

The Role of Semiotics in Advertising: Communicative Approach

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Abstract

This paper title the emergence and principle theories of semiotics. Particularly, the two leading scholar's theories in semiotics, n namely Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles pierce, are presented. This is because of the fact that these two theories are commonly used as a reference in the field of Advertising. "The Role of Semiotics in Advertising: Communicative Approach". Advertising is a symbolic message.

The fast-changing business environment and growing competition is redefining the business strategies changing with the environment are the needs and preferences of the consumer. There are different strategies which the business organization might use i. e. Advertising, sign and symbolism and consumer attachment. There are many reason develop of semiotic advertising every company used sign and symbolism like.

Advertising semiotics is one of the richest areas to study communication and meaning in the marketplace. It provides marketers with the tools to introduce new advertising concept and bring new advertising, through using meaningful signs and symbols, to a variety of products or services.

Keywords: Semiotics, Advertising, language of advertising

Introduction

Marketing semiotics is one of the richest areas to study communication and meaning in the marketplace. It provides market with the tools to introduce new advertising concepts and bring new advertising messages, through using meaningful signs and symbols, to a variety of products or service. This paper outlines the Role of Semiotics in Advertising: Communicative Approach. Particularly, the two leading scholars' theories in semiotics, namely Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Peirce, are presented. This is because of the fact that these two theories are commonly used as reference in the field of advertising. Then, the Role of Semiotics in Advertising: Communicative

Approach. Especially in advertising is discussed. In addition, the symbolic messages of two pairs of advertising (perfume and cigarettes) are decoded using semiotics analysis in order to compare the different strategies that are utilized to target different customer groups according to demographic variable such as gender and age. The finding of the semiotic analysis is discussed from the view of advertising campaigns. Finally, limitation and suggestion for further study are mentioned, and a conclusion is outlined.

Literature Review

1.1.Semiotics: Origin and Evolution

Definition. Semiotics is one of the oldest paradigms for perceiving meaning (Mick & Oswald 2006). The word semiotics derives from the Greek “semision” which means “sign” in general the definition of Semiotics, as different semioticians agree it on, is “the study of signs or an epistemology about the existence or the actuality of sign in social life” (Yakin & Totu,2014, P.1). In a semiotics sense, signs are anything that signify something else (Eco,1979). According to Eco (1979, P.8), “Semiotics Studies all culture processes as processes of communication there, each of these processes would seem to be permitted by an underlying system of signification. To be more precise, during a communication process, when the message (signal) stimulus and arouses an interpretive reaction in the receiver (when the destination is a human being in particular), a process of signification takes place. According, Eco (1979, p.8) points out that to establish any form of communication, a system of signification is used to correlate the expression and content of signs. According to Dictionary.com, there are two inter-related definitions of what semiotics mean, namely:

1. The study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behaviour. This also includes the analysis of the systems of communication, as language, gestures, or clothing.
2. A general theory of signs and symbolism usually divided into the branches of pragmatics, semantics, and syntactic.

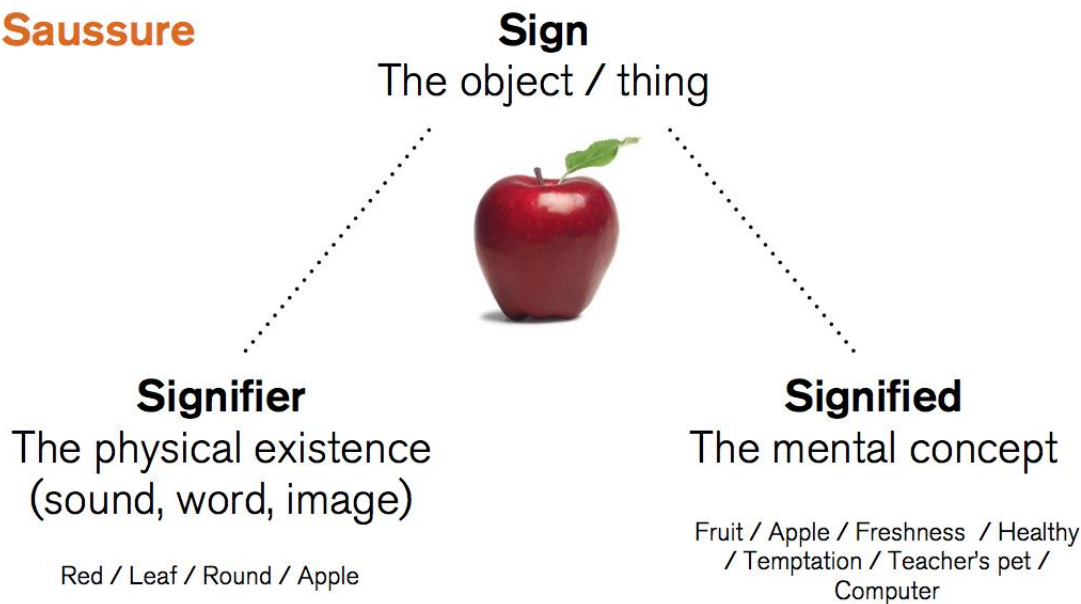
According to Swiss linguist and semiotic an Ferdinand de Saussure, there are two main parts to any sign:

1. Signifier: This connotes any material thing that is signified, be it an object, words on a page, or an image.
2. Signified: The concept which the signifier refers to. This would be the meaning that is drawn by the receiver of the sign.

