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Social Semiotic Analysis of Women Portrayed in Pakistani Television Advertisements

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Abstract

Consumers are exposed to a wide range of advertisements on a daily basis. These advertisements can be found in a variety of media technologies, including radio, television, print (such as magazines and newspapers), billboards, and cinema. This research examined the Portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements in Pakistan. Advertising now reaches far more people than it used to with traditional media since it has major presence in new digital media which has also transformed immensely in recent time. Semiotic analysis was used as a study tool to investigate how advertising gender builds different meanings and beliefs in a culture. Adverts from various Pakistani TV stations and newspapers were chosen as samples for this study. These commercials were chosen because they showed women in a particular way. These advertisements deliver and utilize a wide range of meaning, symbols and messages also called semiotics in their advertisements. Importantly, lot of signs and symbols surrounds large part of any individual, however, the way they comprehend these signs, symbols and meaning differ from one to other individual. Barthian semiotic analysis on the denotative and connotative levels of significance was used for the analysis. The study's findings showed that ads in Pakistan place a strong emphasis on women's bodies and outward looks.

Keywords: Advertisement, Connotative, Denotative, Semiotics

Introduction

Advertisements have the power to impact customers as well as their social and cultural surroundings. There are numerous approaches to the study of language, signs, and symbols used in advertising. Many sociological, cultural studies, and sociolinguistic approaches highlight the manner in which symbols are used in advertisements. These various signs, images, and symbols utilized in advertisements are an important component of their communication process. These visuals are societal reflections that shape customers' cognitive processes in order to grasp the message of the commercial. Semiotics provides a framework for understanding how advertisements mirror and modify consumer experiences in everyday life. However, different fields have different data and ask different questions of

consumers. Semiotics has recently been recognized as a significant component of advertising (Sharma & Gupta, 2015).

Similarly, advertising patterns are shifting, significantly changing and rearranging society. The fundamental point of contention is whether commercial advertisements explain what is relevant to social ideals or what societal behaviour desires to embrace. There is a protracted debate on cultural shift, particularly in the setting and positioning of women's roles, as communicated in the specific commercial (Chatley, 2018). Advertising must be viewed from a cultural standpoint. According to Arens (1986), visual pictures are extremely important in advertising because "the majority of readers of ads (1) glance at the artwork, (2) read the headline, and (3) read the body content in that sequence." As a result, in advertising, visual representations bear a considerable degree of responsibility for conveying the message (Arens, 1986).

Gender is viewed as a social order axis, with the story of masculinity and femininity being merely a social construct. Print/electronic/social media, academics, and sports are all ways in which these notions are materialized. Similarly, Sutherland, Gilbert, and Taylor (1992) assert that advertising has steadily become a highly prominent institution in which the male and feminine voices are represented at a symbolic level in commercials. The current study examines the aforementioned gender ideas that are pushed through television advertising that we see in everyday life. Television advertising not only promotes socially created gender beliefs, but also forces us to accept whatever message is offered in the form of running visuals.

- i. To analyze how different semiotic modes are used to portray various women's roles in Pakistani television advertisements.

Literature Review

The division of the Subcontinent into Pakistan and India in 1947 marked the beginning of the evolution of advertising in Pakistan. From 1947 to now, it has gone through a number of stages. Due to a lack of resources and awareness during the first era (1947–1964), advertising was confined to a few regional and urban locations where print media advertisements were a common medium. Newspapers were regarded as the sole media for use in business communications. According to International Media Support report (2009), the history of media in Pakistan dates to the time before partition, when it was developed to help Muslims advocate for a separate ideological state, according to 2009 research by International Media Support. Quaid-e-Azam established "Dawn" in 1941 to refute the non-Muslims' claim that Islam was a victimized religion. In 1940, Nawa-e-Waqt, which utilized a similar position, was introduced.

According to McNair (2003), advertising is a for-profit medium used by businesses to spread their thoughts and market their goods. Since these commercials efficiently carry messages through the voices of people, human representation is a crucial component. Because of socially constructed notions, how human subjects are treated in the media varies. A secondary discourse about what and who is involved in the development of the advertisements was produced as a result of studies on the content of television commercials.

