

Humor and Public Hygiene: A Critical Social Semiotic Analysis of Singapore's National Campaigns

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Abstract : This presentation focuses on national campaigns as a government tactic of social behavior and order. Focusing on one of Singapore's first national campaigns, Keep Singapore Clean (1968), particularly its iterations of public hygiene in recent years: Keep the Toilets Clean (2012-2019) and UnLittering with Mary Chongo (2019), the study examines how humor and the use of multimodality reflect contemporary practices in political practice. A critical social semiotic analysis involving the textual (linguistic and visual design) and material (print cartoons and videos) is undertaken to show how these messages are communicated. Incongruity and parody are humorous mechanisms used to project the government as likeable, effectively capture the public attention, and instill individual responsibility for the greater community. In focusing on public hygiene national campaigns, the study further illustrates how humor offers a polite way to address crude behavior while providing models of exemplary behavior.

Keywords : communication strategies, critical social semiotics, humor, national campaigns

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