Incorporating the Semiotic Approach into Brand Iconicity to Establish Unique Value Proposition

Debraj Datta*

ABSTRACT

An effective advertisement is that which communicates the utility of the products of the brands to the market. In this discourse, the promotions done use signs and symbols which are so placed that the consumers can relate to them and interpret the communication. The study of signs and symbols with their accurate interpretation is called semiotics which is frequently used in advertising to signify an advertiser's message. This paper deals with showing the importance of using signs and symbols and how they help the consumers to establish a connection with the brand, resulting in buying action. Through the effective deployment of verbal, visual as well as sound aids, the company's connotation of the brand image can be complemented. 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".

Keywords: Communication; Semiotics; Interpretation; Branding; Unique value proposition.

1.0 Introduction

Branding happens to be the buzzword for marketers since the dawn of marketing. As per the American Marketing Association, branding may be defined as "A name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of all these which is intended to differentiate the products offered by one seller from another." The above definition focuses on the different brand elements which distinguish the offerings of one seller from that of its rival or competitor. The brand elements which differentiate could be

*Professor & Head, Department of Management, Sister Nivedita University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India (E-mail: debraj.datta@gmail.com)

- Names such as Sony or Apple
- URLs such as shaadi.com or amazon.com
- Logos and Symbols such as the Swoosh in Nike or the Wave of Airtel
- Punchlines such as HSBC's 'World's Local Bank' or Hitachi's 'Inspire the Next'
- Characters such as Ronald of McDonald's or ZooZoo of Vodafone.

With the course of time and as more and more people are becoming brand conscious, the need of differentiation and degree of competitiveness is reaching its peak. In this context, the brand recall on behalf of the consumer is more important than just brand awareness. Thus, the organisations are shifting their focus towards a "semiotic" branding strategy rather than a traditional branding strategy. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and their silent communication with their intended audience. The term was first derived from the Greek letter *semeiotikos* which means the study of signs and symbols. However, in English, it was first used by Henry Stubbes in 1970.

There are three branches of Semiotics:

- Semantics: It is the study of meaning, which focuses on signifiers such as words, phases, signs and symbols and what they actually mean.
- Syntactics: It refers to the rule governing sentence-making in linguistics.
- Pragmatics: It is the study of the relationship between the signs and symbols and their effect on people.

Although the semiotic related to branding arises from the definition stated above, it is much more specific and expected to be the future of branding (e.g., the letter called Nike is no longer written in any of the advertisements. It is just the symbol (i.e., swoosh) which signifies the brand and not the letter Nike anymore).

But what causes the brand positioning and influence on the target audience is the ability of the brand to communicate its values to its target customers. This is done by propaganda and promotional campaigns (Belch, Belch & Purani, 2010). The visuals or the graphical content of the medium compel the prospect to act in a favourable manner (Williamson, 1978).

However, researchers have agreed that the message sent by the medium is much more in terms of visual communication as compared to what actually is written in the printed advertisement (McCracken, 1987; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Leiss et al., 1997). Symbolic visual is an important part of brand development because it helps in the association of the product with the scenario, providing a symbolic meaning (Leigh & Gabel, 1992; Gustav, 2014). The visuals used in advertisements to create a difference,

exhibit messages in the form of symbolic representation than what is written along with it (Scott, 1994).

2.0 Literature Review

Marketers have duly recognised the communication aspect of the brands which directly account for the enhancement of brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Schmidt *et al*, 1995; Keller, 2007). Over the years of continuous research and understanding, the abstract aspect of brand communication, researchers (Peñaloza & Gilly, 1999; Oswald, 2010) have acknowledged the brand power and the values that are associated with the brand elements which form the preliminary base for brand communication. Sometimes it is so powerful and overwhelming that a logo or symbol may override the functional benefit and economic benefit associated with the product offered under the brand as compared to its rival competitor (Hirschman & Thompson. 1997; Holt, 2002). Semiotics associated with the brand elements either directly or indirectly provides the personality of a brand with respect to the current competitive business scenario (Mick, 1986). A brand might be defined as a system of complex signs and symbols which would be potent enough to engage the customer in an imaginary or abstract process which contributes to the tangible value of the product offering (Fournier, 1998; Holt, 2004). Analysing the communicated information of a brand logo, advertisements, and packaging in a broader sense provides a brand positioning respectively (Levi, 1959). Semiotic analysis helps the organisation to combine brand communication with the strategies for a continued brand legacy.