One of the trustworthy social institutions that emphasizes the relative worth of men and women within a socio-cultural paradigm is regarded to be the media. Lemish (2005) did her research on Israeli media and exposed the stereotyping of women in constrained occupations. She also contrasted her results with those of earlier studies that had been done on the same subject. She concluded that women are typically shown as being closely tied to domesticity. They are portrayed as objects of sexual and reproductive desire. She believes

that women are the oppressed species that are used as an object to appease their male counterparts. According to Rasul (2000), women models are displayed like a thing or object to promote products. These commercials are a standard element of modern television programming. These unfair gender stereotypes are prevalent practically everywhere that people engage in human activity and are not only limited to television or print media. The portrayal of men and women in electronic media commercials is highlighted in the section that follows. It would also focus on the methodological approaches incorporated by scholars to conduct their studies and to investigate gender relations in electronic media discourse.

Since the 1970s, experts from all around the world have been debating gender study in relation to how men and women are portrayed in television material. According to Courtney & Whipple (1983), the rise of feminist discourse may have increased public awareness of the problem of gender roles and stereotyping in TV advertisements. In terms of gender representation in television advertising, a lot of content analysis has been generated. According to Bretl & Cantor (1988), about eleven research have been done on how men and women are portrayed in US television advertising.

According to Craig (1992), advertisers deliberately include gender-biased frameworks in their advertising to either support the already conventional attitude or undermine it. According to Craig (1992), patriarchal social systems prevent advertisers and advertising firms from portraying men and women equally. The ads present men and women in diverse roles. Advertisers portray men and women in various positions. As a result, the stereotypical images of men and women in television advertising disclose their identities.

Hassan (2015) explained in a study titled "The-Influence-of-National-Culture-on-International-Marketing-Consumer" that Internet websites failed to erase cultural disparities and did not generate any culture-free products. Many cross-cultural, marketing, and advertising studies have demonstrated that culture has an impact on the news site medium. Using Hofstede's (1984) model ("Individualism and avoidance") and Hall's (1992) method ("Low and High Context"), the focus on low and high draws a dominant cultural effect on internet use. Both approaches have been regarded as significant contributions from cross-cultural and advertising. Furthermore, Hassan stated that Hofstede's pragmatic quantitative approach favours national culture because it is the most stationary, comprehensive, and fundamental method. Hall's system, on the other hand, is less operational but more adaptable. These two paradigms are extremely important in the global context of national and global cultural changes. These two models primarily serve as the foundation for further exploration into cultural credentials (Hassan, 2015).

According to Nazafian and Dabaghi (2011), everything that leads the reader to assume a meaning is a sign in the advertisement. The advertiser is better able to market his goods and make it popular among his audience by using signs and colours. Advertising contains a certain amount of predictability. Image, phrase, and colour are only a handful of the various semiotic modalities utilised to code the social meanings of advertisements. Semiotic analysis is perhaps possibly the most fundamental building block in the construction of ideologies.

According to Mick (1986, p.196), "the consumer world is a web of meanings among consumers and marketers woven from signs and symbols ensconced in their cultural space and time." He claims that while the significance of signs and symbols has been widely acknowledged, very few consumer researchers have developed theories and study programmes based on semiotics, the theology of signs. He also says that "one of semiotics' strengths is that it positions meaning at the nucleus of consumer behaviour, which provides a rich meta-

language for semiotic consumer research and recommends a multi-paradigm philosophy of science." (Mick, 1986:196).

Williamson (1978), as indicated by (O'Barr, 2008), presents an ideological framework for evaluating commercials. Using semiotic theory, she claims, that advertisements communicate in ways other than the obvious messages they provide. Messages, according to Williamson, enable consumers to adopt the prevalent ideologies of corporate power, consumption values, and their status as customers and consumers of products.

