CHAPTER - 1

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Chapter 1

Background of communication

There has been a mercurial change in the dissemination of information over centuries. From cave paintings, sign languages, ancient scriptures and symbols, to using energy like electricity to transmit messages through different media. Human voice communication was followed by the invention of print communication in the mid 15th century in Europe, followed by the invention of telegraphs and telephones in the 19th century. The 20th century ushered in the radio and television communication, and finally the 21st century has been an era of digital and modernized modes of communication.

The oldest forms of communication known are symbols. It is a conventional representation of a concept. Cave paintings made use of symbols, since speech was imperfect. This later led to the connection between paintings and languages. Petroglyphs that showed an event in the paintings were followed by pictograms that told a story, and can be linked to the story board method used by advertisers today. The cuneiform script which appears as wedge shaped marks, evolved into the Egyptian hieroglyphs, which was a formal writing system used by Egyptians. It combined both logographic/ideographic and alphabetic elements. Inspite of the fact that transmission of signals began thousands of years ago, by using smoke signals, bonfires, the sound of drums, nonverbal communication by whistling used to communicate in the deep valleys, optical signaling used for the flags of a ship and other such conventional means, signal transmission was transformed by the inventions electrical telecommunication. Finally, the digital explosion of the 21st century marks a landmark in the evolution history of communications.

Modes of communications

Communication can be broadly classified into Verbal, Nonverbal and Visual communication. Verbal communication constitutes of oral and written communication. Nonverbal communication comprises of two sub classifications of physical nonverbal communication and paralanguage. Physical nonverbal communication consists of body language, facial expressions, eye contact, body posture, tone of voice as its components.
Paralanguage on the other hand, considers aesthetic communications, including paintings, dancing, appearance, space language, and symbols. Visual communication involves signs, typography, drawings, graphic designs, illustrations, color, graphs, charts and other electronic resources.

The basic modes of communication today involve face to face communication, audio-video communications like Television, audio communication like the radio, textual communication involving print media. Speech, signs, pictures, behaviour, eye gazes, gestures, facial expressions sounds all form an integral part of communications too. Modern day marketing communication comprises of the use of media like print, radio, television and digital media to carry out activities like advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, direct marketing, public relations and sponsorships. The media enable marketers to reach the audience so that they could convey the messages in a desired manner.

Integrated Marketing communication (IMC) makes use of different promotional methods that reinforce each other to achieve a marketing campaign. It makes use of conventional and non conventional channels of communication to convey consistent brand messages to the audiences across various segments of the society. Each activity carried out in an integrated marketing campaign is intended to send out appropriate signals to the target market to achieve maximum efficiency in brand building. The new market trends in the 20th century shifted the focus of organizations from standard advertising approach to IMC approach. The cluttering of marketing messages in this new market place made it more difficult for a single message to cause a noteworthy impact on the audience. As competition increased, companies resorted to new technology and digitalization to target specialized audiences, based on place of residence and ethnicity. Thus IMC became the buzz word of the emerging marketing communication era.

I. Marketing semiotics and brand communications.

One of the richest and oldest paradigms for understanding “meaning” is, “Semiotics.” The term originates from ancient Greece in relation to the study of signs.
Peirce (1955, p 98) used the term “Semiotics” to describe the relation between signs and thought or logic. “Semeion”, a Greek word which means “Signs” and “Semiology,” as the name suggests, is the study of signs, symbols and pictures as well as text. Semiotics has its origin in linguistics, but has spread its branches in the domains of marketing, media and other nonlinguistic media of communication.

Meanings are conveyed in a number of ways, some implied and some explicit. Signs need to be interpreted appropriately in order to get the desired response. Hence, the study of semiotics has gained popularity amongst the media researchers. Languages emerged from the need to communicate and it all began with drawings, symbols and signs. Alphabets, words, phonetics, languages followed suit. Peirce (in Beebe, 2004, 628) considers, “The entire universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs.” For Ramello and Silva (2006, 943), “In simplified terms, we can say that a sign is nothing more than a kind of label – technically it is termed a ‘semiotic device’ – which conveys a meaning, that denotes some particular object. Human interactions are permeated with such labels, that are necessary tools for communication and collective human activities.” So, signs exist all around us, and through them we can construct our relation with the world (Johansen and Larsen, 2002).