Among the eminent semioticians, Saussure and Peirce are the most respected. Where Saussure's approach is that of a linguistic focusing on the inseparability aspect of 'signified' and 'signifier' providing the intangibility aspect of a semiotics communication, Peirce's approach is that of philosophical (Peirce Triadic Semiosis) focusing on the relationship between the signs, object and interpretant (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Therefore, after analysing both the theories in the light of brand communication, we might come up with certain points. They are:

- It suggests that there is something which is inherent with a brand which has a capability to attract and finally instil brand loyalty among the customers.
- It also suggests that there is a common community which is shared by the brand users (e.g., the Yamaha RD 350 club at Bangalore in India is a common community not only for owners of the brand but also for bike lovers, especially bike racing who also own RD 350 as well).

- It further suggests that branding is a complex semiotic process catering to both the emotional as well as functional aspects of the brand.
- A brand may also create an intra-subjective memory system based on its own semiotic signs and symbols.

Figure 1: Pierce's Triadic Semiotic Model
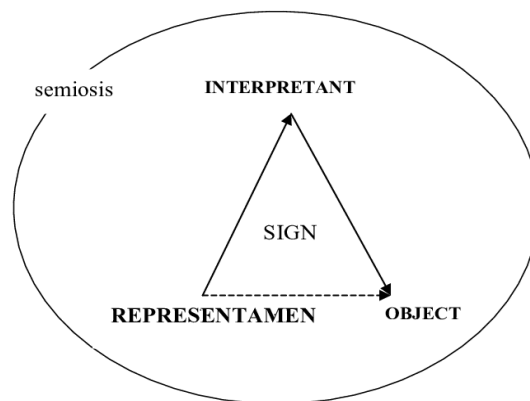
Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Pierces-Semiotic-Model-Triadic-Model_fig2_327597830

Figure 2: Saussure's Approach

Source: https://cte.univ-setif2.dz/moodle/mod/book/view.php?id=16597&chapterid=4193
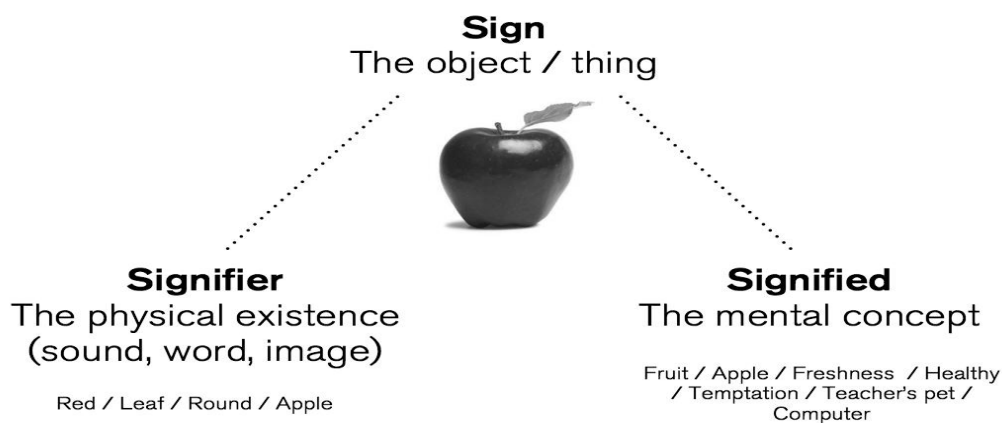
Signs and symbols as brand elements may also be a source for sensory marketing (Schmidt, 1995; Combe *et al.*, 2003; Danesi *et al.*, 2005). It is the intangible

aspect (e.g., information) embedded in the tangible thing (e.g., advertisement) which accounts for the sensory acceptability followed by heart share. For a consumer to consume the offering, it is important that proper promotion is done. Hence, as per many researchers, advertisements happen to be an important field for semiotic research. In this context, Barthes (1968) identified three types of messages in an advertisement in which the tangible copy of the photograph represented the material object, the uncoded iconic message associated with it and the coded iconic message associated with it.