Advertisements can also have an impact on gender stereotypes in a society. Television advertising is proven to be even more important in countries such as India, where television was introduced just in the early 1970s (De Souza, 2006). Even so, relatively little research has been conducted on gender role representation in Indian television advertisements (Das, 2017). According to a study conducted by Jha Dang and Vohra (2005), women were more likely than men to be featured in advertisements for domestic products or beauty products, whereas they were less likely to be depicted as working women. Similarly, Das (2000) discovered that men appear more frequently in advertisements for automobiles, financial services, and electronic devices than women.

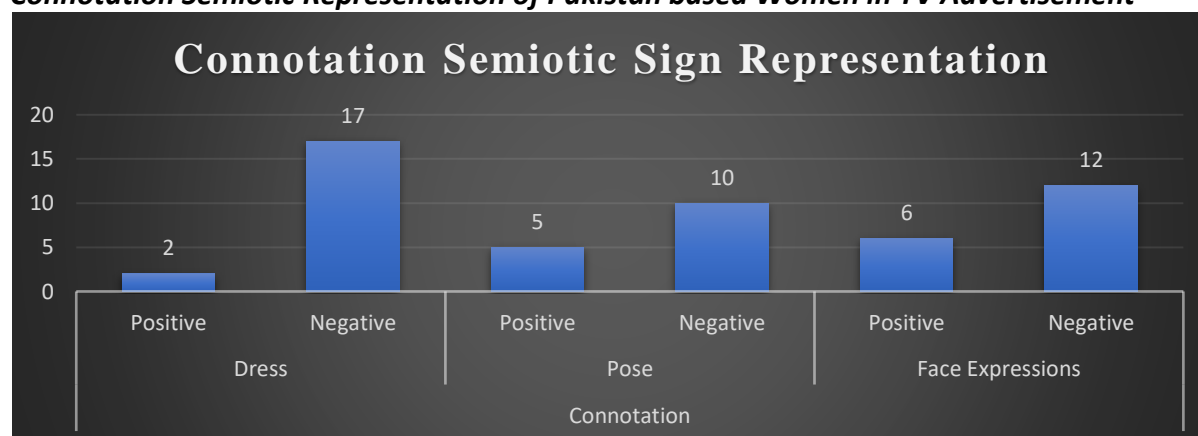
Research Methodology

In our study, we attempted to comprehend the semiotic factors employed in commercials, as well as the variety in customer choices, appeals, and values. The research will be carried out using a qualitative method. The study's population will be Pakistani TV advertising; nevertheless, the study's sample will be TV advertisements from chosen Pakistani entertainment channels. For one month, from February 2022 to March 2022, the data would be shown on seven selected entertainment TV channels in Pakistan (Geo Digital, ARY Digital, Aaj entertainment, BOL entertainment, Express entertainment, HUM TV, TV One). The researcher will examine 21 adverts from various entertainment TV networks. Furthermore, the study's qualitative analysis will be conducted using social semiotics Hodge and Kress (1988) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clark 2006) for cultural theory, Hofstede model (1984), and stereotypical representation of women in Pakistani TV advertisements.

Findings

The overall results are presented below along the findings and graphs in reported categories with a wide range of directions that were given for better understanding.

Connotation Semiotic Representation of Pakistan based Women in TV Advertisement



Interpretation

According to Barthian approach, there are two levels of images (1) Denotation, that is, 'who is shown or depicted?' and (2) Connotation, that is, 'what ideas are shown through the presentation?' (Jewitt, 2001). The graph (1) depicts the outcome of semiotic representation of women in Pakistan-based television advertising. In which the semiotic Presentation frame is further subdivided into Connotation Semiotic Signs and Denotation Semiotic Signs. The current graph also displays the results of the Connotation frame, which is further classified as Dress, Pose, and Face Expression. The range of the graph is (0-18), with the X axis displaying the range and the Y axis displaying the categories of frame connotation in which Dress positive treatment result is 2 out of 18 and Dress negative treatment result is 17 out of 18, indicating that women in Pakistan based TV advertisement dressing were also negative. However, the category Pose outcome is also shown beside the therapy of both good and negative. Furthermore, the results of this category suggest that positive pose presentation in TV advertisements is 5 out of 18 times and negative pose presentation is 10 out of 18 times. It demonstrates that the women's Pose Semiotic sign is significantly higher than the positive Pose Semiotic sign. However, in the third category of Face Expression, positive expression accounts for 6 of the 18 and negative expression accounts for 12 of the 18. This reassures that women's facial expression treatment is negatively higher in Pakistan based on TV advertising than positive facial expressions. Dyer (1982) claims that facial/body expressions culminate meanings which are based on socially learned behaviours.