Media has become an integral part of life; from the time we wake up in the morning and open the newspapers to the time we sleep in the night, after signing out from the social networking websites, and switching off our electronic gadgets. Print, audiovisual, interactive media are just a few forms of communications channels that surround us throughout our busy schedules. The prime job of communication channels is disseminating information, and contextual messages which are interpreted by the observer. “Symbols speak louder than words,” is a known fact, but today in the increasing clutter of branding and competition, this fact seems to be ignored by marketers. Products and services have been sold to customers for decades using marketing communication tools.

The concept of Marketing Communications (Marcom) has however become so clichéd that more ideas and thoughts need to be pumped into these communications to add to the required punch.
Scientists and Researchers have designed a lot of models, and propounded theories on how messages can be conveyed effectively to the customers. The oldest account of communication through signs, symbols and drawings, dates back to the cave man. Every bit of a message was conveyed without the use of words, but by the sole use of symbols and pictures. Cave paintings and other discoveries of pictorial communications are proof that man could communicate effectively without the knowledge of alphabets and scripts. With the advent of language in the form of alphabets and words, communication through symbols and diagrams reduced, and man started advancing through the use of scriptures and verbal language.

The branding and marketing activities of the 21st century have cluttered the communication space. The strategies used to sell are so deafening that the consumer is turning to modes of communication that are less intrusive and more meaningful. The reducing attention span of the consumer is also building pressure on the communication experts, to create messages that convey the philosophy of brands in the least possible time and words. This art of communication through pictures and paintings is slowly being revived.

**Evolving Semiotics**

The history of art has a lot of examples of tribes who communicated very artistically through the paintings and images, like the Warli paintings of the tribal community called the Warli in India, in the states of Maharashtra-Gujarat. They had an unwritten language of communication called Warli language using basic graphic vocabulary, circles, squares and triangles, picked up from the observation of nature, rituals and traditions. Sign language, verbal as well as visual cues have been a part of everyday life. However, an attempt to imbibe these cues in marketing communications has been a challenge. Evoking the correct emotions within the consumers has become a task for most people who are in the business of designing and drafting communications. This is a result of an increasing rational and analytical attitude amongst the masses towards the markets. It is the primary images that define the product, promised experiences and expectations.
This is achieved by the socially and culturally embedded semiotic messages or the symbolic values (Mintz and Du Bois, 2002). As far as neurosciences and psychological studies are concerned, the human left brain is divided into two sections, the analytical and structural parts. The right brain is again divided into two sections, the conceptual part and the social part. Based on the activeness of these four parts of the brain, the preference of a person could be determined.

The knowledge of this research will form an important part in designing communications, as different people are wired differently and hence differ in their perceptions. A visual or other sensorial stimulus may activate the nerve centers of the brain, and in turn result in action, either leading the consumer towards the stimulus or away from the stimulus. Thus, understanding the perceptions of the audiences towards such stimuli is of prime importance for the media person, to know if messages are conveyed effectively. The media managers and communication experts have to draft messages after carefully studying the culture, the personalities, the influences of target audience, the situations prevailing in the country, the existing messages that are crowding the markets and so many more parameters. This will help them in coming up with hard hitting messages for a brand. The level of tolerance and understanding of the target group regarding varied issues should be gauged beforehand as messages are understood based on the conditioning and influences of society, cultures and values. The limitations of media can hamper the dissemination of messages, in turn resulting in broken or incomplete communication with the audience.

II. The semiotic approach and ideology

Advertising research can be conducted based on analyzing the influence an advertisement has on the consumer, and how the external factors such as society and culture impact these perceptions. An analysis of photographs, texts, sounds, associated connotations, imagery, presentation layout, and communication channel used to convey the messages, will give insights to improvise communications in the future. A lot of language systems already exist in the society that give form to reality, but signs and symbols go beyond these pre existing systems to define a shorter and smarter way of
communicating instead of using a set of words. Semioticians carry out research to discover the ability of signs and symbols of everyday life, to give away more meanings than what they presently do.