Even apart from advertising, there are many areas where semiotic analysis can be done. As per Pinson (1998), semiotic approaches can be applied to packaging, store designing and other promotional activities. The main purpose of such a study is to analyse consumer behaviour towards a particular sign, symbol or artefact.

Thus, on analysing the above-stated literature, there are a few aspects which are not clearly stated. A few of those are:

- The semiotic analysis on brand perspective has not been done in the Indian market.
- The extent of influence of foreign brands over Indian brands in an Indian consumer's mind.
- For sustained brand equity, the need for change in the brand elements (semiotic analysis).

3.0 Research Questions and Objectives

The pertinent research questions are:

- Is a semiotic related to a brand potent enough to create a favourable increase in brand equity?
- Can a semiotic be considered a common platform for like-minded people?
- Can a semiotic represent the cultural association of the era?
- Should the consumer have a prior knowledge framework to comprehend semiosis?
- Which semiotic artefact should be appropriate for a certain product category?

Hence depending on the research questions stated above, the research objectives would be:

- To critically analyse the semiotic relationship between the brand and its customers.
- To critically analyse the role played by the semiotics of a brand for crafting its brand loyalty.

To analyse the current semiotic artefact of the brand and suggest improvements in it (if required) for a particular product category (automobiles, fast-food, apparels and accessories).

4.0 Research Methodology

Primary data collection was divided in four phases. The first phase involved focus group study which was followed by a survey with the help of a questionnaire, which was formulated as per the objectives stated in the proposal consisting of semiotic analysis of the brand (specially focusing on the signs and symbols). The main purpose was to check the brand association of Indian consumers in a semiotic purview (focusing on brand recall by means of semiotics associated with the brand). The third phase involved the use of the projective technique of depth interview, which involved aided, semi-aided and non-aided blind tests.

The venue of the interview and the demographic profile of the respondents were intentionally chosen to be very different from one another in order to eliminate the possibility of bias in terms of psychographic orientation, socio-cultural profiling, purchasing power and gender. The venues selected were malls, office areas, schools and sub-urban marketplace. The last phase involved the Delphi method, where the opinions of several branding and advertising professionals were sought regarding the influence of semiotics on branding and marketing communications.

The Focus Group Discussion technique was used on a cross-section design, which is a representation of a collection of data either found naturally or may be found singly at a point thereby detecting a pattern or a trend in the variables associated (Bryman & Bell, 2006). This approach was followed since it provided ample flexibility along with the opportunity to observe and document consumer reactions towards respective brands (signs and symbols) in a particular time frame.

A focus group is defined as a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on the subjects, which could range from brand perception to the consumption patterns of products, especially complex or emotive in nature, on the basis of personal experience (Davies & Chun, 2002). Focus groups are discussions in which the moderator introduces topics in a group environment and encourages participants to engage in discussion to arrive at a certain conclusion. This type of interviewing is particularly suited for obtaining several perspectives about the same topic. Focus group discussion enables researchers to listen to myriad voices, explore newer dimensions of a complex issue and consequently gather meaningful insights which might not have been possible had the discussion not been initiated (Palomba & Banta, 1999).

Focus groups representing different linguistic, ethnic and religious communities were selected and assembled in order to discuss and comment from their personal

experience on the probable influence of semiotics in marketing communication and branding. In addition to this, the focus group study also aimed at studying whether different cultural groups interpret the advertising and other promotional campaigns in the same manner or not. All the groups under consideration were of ten people except one, which had seven members. Two differentiation parameters viz. linguistic ethnicity and religion were chosen as primary factors, which were further differentiated in gender and age. In total, seven groups were formed, out of which six focus groups were homogeneous with respect to linguistic ethnicity and religion.