Connotation Semiotic Sign Representation/Dress Positive and Dress Negative

The frame on the upper left side explains the Positive and Negative Dress connotation semiotic indicators, as well as the ultimate Tea pack commercials in the presentation of women in Pakistan-based TV advertisements. Furthermore, the favourable portrayal of women in the Pakistan-based TV advertisement is prominent, whereas the right frame explains the negative dress in the Super Biscuit ad. Positive adi's theme is scripted as homemade, aimed for housewives.

Cultural and ideological clothing.



Connotation Semiotic Sign Representation/ Pose positive and Negative

However, the Top right side base left image displays the positive Pose Connotation sign in representation of women in Pakistan based TV advertisements along with the face cream ad, whereas the Top right side base left image displays the negative Pose Connotation sign in Pakistan based TV advertisements.

Ideologically indecent pose and scripted as unusual while vulgar dressing style.



Connotation Semiotic Sign Representation/Facial Expression Positive Negative

Furthermore, the image below at the extreme left side presents the Positive Facial expression along with the advertisement of Nido Milk in which the connotation sign of facial expression in Pakistan based TV advertisements is presented in a positive sense, whereas the image below at the extreme left side presents the Negative Facial expression in advertisement of Surf Excel campaign in Pakistan based TV advertisements.

Ideology, theme and expression are accordingly categories.



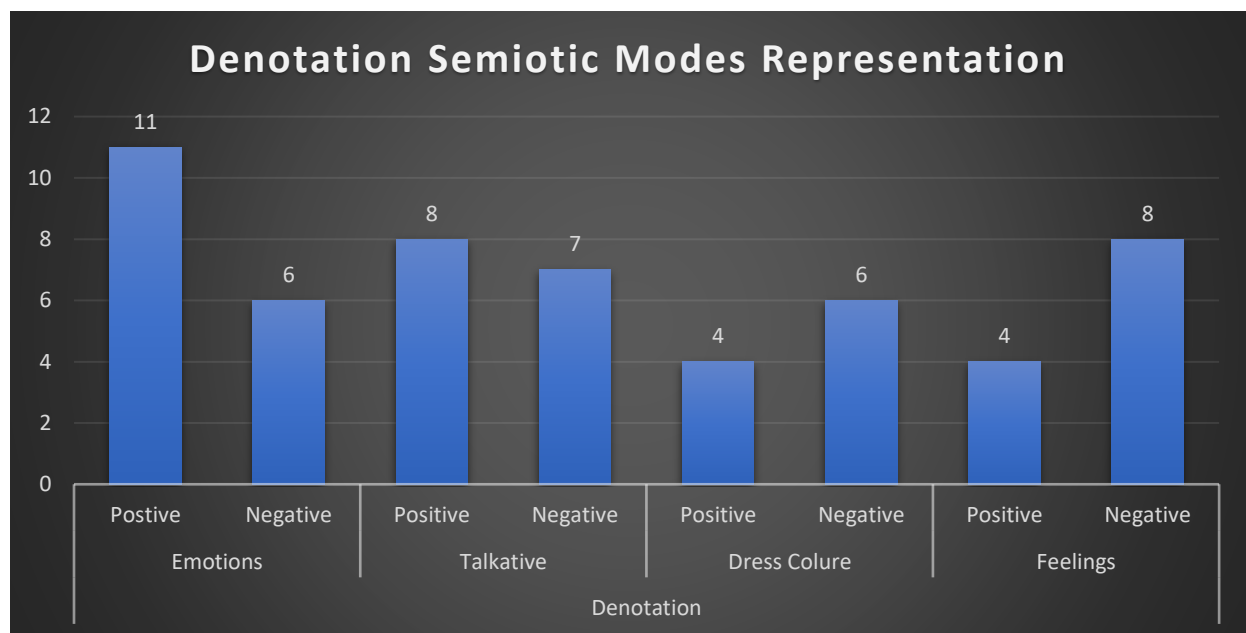
Connotation Semiotic Sign Representation/Facial Expression Positive Negative

However, on the lower right side, the left side image depicts the positive Facial Expression in the Dalda Pakwaan advertisement, whereas the right side image depicts the negative Facial Expression in the Beauty Cream advertisement.