The example below shows how this can be understood.

Figure No. 1

Saussure



There we have three definitions:

1. **Semantics:** Relations between signs and the things to which they refer to. It focuses on the relationship between signifiers, like words, phrases, signs, and symbols, and what they stand for; i.e. their denotations. For example, young can mean a colt, filly, piglet, baby, puppy or kitten.
2. **Syntactic:** Relations among signs in formal structures. An example is the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language (eg grammar).
3. **Pragmatics:** Relationship between signs and the effects they have on the people who use them based on their context, pre-existing knowledge, inferred intent

1.2. Advertisements

Advertising as an ideology. Many theorists have correlated advertising with the notion of ideology (Boume, 1981; Goldman, 1992; Elliott & Ritson, 1997; Bignell, 2002). This ideology nature relates to the usage of symbolic messages to represent the reality and reflect human values (Elliott & Ritson 1997) In other words, advertising tends to associate certain products or brand to a particular set of beliefs in the consumer's minds. Bignell (2002, P. 36) points out that "Social status, membership of particular social group, and our sense of our social individuality, are all signified by the products which we choose to consume"

First elements is the "formal structure" of the ads (creating a relationship between one sign to another based on their places in the ads).

Secondly, consumers are able to read the connotation of signs.

Thirdly, the connotation meaning already exists in the consumer's culture.

Applying Semiotics to advertising. The advertising industry is part of marketing communication used to promote certain products or something. Commercial ads, for example, are found in a wide range of media, billboard, newspaper, magazine and television. Advertising use

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persuasive technique, both verbal and non-verbal technique, to covertly reach their message to targeted audiences and influence people's attitude and life style (Danesi, 2002). Semiotics has its importance in identifying the target market.

Regarding the decoding process, in printed advertisement, for instance, semiotics is utilized to analyse the images and slogan in certain adverts this could be reinforced by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) theory of visual grammar.

They point out that “just as grammar of language describe how words combine in clause-people, places and things – combine in visual ‘statements’ (P.1). They established theoretical

Method

2.1. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to analyse advertising images by applying a semiotic approach, based on combination of the theories of de Saussure and Pierce. Hence, studying the meaning and the symbolic messages that advertisers try to send through this approach is the key focus of this study. Briefly analysing these advertisements using a semiotics analysis would help to formulate an understanding of the different strategies that advertisers use to communicate and/or sell to their target customers.

2.2. Semiotics in Marketing Communications

In marketing communications and advertising, semiotics plays a key role in determining the success or failure of any endeavour.

Through the effective deployment of verbal, visual and performative (ie actions by the consumer) elements, companies can strengthen their reach to their customers. These symbolic elements include logos, rituals, cultural symbols, colours, iconic individuals, text, advertisements, websites, physical environments, hospitality and service, tag lines and other “touch points”.

A great example of effective use of semiotics is found in the use of metaphors. These commonly understood concepts tend to resonate easily with your target audiences. For example, “a glass half full” is perceived as a sign of optimism and positivizes.

Have a look at this advertisement (example courtesy of Cher Taylor)

Figure No.2



You can see that the **signifier** is the represented by a public bus as well as a woman holding on to hand rails that are shaped like hands. There are also words – “WHOSE HAND ARE YOU HOLDING?” – Which adds to the signifier.

What is **signified** to you? Perhaps the feeling that it can be dirty, unhygienic and full of germs. For this ad, a strong message is effectively communicated without the use of much words. What about this second ad below? What are the signifiers and what is being signified to take semiotics one step further, it is useful to consider how this works as a tool for more effective brand communication.

In this well-written article by Laura Oswald of Marketing Semiotics Inc, she explains the following:

“Semiotic theories and methods can be used to identify trends in popular culture, understand how consumer attitudes and behaviour are formed in relation to popular culture, including brands, and how marketing and advertising programmes can best meet the needs of consumers by improving communication with the end user.” The article goes on to explain that semiotics involves the “collection and analysis of data drawn from communication of all kinds – artistic or every day, in all kinds of media including verbal, visual, and olfactory” and is useful for “clarifying brand equities in the brand audit, then tracking the implementation of these equities across all elements of the marketing mix.”