Three groups consisted of only Bengalis, Marwaris and Gujaratis respectively considering linguistic ethnicity as the sole differentiation parameter whereas the other three groups had members of Hinduism, Islam and Jain religion respectively, thus considering religion as the only differentiation parameter. All these six groups had 10 people, who equally belonged to 2 gender and 5 age groups viz. 18-25, 25-35, 35-45, 45-60 and above 60. This means each group had an equal number of men and women for all 5 age groups.

In all such cases, when one cultural factor (linguistic ethnicity or religion) was chosen as a differentiation parameter, the other one was not considered. In order to avoid group think, the last group was intentionally made heterogeneous by including a mix of people from various religions and linguistic ethnic communities. The group was supposed to have 9 members, considering 3 different linguistic ethnic and religious groups each, but had to be restricted to 7 due to the unavailability of Bengali Jain and Marwari Muslim people. Gender and age were not considered individually for this case, since if had they been considered, it would have been a case of 7 ethnic-religion factors, 2 gender groups and 5 age groups together, which would have increased the group size abnormally. So, the details of the seven groups are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Participants' Profiles of Seven Focus Groups

Group 1: Only Bengalis				
Group Members	**Linguistic Ethnicity**	**Religion**	**Age**	**Gender**
1	Bengali	Not Considered Separately	18-25	Male
2	Bengali		18-25	Female
3	Bengali		25-35	Male
4	Bengali		25-35	Female
5	Bengali		35-45	Male
6	Bengali		35-45	Female
7	Bengali		45-60	Male
8	Bengali		45-60	Female
9	Bengali		Above 60	Male
10	Bengali		Above 60	Female

Group Members	Linguistic Ethnicity	Religion	Age	Gender
Group 2: Only Marwaris				
Group Members	Linguistic Ethnicity	Religion	Age	Gender
1	Marwari		18-25	Male
2	Marwari		18-25	Female
3	Marwari		25-35	Male
4	Marwari		25-35	Female
5	Marwari	Not Considered Separately	35-45	Male
6	Marwari		35-45	Female
7	Marwari		45-60	Male
8	Marwari		45-60	Female
9	Marwari		Above 60	Male
10	Marwari		Above 60	Female
Group 3: Only Gujaratis				
Group Members	Linguistic Ethnicity	Religion	Age	Gender
1	Gujarati		18-25	Male
2	Gujarati		18-25	Female
3	Gujarati		25-35	Male
4	Gujarati		25-35	Female
5	Gujarati	Not Considered Separately	35-45	Male
6	Gujarati		35-45	Female
7	Gujarati		45-60	Male
8	Gujarati		45-60	Female
9	Gujarati		Above 60	Male
10	Gujarati		Above 60	Female
Group 4: Only Hindus				
Group Members	Religion	Linguistic Ethnicity	Age	Gender
1	Hinduism		18-25	Male
2	Hinduism		18-25	Female
3	Hinduism		25-35	Male
4	Hinduism		25-35	Female
5	Hinduism	Not Considered Separately	35-45	Male
6	Hinduism		35-45	Female
7	Hinduism		45-60	Male
8	Hinduism		45-60	Female
9	Hinduism		Above 60	Male
10	Hinduism		Above 60	Female
Group 5: Only Muslims				
Group Members	Religion	Linguistic Ethnicity	Age	Gender
1	Islam		18-25	Male
2	Islam		18-25	Female
3	Islam		25-35	Male
4	Islam		25-35	Female
5	Islam	Not Considered Separately	35-45	Male
6	Islam		35-45	Female
7	Islam		45-60	Male
8	Islam		45-60	Female
9	Islam		Above 60	Male
10	Islam		Above 60	Female