Signs are arranged into systems which are termed as “codes”. Specific codes regarding behaviour, clothing, addressing people, culture, exist in each society and communicate messages. Signs are understood by learning. A crying baby is trying to convey hunger, a barking dog is conveying danger, thundering in the sky conveys monsoons or bad weather, an ambulance or a fire alarm raise alerts by the use of sounds, all these are signs that have become a part of our life, that we are conditioned to understand what they mean only in one specific direction. Semiotics aims at deciphering more meanings from an existing phenomenon to convey more information through the same source. Signals, signs, symbols and other formats of communication keep evolving with the society and culture, but a few remain constant to signify legacy. In the Indian clothing context, the saree has evolved over a period of time from a length of nine yard to 5 yards. The salwar kameez and western wear are slowly occupying the closet space of a lot of households, also becoming a part of the Indian everyday wear wardrobe. Inspite of these codes being fairly constant, evolutions based on creativity and blending of cultures is being witnessed in the way Indian people are now dressing up. These are signs of a progressive society in terms of western adaptations of clothing and mannerisms. Many a times, the society determines the level of progress and modernization by using the attire of the people in that area as a sign of urbanization. It is all about perception and preferences of individuals. A lady staying in the city may still prefer to go the traditional, conservative way even though she resides in a modern/urbanized society. Thus, signs and symbols cannot always be crystal clear, and may need to be substantiated with appropriate text and data to convey the gist of the message.

**III. Rationale and significance of this study**

Marketers struggle to stand apart from the clout and are finding newer methods to add a refreshing touch to their existing communications.
The science of semiotics has come to the rescue of such communicators, who have realized that the bombardment of text and messages on the consumers is sensitizing them towards any further attempts of communication, and the only way to get their attention back is to use differentiators in techniques of conveying complicated messages in a simplified manner. The communication industry desires to control the consumer’s emotions regarding their brands, and by doing so they are aiming at attracting a major chunk of the market. Our everyday life revolves around plenty of signs and symbols that have made our lives easier. Not many of these symbols have been taught to us inspite of that many of them are easy to comprehend due to the use of pictures and signs that are apt in conveying the desired message. Today, each day is full of information and communication overload. Therefore, designing communication which does not tax the brain while interpretation, but instead acts as a relief amongst the crowding of advertising, has become a challenge for any marketing communication specialist.

The science of semiotics explains the art of deriving meanings out of signs, symbols and other such cues. Imagery, illustrations, pictures form an integral part of the semiotics. Consumers should be able to identify, analyze, recall and relate to the interpretations that stem out from using images, colors and other elements of semiotics. Images and concepts can be very innovatively created if semiotics is applied while coming up with communication messages.

Peirce has also brought to light the concept of “Indexical signs”. He states that, indexical signs have a concrete and often causal relationship to their signified. The sunflower always faces the rays of the Sun, the Sun and the rain together cause the rainbow, excessive eating causes obesity. These are a few examples of concrete and often causal relationships.
For Hodge and Kress (1988), meaning is a process in their interpretation of Peirce, and they refer to Peirce's triadic model of semiosis, which depicts the "action" of a sign as a limitless process of infinite semiosis, where one "interpretant" (or idea linked to a sign) generates another. The flow of these infinite processes of interpretation are constrained in Peirce's model, they claim, by the material world (the "object"), and cultural rules of thought, or "habit".

The Semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce

![Diagram of Peirce's Triadic Model]

Figure 1: Charles Sander Peirce's Triadic Model

The second figure describes the Peirce’s infinite semiosis model. The figure describes the findings of Peirce that signs comprise of three interrelated parts: a sign, an object and an interpretant. The Sign vehicle is considered as signifier in this case. The written words, utterances, red traffic light act as a sign for stop. As stated by Peirce, 1931 the object, is whatever is signified: “stop” is signified by red traffic light However, the object is not a real-world referent, that is to say “stop” is a mental status, concept. The interpretant is one of the most significant features of Peirce’s semiotic, which decide how sign vehicles interconnect with the mental object and thus make meanings. The connections enables meaning making as a dynamic network, a “semiosphere” expands along with time.
IV. Brand Building and Marketing Semiotics:

Language is a mode of attributing a label, name or description for a particular object, situation or emotion. It would be unfair to argue if media using imagery communicates better than linguistic based media as both, text and images can be complementary to each other in communicating meanings. The real time observations are assessed within seconds and microseconds in the brain. An observer may neglect the text or taglines, instead focusing on the signs and symbols first. This immediate registration of images may be attributed to the reptilian/old brain of human beings which is fast, effortless, and does not take time to rationalize like the neocortex or mid brain does.
Neuroscience studies have proved that colors/images and text may create a conflict between these two parts of the brain. Chandler (2007), states human beings interpret things as signs mostly in an unconscious way.