Ideology, theme and expression are accordingly categories.

The positive and negative connotation indicators of semiotic modes offered in Pakistan-based TV advertising are shown above, along with the directions of positive and negative images. The overall result indicates that the connotation category Dress is framed adversely, which is quite high, and it demonstrates that women dressing was portrayed negatively for appealing attention in Pakistan-based TV ads; nevertheless, the result of the second category Pose also indicates that women dressing were presented negatively for appealing attention in Pakistan-based TV advertisements. Pose negatively appealed attention, whilst the third category Face Expression demonstrates that women's facial expression revealed unfavorable attention for TV advertisements. Such positive representation of women is rarely found in advertisements as it challenges the hegemony of patriarchal ideology. Deckard (1985) goes on to say that women can effectively work in a pluralistic environment and can bring productive social change. These commercials portrayed women as showpieces and more focus was placed on the looks of the respective model rather than the products (Khalid et al, 2020). The graph reveals that negative connotation cues such as facial expression, pose, and dress type were used when women were featured in Pakistan-based TV advertising.

Denotation Semiotic Modes Representation in Pakistan based TV Advertisements



Graph (2)

The graph (2) depicts the results of Denotation Semiotic modes portrayal of Pakistani women in television advertisements. The primary denotation indications employed in advertising are further classified as Emotions, Talkative, Dress colour, and Feelings along the positive and negative directions illustrated in the graph above. The X axis of the graph represents the range (0-12), while the Y axis represents the denotation's frame categories, which are Emotions, Talkative, Dress Colour, and Feelings.

The first reported category with a wide range of results is Emotions, which indicates the outcome of Emotions signs of Semiotic modes being 11 out of 12 and negative Emotions signs being 6 out of 12. The category-based overall result reveals that Pakistan-based TV advertising consistently exploited women emotional cues to pique the attention of viewers in Pakistan-based TV advertisements. However, while the majority of emotional signs are positive, women's emotions were depicted in a negative light in this category of semiotic signs, indicating that women's emotions were heavily employed to capture the attention of viewers in Pakistan-based TV advertising.

The second category of Denotation semiotic modes is Talkative, and this one category demonstrates the outcome of both positive and negative treatments for the depiction of women in Pakistan-based TV advertising. Positive Talkative Semiotic Denotation mode yields an 8 out of 12 while negative Talkative Semiotic sign yields a 7 out of 12. The results suggest that women were shown in TV advertising with both good and negative chatty behaviours in order to capture the attention of viewers. The current talkative results are not significantly different, indicating that the advertising used both positive and negative treatment of women's behaviours to attract the attention of the audiences.

The third Denotation semiotic mode category is Dress Colour, which indicates that Positive Dress Colour results are 4 out of 12 and Negative Dress Colour results are 6 out of 12. It shows how women in Pakistani TV advertising used negative and then positive dress colours to attract the attention of the viewers. However, most of the outfit colours used to attract consumers in Pakistan-based TV advertising are negative.

Feeling is the fourth category in Denotation semiotic signals frame, and it has been given both positive and negative treatment, as shown in the graph above. According to the graph results, happy feelings score 4 out of 12 and negative feelings score 8 out of 12. The negative Feelings presentation result is higher than the happy Feelings outcome. It suggests that women's negative Feeling type semiotic denotation signs were used to project the product and keep the audience's attention. The graph reveals that the positive Emotions result is high, and the positive talkative result is likewise high. The results suggest that negative Emotions are also high, as are Dress negative and Talkative negative.