Group 6: Only Jains				
Group Members	**Religion**	**Linguistic Ethnicity**	**Age**	**Gender**
1	Jainism		18-25	Male
2	Jainism		18-25	Female
3	Jainism		25-35	Male
4	Jainism		25-35	Female
5	Jainism	Not Considered Separately	35-45	Male
6	Jainism		35-45	Female
7	Jainism		45-60	Male
8	Jainism		45-60	Female
9	Jainism		Above 60	Male
10	Jainism		Above 60	Female
Group 7: Heterogeneous				
Group Members	**Linguistic Ethnicity**	**Religion**	**Age**	**Gender**
1	Bengali	Hinduism		
2	Bengali	Islam		
3	Marwari	Hinduism		
4	Marwari	Jainism	Not Considered Separately	Not Considered Separately
5	Gujarati	Hinduism		
6	Gujarati	Jainism		
7	Gujarati	Islam		

Focus groups can be of different types depending on the subtle variations incorporated into the standard procedure. These variations are necessary as members differ widely across various groups and some amount of variation helps in eliciting a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context. For the present research, two of such variations in focus groups were used as mentioned below. It may be understood from the description that both the formats were used for all the groups except one with all Bengali people, for which only the first format was found out to be sufficient due to the proficiency of the researcher in the language of discussion.

Two-way focus group: For all the groups, this was used in the middle course of discussion, where a section of the groups discussed the advertising copies they have watched and heard while the other section monitored and evaluated the key verbal and visual expressions used in the ad copy and the corresponding responses of the other group. The same process was repeated for other sets of ad copies with role reversal.

Dual-moderator group: The researcher is a Bengali-speaking person with just-manageable knowledge of Hindi and Urdu and no working knowledge of the Marwari and Gujarati languages. For the groups involving Marwari and Gujarati people and even for the other groups, the discussion involved these languages. Hence, this concept had to be used, where the researcher although still acting as a moderator was supported by another person familiar with at least one of these languages. In the case of the group involving only Gujarati people, the researcher took help from one Gujarati person. For

other groups (except for the group involving only Bengali people), the researcher was required to take help from one Marwari person conversant both in Marwari and Hindi language since it was apparent to the researcher from his experience that Hindi would have been the lingua franca for any linguistic heterogeneous group and even in case of a linguistic homogenous group of Marwaris since the young Marwaris generally feel more comfortable speaking in the Hindi language. For all such cases, the researcher was following the excitement level and non-verbal communication of the participants along with the verbal one, to whatever extent it was possible, whereas the other one noted down the important points and also ensured that the topics in the basic checklist were discussed.

For all the focus group discussions, a comfortable place was chosen. In some cases, the place happened to be the home of one of the participants whereas in other cases, it was the choice of the researcher unanimously accepted by all the group members. For all the cases, the room was examined to check whether all the facilities were in proper place. Precautions were taken to check factors like humidity, ventilation or temperature as well as closing doors or windows urgently needed to eliminate noise and other distractions. The researcher had taken a necessary back-up plan for a possible power-cut.

Once introductions were complete, the researcher moderated the discussion with the help of an outline of questions and sub-topics aided by a set of advertisements in the form of print clippings mounted on a board and also some audio-visuals with the help of a DVD player. Questions being asked in the focus group discussion were simple, specific and structured, yet open-ended as far as possible, which moved from being generic to specific (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). A study revealed 'what' questions to be more effective than 'why' questions (Krueger, 1994). It was remembered while designing the focus group process that questioning and probing during the discussion must not be a serial or structured interview; rather it should be a discussion of specific but loosely held topics that could lead to the core objective of the discussion. Hence, questions were primarily used to start and guide the discussion followed by appropriate practical aids to ensure that all focus group members could enjoy and participate. Listening is very important to moderate a focus group. The moderator must be familiar with the research questions and focus group discussion objectives and must focus more on active listening and proper oculesics (Greenbaum, 1998). Hence, the researcher not only listened with rapt attention but also expressed positive gestures so that the members could also understand his involvement. The key ideas in the notes were summarised, which were further examined to comprehend participants' choice of words in the context of group

dynamics, and also consistency and coherence of perceptions, attitudes and opinions among group members within and in between.