We consider being acceptable to conclude that the processing of the semiotic signs of the brands can be framed just like any other cognitive process and, in that sense, we infer that consumers use the signs most of the time unknowingly.

Zaltman (2003, 48) has a point of view that, “The term cognitive unconscious, sometimes called the unconscious mind, refers to the mental processes operating outside consumers’ awareness.” The processing of the signs creates meanings that, in this perspective, we can consider to lie most of the times in an unaware state, in the minds of the consumers. What consumers already know; shapes the way they gather more information (Zaltman, 2003). The meanings of the brands are used by consumers to make their choices, and this can happen in an unconscious way, like explained by Zaltman (2003, 55), “The areas of the human brain that involve choice are activated well before we become consciously aware that we’ve made a choice. That is, decisions ‘happen’ before they are seemingly ‘made’.” Our actions as consumers may seem to derive from conscious decisions when most of the times we actually made them much earlier (Zaltman, 2003). Consumers consume brands not only when they acquire them and use their products and services, but also when they encounter and assimilate their semiotic signs. We consider that a part of the brand is being consumed in every situation in which a potential meaning about a brand is assimilated into the perceptual spaces. Consumers are permanently and often unconsciously constructing their thoughts about brands and every decision regarding them are based on these meanings (Fernando Santos).

The brand equity concept is based on the perceptions of the consumers about the symbols, logos, taglines, the communication a brand uses and the associated emotions it arouses about the brand. A consumer attaches equal importance for the intangibles of a brand, and thus they can be linked to the loyalty that arises on account of these intangibles. Every brand has a set of attributes that define it in the best possible manner giving it a distinct personality. Brand archetype is a term that defines brand personality in a detailed manner.
The brand, its communications, and its benefits must resonate with the customer so as to leave a lasting impact on him, and convert him into a loyal long term customer. Over a period of time, the customer builds a relationship with the brand and starts associating “self” with the “brand.” Marketers should be cautious at this stage to not let the brand personality dilute. This may lead to one lost customer, due to blurring of association between the customer’s personality and the brand’s personality.

Customers have to be kept engaged through communication which will result in an increase in his level of involvement with the brand. Thus, it becomes necessary to keep a check on the kind of communications that are conveyed to the customer throughout his association with the brand. Semiotics can help a brand build its distinctiveness among competitors, consistently helping the brand to climb the preference ladder within the customers’ mind.

According to French critic Roland Barthes, whose contribution to semiotic research and analysis has been exemplary, signs and connotations come together to shape a particular message giving rise to a “Myth”. Myth, in this context, means a particular way of thinking about certain images, characters, locations in a structured and fixed manner based on the text. Myth attaches an existing sign to a new meaning. Signs are not just means of denoting things or properties, they also communicate connotations. An image of the Taj Mahal, one of the Seven Wonders of the World connotes the emotions of endless Love and Sacrifice, the crown above the logo of Rolex indicates luxury and royalty. Thus, images trigger connotations and bring out emotions from the subconscious to the conscious. An auto company used a twisted chain in such a way that it looks like a powerful Chinese legendary dragon, symbolizing potent and auspicious powers. The dragon is also a symbol of power, strength, and good luck. Since the origin of the company is in China, this is the best depiction of that. Thus, a myth of an existing sign of the Chinese dragon and its connotation with good luck, power and strength is used intentionally to show the company’s origin in China. To read a myth one has to identify the sign and decipher the codes which built it into a structure to understand the literal meaning of it. The image of a dragon tickles the mind to think where it originates from, China, and directs us towards the message that the communicator wants to convey.
The signs and images can be broken into two elements, the narrative and the conceptual (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996, p.56). Narrative structures always have a vector (a gaze or line of communication that directs the reader to the message being presented in the text). However, conceptual representations are not reliant on vectors in the transmission of meaning. Vectors are formed as lines of vision across the pictures thus leading to the connections between the vector and the message.

Roland Barthes believes that some ideas are shaped by ideologies existing within homogenous groups. Many a times the ideologies between groups assumes a conflict like picture and the interpretation of a certain piece of communication shapes itself as per the ideology. Semiotics thus, is a tactic of making the viewer think and look beyond what is seen and heard, and not just focus on the surface. It is all about decoding the actual meaning from the least possible information. The definition of a brand in itself evolved encompassing the signifier, a related performance and a vast collection of meanings associated with the brand in the consumer’s mind space that links the meaning with the outcome/ performance of a brand before, after or during a purchase. Semiotics can thus assist in developing cues to befit the brand strategies to register the brand better in the consumer minds thus, building brand equity.