Semiotics involves studying cultural trends, language, non-verbal cues, behavioural norms, social etiquette, and rituals. It also includes understanding how the various sensory and emotional stimuli of a brand interact with each other or influences its targeted recipient. What this tells us is that implementing a consistent brand communications programme alone isn’t enough. Rather, one should adopt a more holistic approach which involves studying the unique context of where the communications takes place.

By doing so, we can better predict and control how consumers would respond to a brand given their current socio-cultural contexts.

2.3. Implementing Semiotics in Marketing

The next time you consider rolling out a fancp-0y brand name, logo, renovated shop front or new product feature, think about what your total package of signs and symbols mean to your consumers before doing so.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is there synergy between what you're trying to convey and what your staff are saying at the shops?
- How does culture influence the way different shapes, colours, and words are perceived?
- Are the different symbols and signs used in your communications coherent and synergistic?
- Have you considered how deep metaphors could influence the way your content is perceived?
- Do you foresee any clashes in meaning between what you seek to project, and what your audience may perceive?
- Can customers associate your visual, auditory, olfactory and tactile stimuli with your product or service?
- Are you giving the wrong impression with that bright fluorescent pink packaging that you're investing in? Or that drab grey colour used for your logo?

Sending the wrong signals can be extremely detrimental to your brand. It also negates whatever intent you may have.

By embracing the tenets of semiotic analysis, our chances of making a real impact on our consumer's lives – and our bottom lines – may improve significantly.

Doing so also helps us to avoid the unfortunate gaffes which may sometimes arise from a poor understanding of how consumers perceive and react to different stimuli.

3.1. Advertising is Blood irculation of Company

Every company are facing strong competition in market because customer is king of market. Now a day social media is very common in society. Customer is more conscious and visual.

Whole market is very visualisation.

3.2. Research Questions

The study examined the usage of semiotic approach in advertising for different products based on variable such as age and gender. The research question, which direction this investigation, were as follow:

How are semiotics approach used in decoding certain advertisement?

Do advertisers very semiotics approaches in advertisement when considering gender and age differences? If so, how?

4.1. Analytical Framework

A two-step analysis was used to analyse the advertisements, these two steps included examining non-verbal and verbal signs. The non- verbal signs include signifiers, the denotative and connotative meaning and the general theme of the images. The verbal signs include the language that is used in the adverts.

The first step. The non- verbal signs (the signifiers and the denotative and the connotative meaning) of the printed advertisement were examined through a semiotics analysis, stemmed from de Saussure and pierce theories of signs. In this respect, the visual images were studied from the point of view of factors such as the images themselves, colours of the images, font, size, color of the words, the choice of models to endorse the products, facial expression (signifiers) and the possible meaning are explored through theses visual cues (the denotative and connotative meaning).

Regarding the advertisement theme, it was examined through kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) theoretical framework in visual communication. To do so, the social meaning encoded by the producers (advertisers) into images, was investigated by considering two elements: eye contact, the social distance.

In terms of eye-contact, looking directly to the viewers (customers) signifies demand to enters a relationship with the participants (the models) whereas looking indirectly implies offering the participants as a subject of information (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996) social distance is related to the fact that the relation between the participants and the viewers could be suggested by determining the distance between them. Accordingly, the shorter distance means the more intimate relationship (Hall, 1964).

The second step. The verbal signs (linguistic signs) was investigated. In doing so, several questions were addressed: Are slogans used? If so, what do these slogans mean? How is this language associated with a certain group of society? Do the words saddest something about the products?

4.2. Limitation and Suggestions for Further Study

The main purpose of this paper was to give an insight into some advertising themes the utilized to promote certain emotions to target certain audiences. However, given the relatively small sample that was examined, this research could not make generalizations about how semiotics is used in the marketing of these specific products. In addition, the interpretations of these themes were made by the present author. Therefore, there is a possibility of other interpretations based on cultural differences, furthermore, the sample is restricted to demographic segmentation (age and gender variable) of the consumer market. Other market segmentation such as geographic segmentation

(region, population density, and climate variables), psychographic segmentation (values, attitude, and interest variables) and behavioural segmentation were not discussed. As a result further research could explore marketing segmentations were not discussed. As a result, further research could explore marketing semiotics in these segments.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to discuss the importance of meaning in marketing and explore ways in which semiotic analysis is applied in the marketplace, particularly in advertising. Given that advertising could function as an expression or reinforcement of ideology, semiotics' analysis occupies a significant place within the framework of encoding and decoding adverts' messages. Regarding encoding, it allows advertisers to deliver meaningful messages, associating the product with consumers' lives and values. Considering the decoding process, semiotics provides the tools of study the hidden meanings of advertisements through analysing verbal and non-verbal signs. The paper has shown that in order to promote certain products like those examined in this paper, advertisements, use sets of organized signs to symbolize different social and ideologies.

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