5.0 Analysis of Data

The data analysis of both primary and secondary data revealed a significant influence of semiotics on consumers' interpretation of advertisements. Even if the concept of semiotics remained the same, still its role varied from situation to situation. The application of semiotics mainly depended on a particular situation since there needed to be sync between its dimensions (symbols, signs, gestures, visual imagery, ambience and colour psychology, sound) and the given situation. The domain of semiotics seemed to have widened the mental horizon of a marketer in terms of product conceptualisation, product promotion, packaging, location advantages and marketing activities since it could integrate every element in order to maintain co-ordination. In the ever-growing competitiveness of the market dynamics, semiotics was found to be a strong element that could influence the perception, interpretation and decision-making, since it could not only create uniqueness in the value proposition but could also act as a catalyst for creating a positive impact in the minds of the customers, which could be attributed to the findings that the power of a message communicated verbally was less in comparison to that which was communicated non-verbally. Hence, it could be inferred that semiotics must be in practice to make advertisements persuasive; even an ordinary advertisement may look extraordinary by using the concept of semiotics. It could also help in leveraging a particular product in terms of its acceptability, appeal, brand recall, and customer loyalty. Since usage of semiotics was found to be quite dependent on advertisement medium for the sake of compatibility, choice of media vehicles becomes quite imperative while crafting integrated marketing communication (IMC) strategy. Different aspects of analyses are:

- Type of Logo: As far as type of logos is concerned, the logos are being categorised into four categories as stated above. Among all the categories, concerned logos with words and letters (40%) and combinations of both graphics and word/letters (49%) are the highest. One possible reason for the usage of a combination as compared to other categories may be the semiotic influence as well as the linguistic comprehension of the communication communicated by the logos to its intended audience.
- Bounding: It is also observed that the logos can also be categorised as per the bounding of the primary semiotic artefact of the logo concerned (i.e., whether the logos are bounded or not). Among all the 60 logos, it is found that the percentage of

the unbounded logos (65%) is more than the percentage of the bounded logos (35%). Approximately 1/3rd of the total sample logos is bounded which means the logos are being used along with other semiotic artefacts in a space around the logo to give it the overall meaning and the rest are unbounded.

- Capitalisation: As far as the capitalisation of logos is concerned, it is observed that among all the categories mentioned, the category stating logos with the combination is the highest (44%) followed by the logos which have capital letters (32%). Hence 2/5th of the logos are combinations as compared to others.

- Font Style: Among all the 60 logos, around 3/5th of the total logos constitute print style as far as the type of font used is concerned. This constitutes around 64% and around 1/5th constitutes script or handwriting style (22%).

- Combination of colours: As far as the colour usage is concerned, logos are being classified under 6 categories. Among the 6 categories, logos which use two colours are the highest (36%) followed by logos which use three colours (25%) and thirdly logos which use one colour (21.6%). Now of all the logos, it is observed that logos which use one, two or three colours constitute about 83% of the total logos and the rest 16.6% constitute logos which used four or more than four colours. The probable reason for using only one, two or three colours is because of an aesthetic look from the organisation's point of view and quick comprehension and recall from the consumer's point of view.

- Primary and secondary colour used: Now as far as colour used for making logos are concerned, it is observed that the majority of colour used in the logo making (as in the logo sample) is blue colour (26%) followed by red or maroon (20%).

- Usage of colour palette: As far as the colour palette is concerned, among the 6 categories, the majority of the logos from the sample have used a neutral type of palette (46.6%) followed by a strong type of palette (36.6%).

- The total number of design elements used: Among the total number of design elements, logos with one design element are the maximum among the logo sample (46.6%) followed by two elements. The major reason for such a result could be:

Phase two of the questionnaire contains seven industry verticals among which six logos are distributed in each of the seven verticals. Hence 42 logos are being studied. For such a case, Chi-Square is used because both independent variables, i.e., age/gender/educational background and the respective responses were non-parametric. The main objective is to find brand association by recognising the trend as per respective industry verticals.