**Culture and semiotics**

The black box model is related to the Black box theory of behaviorism, where the focus is not set on the processes inside a consumer, but the relation between the stimuli and the response of the consumer. The marketing stimuli are planned and processed by the companies, whereas the environmental stimulus is given by social factors, based on the economical, political and cultural circumstances of a society. The buyer’s black box contains the buyer characteristics and the decision process, which determines the buyer’s response. Culture forms an important part of the consumer’s perception. The brain reads into the signals and affects the behaviour of the consumer. A black colored cat could be considered as one such example, where for no fault of the creature it is looked upon with fear, and as an animal that brings bad luck in countries like Great Britain, India, and Ireland. On the other hand, the Scottish believes that a strange black cat's arrival to the home signifies prosperity. Black cats are also considered good luck in Japan.
Thus, images and their connotations are highly influenced by the culture codes operating in a country.

An object that arouses positive emotions in the minds of the consumer can also arouse negative emotions in the minds of people from a different country, following a different culture. A lemon and green chilly tied to a thread is a common sight on the streets of India. These are hung outside houses and are also seen dangling behind vehicles. They are superstitiously used to ward off bad luck. Just the way these images may arouse negative emotions, certain images influenced by culture, like mango leaves and marigold flowers hung on a door, a rangoli outside a house, etc, supposedly bring positivity and goodluck in a lot of India households. The study of these symbols will help the marketer use them appropriately in his communications and convey the message in a compact and effective manner. Our everyday life revolves around plenty of signs and symbols that have made our lives easier. Not many of these symbols have been taught to us, inspite of that many of them are easy to comprehend due to the use of pictures and signs that are apt in conveying the desired message.

V. Branches of Semiotics and applications of Marketing Semiotics

The semiotic concepts can be used in creating attractive, relevant and thought provoking packaging. They can also be used for visual merchandising, places where creative strategies need to be implemented to create differentiators. Being able to identify the brand after reading, watching, listening to the messages communicated is an indicator of the effectiveness of a message. Understanding marketing semiotics prevalent in a certain region, state or country will help in making business communication easier too. A study of the tone of voice used, the words used during communication and the images along with the body language used will be an additional benefit in creating better and meaningful marketing communication for the audience. Marketing Semiotics is also being used in checking the effectiveness of a communication media by conducting a semiotic audit.

Political parties trying to convey their messages in a more effective manner are making use of marketing semiotics directly or indirectly to portray the desired image
before the public. Roland and Barthes introduced semiotics to the marketing discipline almost 50 years ago (Barthes [1964] 1967). Visual messages operate along the lines of associations by similarity and contiguity. The ability to create and read associations by similarity and contiguity enables marketers to communicate brand messages via photography.

The signs of the brands exist ubiquitously in our modern societies, and are potentially able to be processed by whoever comes in contact with them. This science of reading between the lines was developed by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Peirce. Saussure indicated the importance of language in communication and believed that all objects that communicate meanings can be studied to understand their basis of communication. Saussure’s research put forth the two components of a sign. The “Vehicle,” expresses the “Sign.” A vehicle could be a tune, a specific sound, texture, pattern which makes up a word, the imagery and colors, shapes which are used to represent an object or a person. The sound of a fire fighting engine used to alert people, the stark red color of the engine that again signifies alert, the uniform of the firefighters are examples of the vehicle called, “Signifier.” The “Signified,” on the other hand, is the concept which the signifier calls forth when we perceive it. The moment we hear a ringing bell alert on the streets, people make way for the fire fighting engine to go on and douse the fire, the bell signifies fire and alarm. In this case no words are used to signal the public; just the sound of the bell helps a person understand the urgency and alerts him.

Metaphors, Metonymy and Syntagms and Paradigms are four concepts related to semiotics that drive the interpretations of the messages. In the case of text, meanings can change if words are used inappropriately or are placed in the wrong position. Language has to follow the order of sequence and time. Syntagm is a sequence of units of words and concerns with positioning while paradigms are concerned with substitutions. Advertisements make use of visual syntagms and could bring an innovative touch by applying paradigmatic syntagms by substituting certain elements with others and giving the advertisement a whole new meaning. Paradigm syntagms believe in substituting elements. Communication channels connect different media to achieve maximum results
while communicating. By interconnecting characters, locations, etc a broad list of connotations may arise.