Denotation Semiotic Modes Representation/Emotions Positive Negative

In the top left, the left side image presented the emotions in a positive sense in the advertisements for Safeguard Soap, in which a child and his mother are in an emotional scene; however, in Left side right side image is presenting the emotions are presented in a negative sense in the Biscuits advertisements, likely indecent reaction and lispng style.

Theme, ideology, dressing and characters presentation is accordingly set category.



Denotation Semiotic Modes Representation/Talkative Behaviour Positive Negative

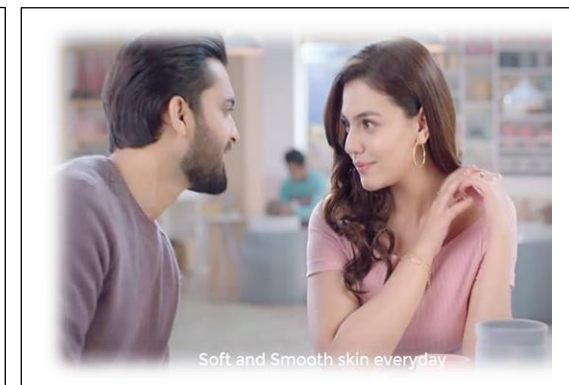
Furthermore, the right side, left based image depicts positive chatty behaviour in the Dalda Pakwan advertisement, but the left side, right based image depicts bad talkative behaviour in the Surf Excel advertisement.

Theme, ideology, dressing and characters presentation is accordingly set category.



Denotation Semiotic Modes Representation/Dress Positive Negative

Moreover, the left side below, the left based image presents the women positive Dress Colure In the advertisement of Dalda Pakwan and left side below, right based image presents the negative red and other stipulated colure in the frame of beauty cream advertisement in the presentation of women in Pakistan based TV advertisements.



Denotation Semiotic Modes Representation/Dress Positive Negative

Moreover, the right side below, the left based image presents the women positive Dress Colure in Nido Milk advertisement along the children's and left side below, right based image presents the negative red and other stipulated colure in the frame In the advertisement of the Glow Cream ads. Moreover, Theme, ideology, dressing and characters presentation is accordingly set category.

These images discourse says that women in Pakistani TV advertisements are shown in denotation signs such as emotional denotative signs, dress colour semiotic signs, talkative behaviour signs, and behaviour semiotic indicators. According to Barthes (1977), "It innocents the semantic artifice of connotation, which is extremely dense in advertising". The overall result shows that semiotic denotation signs were used in Pakistan-based TV advertisements and Emotions, both positive and negative, were installed in Pakistan-based TV advertisements to appease attention; however, the Dress colour was negatively prioritised, as were the talkative negative signs. The findings demonstrate that both positive and negative Denotation Semiotic indicators were used to entice people in Pakistan-based TV advertising.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The objectification of women in mass media [especially in television advertisements] has long sorted history (Berberick, 2010). In our study we examined the semiotic analysis of women portrayed in Pakistan advertisement. We found in our study that the presented Semiotic modes in Pakistan based TV advertisements are further categorized as Denotative Semiotic Modes and Connotative Semiotic modes. The data shows that the Pakistan based TV advertisements presented the women both in Denotative and Connotative Semiotic Modes while Denotative Semiotic Modes are used more as compared to Connotative Semiotic modes in Presentation of women in Pakistan based TV advertisements. However, both negative Denotative Semiotic Modes and Negative Connotative Semiotic modes presentation is high as compared to Positive Connotative and Denotative Semiotic modes presentation in Pakistan based TV advertisements.

Advertising, being a persuasive source makes such portrayal appear natural, thereby, promoting the patriarchal ideological narrative. The semiotic analysis of the advertisements proves that women are presented in an objectified way in print and electronic media advertisements in Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2020). The media representation of gender not only develops the ideology of audience as a persuasive medium, but it also compels us to perceive the way it presents gender roles, position and level of authority. The images of masculine and feminine voices displayed in the commercials strengthen our ideological beliefs about what we think as masculine or feminine. Overall our study shows the impact advertisements have through their themes, color, to be more specific, impact that semiotics have on consumers. Our findings also suggest that by understanding the language and impact of semiotics on consumers in Pakistan, ads can be made more effective and can have higher influence on consumers.

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