5.1 Age category

Analysing the influence of age on the response of the oil and natural gas sector.

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.002), it may be inferred that age has a strong influence (Cramer's V=.348) on the correct comprehension of the oil and natural gas sector.

Analysing the influence of age on the response of the construction and engineering sector:

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.005), it may be inferred that age has a strong influence (Cramer's V=.395) on the correct comprehension of the construction and engineering sector.

Analysing the influence of age on the response of the automobile sector:

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.018), it may be inferred that age has a strong influence (Cramer's V=.348) on the correct comprehension of the automobile sector.

Analysis of the influence of age on the response of the personal care sector:

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.047), it may be inferred that age has an influence, although moderate (Cramer's V=.277) on the correct comprehension of the personal-care sector.

Analysing the influence of age on the response of the telecom sector.

Since Chi-Square was not significant (p=.519), it may be inferred that age has a very low influence (Cramer's V=.165) on the correct comprehension of the telecom sector.

Analysing the influence of age on the response of 'apparels and fashion accessories':

Since Chi-Square was significant (p= .044), it may be inferred that age has an influence, although moderate (Cramer's V=.274) on the correct comprehension of "apparels and fashion accessories'

Analysing the influence of the age on the response of 'information technology'.

Since Chi-Square was significant (p= .001), it may be inferred that age has a strong influence (Cramer's V= .264) on the correct comprehension of 'information technology'

5.2 Gender category

Analysing the influence of gender on the response of the 'oil and natural gas' sector:

Since Chi-Square was not significant (p= .643), it may be inferred that gender has a very low influence (Cramer's V= .103) on the correct comprehension of 'oil and natural gas'.

Analysing the influence of gender on the response of the 'construction and engineering sector':

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.005), it may be inferred that gender has a high influence (Cramer's V=.394) on the correct comprehension of the 'Construction and engineering sector'.

Analysing the influence of gender on the response of the 'automobile sector':

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.040), it may be inferred that gender has a marginally high influence (Cramer's V=.225) on the correct comprehension of the 'automobile sector'.

Analysing the influence of gender on the response of the 'personal care sector'**:**

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.898), it may be inferred that gender has no influence (Cramer's V=.051) on the correct comprehension of the 'personal care sector'.

Analysing the influence of gender on the response of the 'telecom sector':

Since Chi-Square was not significant (p=.055), it may be inferred that gender has a low influence (Cramer's V=.264) on the correct comprehension of the 'telecom sector'.

Analysing the influence of gender on the response of 'apparel and fashion accessories':

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.044), it may be inferred that gender has a marginally high influence (Cramer's V=.274) on the correct comprehension of 'apparel and fashion accessories'.

Analysing the influence of gender on the response of 'information technology':

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.055), it may be inferred that gender has a marginally low influence (Cramer's V=.264) on the correct comprehension of 'information technology'.

5.3 Educational background

Analysing the influence of educational background on the response of 'oil and natural gas':

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.047), it may be inferred that educational background has a marginally high influence (Cramer's V=.277) on the correct comprehension of 'oil and natural gas'.

Analysing the influence of educational background on the response of 'Construction and engineering':

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.037), it may be inferred that educational background has a high influence (Cramer's V=.284) on the correct comprehension of 'construction and engineering'.

Analysing the influence of educational background on the response of the 'automobile sector':

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.024), it may be inferred that educational background has a high influence (Cramer's V=.338) on the correct comprehension of the 'automobile sector'.

Analysing the influence of educational background on the response of the 'personal care sector":

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.003), it may be inferred that educational background has a very strong influence (Cramer's V=.493) on the correct comprehension of 'personal care'.

Analysing the influence of educational background on the response of the 'telecom sector':

Since Chi-Square was not significant (p=.780), it may be inferred that educational background has no influence (Cramer's V=.115) on the correct comprehension of the 'telecom sector'.