Use of Metaphors becomes a part of these interconnections, establishing similarities between two things. Metonymy on the other hand in the literal sense is a figure of speech in which a thing or concept is not called by its own name, but by the name of something intimately associated with that thing or concept.

Thus, Peirce (in Beebe, 2004: 626) has defined semiotics as, “A domain of investigation that explores the nature and function of signs as well as the systems and processes underlying signification, expression, representation, and communication.” Thus, semiotics seems to be the most adequate option in order to study the consumption with a focus on the meanings that consumers ascribe to products and brands. The modern semiotics is founded on the work of the linguist Saussure and of the philosopher Peirce.

Alicia Clegg's article, Just a Sign of the Times?, in the marketing week, September 2004 gives her comments on how semiotics could give clients the added confidence in making brand-building decisions, by revealing insights into consumers' subconscious reactions to brand imagery. Semiotics has its applications not only in Marketing but is also diversified into branches such as Biosemiotics. It could be defined as the biology interpreted as sign systems study, and attempts to establish a relationship between a scientific field of enquiry and the study of signs, semiotics. It studies the phenomenon of how living signs communicate in the ecosystems. Cognitive Semiotics has assumed importance because of its link with cognitive sciences such as linguistics, neuroscience, psychology and such other fields. Cognitive science has a fundamental concept that thinking can be best understood in terms of representational structures in the mind and computational procedures that operate on those structures. Cognitive Semiotics studies meaning-making by applying methods and theories developed in the cognitive sciences as well as in the human and social sciences: notably in semiotics, linguistics, psychology. It carries out conceptual and textual analysis as well as experimental and ethnographic investigations. Researchers are trying to develop behavioral and neuroscientific experimental approaches to signs.

Research also states that computational semiotics is an interdisciplinary field that
applies, conducts, and draws on research in logic, mathematics, the theory and practice of computation, formal and natural language studies and cognitive sciences generally also including semiotics proper. It adopts a sign-theoretic perspective on issues of artificial intelligence and knowledge representation. Many of its applications lie in the field of human-computer interaction (HCI), fundamental devices of recognition and have also been applied to user interface design.

Semiotics of culture defines culture from a semiotic perspective as a type of human symbolic activity of creating signs and a way of giving meaning to everything around. Culture is understood as a system of symbols or meaningful signs. Symbols are analyzed and categorized in a certain class within the hierarchical system.

VI. Social Semiotics

Linguistic theorist, Michael Halliday, introduced the term ‘social semiotics into linguistics Meaning making in a social context is the easiest way to describe social semiotics. It explores the way in which humans signify practices in specific social and cultural environments. Social semiotics extends Saussure's theories and brings out a premise that the "codes" of language and communication are formed by social processes. Social semiotics dwells upon the social meaning-making practices of all types, whether visual, verbal or aural in nature (Thibault, 1991). These different systems for meaning-making, or possible "channels" (e.g. speech, writing, images) are known as semiotic modes. Semiotic modes can include visual, verbal, written, gestural and musical resources for communication. They also include various "multimodal" ensembles of any of these modes (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001). Social semiotic study is equally important to marketing semiotics since it provides a basis of understanding how people design and interpret meanings, the study of texts, and the study of how semiotic systems are shaped by social interests and ideologies, and how they are adapted as society changes (Hodge and Kress, 1988). According to Saussure, semiotic practices termed as "parole", show how individual creativity, changing historical circumstances, and new social identities and projects change patterns of usage and design.
The main task of social semiotics is to develop analytical and theoretical frameworks which can explain meaning-making in a social context (Thibault, 1991). This research attempts to analyze the correlation of the elements of semiotics with Brand Building parameters. There are seven semiotic elements used for this study - Signs, symbols and logo, jingles and music, taglines, packaging, color, characters, language and connotations.

These elements are individually studied in this research and their impact on the brand building parameters - brand awareness, brand feelings, brand image, brand reliability, brand association, brand preference/bonding and brand trust are analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Advertising forms an important part of integrated marketing communications, and media such as print, radio, television and digital media form the vehicles to convey marketing messages to the desired audience. This study runs a semiotic audit through the communications messages that brands disseminate using media and understand the perception of the audience towards them thus impacting the process of brand building.

