respondents. The trigger that might caused the interpretant refers UGM Icon to Yogyakarta was because UGM itself as a tertiary institution located in Yogyakarta and it was already popular and was one of the reasons many people were attracted to Yogyakarta to study at UGM, so that in the end UGM became an inseparable unit with Yogyakarta city and affect the society in seeing UGM and Yogyakarta as a one unit. One of the reasons that people want to continue their studies in Jogja is also correlated with UGM as a brand that developed in society. This shows that Peirce's theory about the relationship between the interpretant and the representamen is bound to each other as a trigger for the society in making the interpretation.

The reciprocity of the representamen and the interpretant of 5 dominant interpretations of UGM as an iconic brand reveals the underlying notion of the iconicity of UGM. Attempts to possess prominent characteristics of an educational institution are used simultaneously as a branding strategy to influence the perception of society about UGM itself. Here, the resemblance between the representamen and the interpretant occurs bidirectionally as the representation of UGM is motivated by the efforts of UGM itself to maintain the resemblance of society's perception and the characteristics of UGM.

## DISCUSSION

### Identity Creation and Retention of UGM as an Iconic Brand

From the previous section we have seen that the interpretation of UGM as an iconic brand is based on bidirectional interpretation. This shows that what people think about UGM is pre-constructed to some extent by UGM's endeavors to present itself as an ideal brand. Using the symbolic interactionism framework, we are able to investigate the impact of institutional sign as an iconic brand (the representamen) and the societal interest as an icon evaluation (the interpretant), namely icon affect and icon trust. Bidirectionality also occurs in the evaluation and decision-making process. The existing interpretations of UGM serve as evaluative tool to help society make decisions regarding UGM. UGM as an iconic brand also uses multiple strategies to influence the decision-making processes, so the decision will generate benefits for UGM.

Being an icon is a symbolic mechanism used by UGM to create its identity as a "qualified", "the best", "smart", "cool" educational institution in "Yogyakarta". Having such strong characteristics creates a distinct identity of UGM. This distinct identity is not limited to UGM itself, but also attached to people who study or work in UGM. Thus, UGM distinct identity is the way UGM provides identity for its *civitas academia*. However, creating a distinct identity is not sufficient to generate maximum benefit. Being iconic is just the first step. UGM as an

iconic sign needs to take a certain form to promote and spread its distinct identity. Therefore, being a “brand” with a unique and distinct identity is the best option. UGM as the iconic brand can influence more people in more places. This iconic brand at the same time also serves as the pre-constructed knowledge of society’s evaluation of UGM and decision regarding UGM.

The data used in this study proves that the iconic branding strategy by UGM works to influence respondents’ interpretation of UGM. Whether the interpretations can finally generate benefit or not is not part of the investigation in this study. Nevertheless, the data shows the tendency of UGM being a good-in-all brand. Tokens of negative interpretation of UGM are so small that it is not significant for consideration. This is a depiction of what symbolic interactionism calls as “*interwoven with social interaction and influences that social interaction*” (Blumer, 2015: 178). The creation and promotion of UGM distinct identity emerge ideal images of UGM. The ideal images are also used for identity retention.

Identity retention using UGM as the iconic brand here aligns with assumptions regarding the symbolic interaction concept (Blumer, 1986). First, humans respond towards things based on the meanings that things hold for them. Being the iconic brand enables UGM to create the meaning of itself and promote the meaning so that the meaning is also held by society. Second, the significance of such items is drawn from or arises through social engagement with one’s peers. As an iconic brand of UGM, students, lecturers, workers, and alumni of UGM are active agents who interact with various communities not related to UGM. The interactions strengthen the ideal image of UGM and also serve as a retention mechanism for UGM. Third, these meanings are processed and modified by a person’s interpretative process while dealing with the objects he interacts with. UGM keeps on making innovations and promotes those innovations. This adds to UGM ideal images. Therefore, the meaning-making and meaning-modifying process regarding UGM happens as a way of identity retention where UGM can show transformation and innovation without losing its *status quo as a good-in-all* iconic brand.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the iconicity of UGM as the representamen is realized through the attachment of characteristics and place as the interpretant. This tendency corresponds to Peirce’s definition of an iconic sign as an interaction in which the representamen and the interpretant resemble each other. The respondent’s understanding of UGM was expressed as the bidirectional interpretation of the representamen and the interpretant. This tendency also corresponds to Peirce’s definition of an iconic sign. An icon is a type of interaction in which the representamen and the interpretant resemble each other.

The most notable finding in this study is that the construction of prior knowledge and information regarding UGM is undertaken as an identity creation and retention mechanism. Being an icon is a symbolic mechanism utilized by UGM to promote its identity as a

"qualified", "the best", "smart", and "cool" educational institution in "Yogyakarta". Having such distinguishing traits contributes to UGM's distinct identity. Becoming a "brand" with a distinct identity is the ideal option for identity creation and retention which is in accordance with assumptions regarding the symbolic interaction concept. Its notion as the dominant interpretation is based on the questionnaire data from the respondents and is shortened from 165 words that appear in the data from respondents, and after being classified there are 58 words that represent UGM as an icon in society.

Although this study does not specifically address the implications of identity creation and retention of UGM as an iconic brand, there are potential implications that can be speculated based on the findings in this article. First, the identity creation and retention of UGM indirectly separate people into groups. Therefore, these mechanisms can also be the starting point of investigation regarding social class and disparity in the relationship with UGM as an iconic brand. Second, drawing upon the potentiality of social class and disparity, the interpretation of UGM can also reveal power relations and distribution occurs in society. Further research with a different approach and framework needs to be undergone to thoroughly investigate those

In the end, based on the results of the data analysis found, the multiple interpretations that exist in society about UGM as an icon are also the result of construction carried out by UGM itself which indirectly affects the community through the provision of facilities or benefits that are felt by the community departing from UGM as a brand. In the end there is a successful achievement made by UGM in branding itself, as evidenced by the dominant interpretation in society which is a positive interpretation above. This positive review also will eventually become a trigger for UGM to continue to make improvements and introspection so that the positive reviews it gets can last and make UGM a brand that has high value in society.

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