Analysing the influence of educational background on the response of 'apparel and fashion accessories':

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.012), it may be inferred that educational background has a high influence (Cramer's V=.314) on the correct comprehension of 'apparel and fashion accessories'.

Analysing the influence of educational background on the response of the 'information technology sector':

Since Chi-Square was significant (p=.002), it may be inferred that educational background has a strong influence (Cramer's V=.358) on the correct comprehension of the 'information technology sector'.

6.0 Conclusion

The semiotic research conducted for a developing market like India clearly revealed the positioning of brands in the minds of consumers. It is evident that the Indian market is ready for semiotic experiments as far as branding is considered. The study provides a view into the minds of the consumers by analysing their recall rate.

The methodology adopted in this thesis has a professional approach of logo development with respect to marketing. The characteristics category used to classify different logos can be applied to any set of logos. Hence, it can be useful in real-life experience (e.g., analysing the logos of competitors with respect to the marketing budget and market segment). This may also help a brand manager to classify brands and help in position mapping with respect to logos as it is one of the closest parameters to judge a complex phenomenon such as the emotional benefit of a brand respectively. Analysing trends in market acceptance with respect to the corporate image is another examination where semiotic analysis is useful.

Another aspect of this research is that it can also give an insight into the usage of advertising and other promotional tools. Although the main methodology used here is 'Brand Recall' through which the responses are compared as per the category of independent variables, it also can further be researched into "Brand Positioning" and 'Brand Loyalty'. Due to the mentioned limitations (especially time), a comparison has been made with only three independent variables (i.e., age, gender and educational background). However, further independent variables can also be taken into account (e.g. professions and respective brand recognition).

The methodology adopted in this research may further be used:

- By a graphic designer for analysing the semiotic artefact of the logos in usage.
- For comparing the corporate image of an organisation with respect to those in competition.
- For developing a unique method for position mapping.
- For an organisation who wants to take the decision regarding "When to change the logo of the brand or corporation?"
- For analysing market acceptance of the corporations (i.e., corporate image) with respect to the logo recognition test.

7.0 Recommendations

As 42 logos of seven different industry verticals are being chosen and responses of the individuals (as per age, gender and educational background) are tabulated, recommendations can be made as per the seven industry verticals.

For the 'oil and natural gas' sector, there is a very strong influence of age and marginal influence by educational background as far as the responses of the respondents are concerned. However, for gender, there is low influence. For enhancing the brand equity, special schemes for professional women (e.g., doctors or government employees)

can be provided. Special medical and common ailment treatments for senior citizens can be provided at petrol pumps (especially those on highways). Apart from this, a special game zone can be provided for kids and other customers at the petrol pumps.

For the 'construction and engineering' sector, there is a high influence in all the three categories. Hence, it is evident that the sector has good brand equity with respect to brand recall. Therefore, it is important to maintain brand equity. The respective brands may allow scholarships in other sectors within the vicinity of the construction and engineering sectors (e.g., Scholarships for small children by the real-estate owners (e.g., Ambuja Realty).

For the 'automobile' sector, there is a strong influence. Hence, the respective brand owners can do special campaigns (e.g., anti-pollution) to enhance brand engagement. This will not only engage the customers but also help in continuous brand recall.

For the 'personal care products' gender does not have an influence on it which means it is necessary for the brand managers to differentiate its products as per gender (e.g., fairness cream for men and women). Age category is another important aspect where there is moderate influence. Here, fine sub-segmentations are there but it needs to be more prominent (e.g., special strawberry flavoured bubble shampoo for kids).

For the telecom sector, there is a very low influence. Hence, for increasing brand equity, special product positioning (e.g., due to special offer to the corporate executives for 3G and MNP) can be done by providing promotional offers.

For 'apparel and fashion accessories' brand equity can be enhanced by segmentation into men and women and especially kids' accessories. The brand may go for brand extensions as well (e.g., Reid and Taylor going for high-class executive fashionable shoes for men and women).

For the 'information technology' sector for enhancing brand equity, the brands (e.g., TCS, CTS) might go for the educational sector (i.e., opening engineering colleges in India).

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