VII. Semiotic Elements and Media

Lawes and Rachel, 2002 state that semiotics is cutout for analyzing marketing communications and is uniquely equipped to investigate what is going on for consumers, and track changes in the society. They state that semiotics keeps one updated on the current communication codes used within the sector and target market. Semiotic studies study how human interaction happens with the surroundings consciously and subconsciously using elements such as music, language and visual imagery. A lot of unspoken messages are conveyed by the marketer and absorbed and analyzed by the consumers. These codes are being studied in this research to study the impact of such messages on the consumers mind and decisions. Codes are dynamic and keep changing hence communication may get outdated, and constant research has to be done to keep the communication fresh and relevant.

Advertising can make use of efficient semiotics that will enable the viewer to interpret meanings in a short span. Advertising being of prime importance to marketers,
brands have failed and succeeded based on the messages conveyed to the audience and interpreted by the audience. Brand positioning and culture of the consumers influence the media strategy.

The culture codes also influence the cuisines and costumes of countries and hence can be used in the study as a mode of semiotic communications. Research forms an integral part in describing the target market or social group and their attitudes, values, behaviour. This process of analysis helps in building art work and texts required for advertising based on the kind of audience that is being addressed.

**Semiotic elements**

**Signs, Symbols and Logo** forms an integral part of the marketing communication domain. Consumers weave meanings from the signs and symbols that marketers promote. These could be differentiating parameters for the brands and thus symbolism has achieved importance in the field of marketing

**Jingles and music:** Mark F Zander, 2006 has stated in his research on music that, music has an ability to create differentiating effects on subjects’ impressions of product and brands. His research studied the subjects who listened to three versions of a radio commercial in which the music varied in each version. The music that was selected had variety in terms of tempo, style and rhythm, but matched the product and message of the commercial and was a musical fit. Based on the musical style, music can lead to significantly different impressions about a product and a brand without affecting general evaluations of the product. Demographic parameters also influenced the impact of music on a customer. Also, a study done by Derrick Meng Soon et.al, 2008 states that familiar jingle influences brand preference. Other interesting findings show that familiar jingle also influences commercial recall and brand recall. This paper provides insight on the benefits of choosing a familiar jingle for a marketer’s next commercial

**Tagline:** Taglines have found to have significant impact on the recall of a brand. Marketers try to influence consumer decisions by using slogans that appeal to the consumer’s future goals, dreams and wishes. They try to associate brands with personal
dreams and ambitions, and pass on a silent message that conveys that the purchase of these brands can help in achieve purchasing and express his ideals and aspirations

**Packaging:** The packaging elements like color, packaging material, design of Wrapper, innovation and the information provided on the packaging material are more important factors for consumers to make a purchase decision. The packaging impacts the brand building parameters and this study focuses on analyzing these impacts.

**Color:** Colors would be considered under non-verbal communication. Colors are used as an element to study how they mean differently in different contexts and situations. It is not that the colors themselves have meaning, humans assign meanings to them. The meaning of colors could also change like the changing codes from individual, circumstances, society and traditions. White would be considered auspicious in the western culture and would be worn by the bride in the weddings, while in most Indian weddings; white would be considered as inauspicious as it symbolizes death in most Indian traditions and faiths. Colors express it is not that the colors themselves have meaning; it is that we have culturally assigned meanings to them. Red could mean love for someone, and danger, blood, anger for someone else. Hence, marketers need to study what they wish to communicate, and how it would be interpreted by the consumers.

**Characters:** Researcher Julien Cayla (2013), has stated in her paper on brand mascots as organizational totems that help concretize and reproduce an organization’s identity in a foreign context. Promotional characters may work for some companies but may affect the way customers look at the company and could have a negative impact on the company as a brand.

**Language:** Shi Zhang, Bernd H. Schmitt and Hillary Haley’s investigations on the unique relevance of language state that both structural features of language (properties of grammar), and lexical-semantic and phonological features of language (related to writing systems) are important. Their research on how these language features affect the consumer perceptions, and also the way they respond to, various marketing stimuli (e.g. advertisements and brand names and taglines) is noteworthy. The kind of script used or
the language (English, Hindi, Marathi, mix of two languages, etc) used will also determine the connection that the message is able to establish with the local audience.

**Connotations:** Connotations or contexts derived by consumers after coming across marketing communications are mostly internal processes. The consumer analyzes the information he sees or is provided to him, and carries out a mental assimilation of thoughts to come out with an output as a response. The social situations and the historical information that a consumer has in his memory impact this cognition, emotion.

It is observed that factors such as gender, age intellect, belief systems, and psychological dimensions play an important part in forming contexts to information.

**Brand Building Parameters**

**Brand Awareness:** Research published in the California management review by David Aaker, 1996 states that brand awareness is a very important component and can affect perceptions and attitudes. At times, it could also influence brand choice and even loyalty. Brand awareness reflects the salience of the brand in the customers mind. The levels of brand awareness include recognition, recall, top of the mind, brand dominance, brand knowledge, and brand Opinion.

**Brand Feelings:** Messages can be created that evoke feelings related to freedom for individual products or product lines as well as for entire brands. This helps the consumer associate positive feelings with the brand and its products. Some brands elicit feelings of luxury, freedom, instant gratification, etc, by positioning their products as the solution to a previously unknown limitation.

**Brand Image:** Brand image is based on the customers’ perception of the brand. Brand image could provide a link to the brands emotional and self-expressive benefits as well as a basis for customer/brand relationships and differentiation.

**Brand Reliability:** Consumers value the consistence of the product and the brand over a period of time and thus form opinions that influence future purchases. The reliability of a
brand is determined by the consistency in providing the products and the services on behalf of the brand.

**Brand Association:** Young and Rubicam has hypothesized in a research that building brands must start with differentiation—even before familiarity and knowledge—and that, conversely, the first sign that a strong brand is fading is usually a loss of differentiation. Only if a customer can differentiate one brand with another will he be able to associate with the brand in a stronger manner.

**Brand Preference/Bonding:** The psychological bond that a customer has with a brand depends on the brand’s resonance with the customer and his relationship with the brand. These emotions will drive repeat purchases for the brand and the product can be number one on the preference list of the customer.

**Brand Trust:** Marketers tap trust as an important emotion most often than not while promoting their brands. Banks, online shopping portals, where safety is valued the most. By tapping this emotion marketers provide comfort to the customer on quality and security hence creating positive perceptions in the consumer’s minds.

**VIII Scope and Significance of the research**

- If the communicators are able to decode the meaning that consumers associate with symbolic communication, and signs involved in visual, audio or verbal communications, they can make better use of this research while designing advertisements, package designs, jingles, connotations, etc which will contribute to the brand building exercise.

- This research aims at understanding the relationship between semiotics and brand building. The way in which a brand’s personality is conveyed to the audience and how it gets interpreted by them forms a major part of this study.

- This study will give us details on what would appeal to the customers, how communication can be designed around it so as to relate better with the audience, and
increase the appeal of a particular brand. Marketing Semiotics suggests the extent to which consumers recognize, internalize, and relate to brand meanings.

- Semiotics will help identify, evaluate and exploit the myths of language, symbols signs, taglines, characters and other such parameters that form the core of successful brands.

- Semiotic study will provide valuable insights about how a brand interacts with the consumers and will help brands in building effective strategies to penetrate markets. This study will be beneficial in providing guidance about merchandising, displays and packaging also.

- A Semiotic audit of the communication created for a brand will assist in making the brand advertising more impact worthy to carry out a powerful segmenting targeting and positioning of a brand within a region.

**IX. Problem Statement**

- Study of marketing semiotics has been conducted mostly on the basis of qualitative techniques. This makes it difficult for advertisers, researchers and marketers to put forth numbers, to justify semiotic claims and convince the audience on the benefits and importance of semiotic research. This research thus, aims at studying semiotics and its impact on brand building, quantitatively. (Source of problem: Bertrand 1988 has carried out an intensive semiotic research involving qualitative and subjective text analysis thus relating marketing and consumer behavior to semiotics.

- The downside of the majority of research conducted in this field is, it does not involve actual data from the consumers for the purpose of justifying the conclusions from the subjective text analysis hence there is a gap of authenticity of data relevance. This problem could be addressed by conducting an actual survey and giving quantitative evidences.

- The language consumers’ use and the ways in which meanings are attributed, adapted and assigned by consumers have not been substantially studied.
In practice semiotics is hardly used in the industry, inspite of the fact that most of the client’s, marketers, agencies and market research companies are aware of the concept and its importance. This could be attributed to the lack of enough quantitative data to supplement its importance. (Source of problem: Lawes, Rachel (2002). "Demystifying Semiotics: Some key questions answered", International Journal of Market Research 44.3 (Third Quarter 2002): 251-264)