

Semiotic Analysis of Pakistani Clothing Brands Advertisements using Barthes' Theory

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ABSTRACT

The language of signs is used to convey the meaning through indirect method which is often symbolic. Semiotics is the study of signs, and it helps to interpret the symbolic connotations of the signs. The signs used in the advertisements not only attract the customers but also present the norms and customs of society. This study aims to conduct the semiotic analysis of the clothing brands advertisements to unveil the use of signs in order to convey deeper meanings. Barthesian theory of semiotics is used as the research framework as it covers all the desired aspects needed for such kind of analysis. For this research, the advertisements of Pakistani clothing brands are selected, and all the three messages mentioned by Barthes i.e. linguistic, non-coded iconic and coded iconic are analyzed denotatively and connotatively. The researchers used both the male and female clothing brands advertisements for conducting the analysis. The study found the cultural representation of Pakistani society in these advertisements. Moreover, the advertisers use the dominant signs which have a direct impact on the public. They try to manipulate the consumers by linking their products with the social norms and cultural practices of the Pakistani society.

Key Words: Barthes' theory, linguistic message, non-coded iconic, coded iconic or symbolic, denotative/connotative analysis, clothing advertisements
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INTRODUCTION

Advertising is seen as a crucial component of the media in order to inform, educate, and reach the intended audiences (Iftikhar & Islam, 2017). Williamson (1978) believes that an advertisement does not initially establish meaning rather it asks us to engage in a process in which meaning is transferred from one item to another. Advertising informs the customers about what is available in the market, who is manufacturing it and from where to buy it (Durant and Lambrou, 2009). Cook (2001) asserts that advertisements are present all over the world and have shaped a culture that completely ignores the boundaries. In the modern world, the advertising sector promotes itself as a key marketing medium that draws in a considerable audience (Iftikhar, Aziz, & Latif, 2011). The word “advertisement” belongs to French origin which means “body of knowledge” and is used as a method of conveying information and influence people’s thoughts (Kalsoom & Ali, 2019). Advertising influences customer’s purchasing patterns and convinces millions of viewers to purchase specific goods. Adams et al. (2014) states that the purpose of advertising is to create associations in the minds of the audience so the public can relate to it and purchase it resultantly. Advertisers use variety of techniques, such as promoting their products through famous personalities in order to influence the purchasing decisions (Shaikh, Bughio, & Kadri, 2015). According to Bignell (2002), advertisers want to sell their items as rapidly as possible, so they use such colors and signs which get the attention of the public. They spend a lot of money on advertising in order to affect the ideological and socio-cultural practices. In Pakistan, these advertisements affect the customer choices by manipulating the social and cultural ideas.

The studies conducted in the past (Ali & Ullah, 2015; Moin & Fatima, 2021; Sathvika & Rajasekaran, 2021; Saykur, Rusdiawan & Sukri, 2018) reveal that the images presented in the advertisements influence the aesthetic side of the society and fulfill the desired intentions of the advertisers. Furthermore, the researchers are of the view that the signs used in these advertisements compel the consumers to use the product. The signs used in the advertisements represent the social and cultural customs of society and in turn influence the thinking patterns of that particular society (Syahdini, 2019; Patel & Bhutiani, 2018). It is established that the advertisers use means like signs, colors and symbols which affect the purchasing decision of the customers (Afrin & Muniruzzaman, 2020; Hussain, Pathan & Shah, 2021; Sathvika & Rajasekaran, 2022).

From the previous researches, it has been observed that there is a limited study in the field of semiotics regarding the advertisements of clothing brands in Pakistani context. This study aims to fill the gap by analyzing that to what extent the clothing brands advertisements represent the cultural dressing of Pakistan. It will also assess whether or not the advertisers promote the national dress of Pakistan.

The aims and objectives of this research are to analyze:

- i. The cultural representation of Pakistani dresses in the clothing brands advertisements.
- ii. The dominant signs used by the advertisers.
- iii. The denotative and connotative meanings of signs used in these advertisements.
- iv. The reasons behind using these signs in the Pakistani context.

Advertisements surround us in form of print media, electronic media, sms, mms, audio, hoardings, web-based ads etc. Everyday a person watches three thousand ads (Kilbourne, 1999). Moreover, advertisements mould our culture, society, life style, priorities, fashion, psychological makeup and language style etc. Keeping in view the above stated facts, this study will help in understanding the role of advertisements in molding and reshaping the cultural beliefs and practices of the society. It will also help the future researchers in analyzing the culture-based products advertisements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of linguistic and nonlinguistic signs is defined as semiotics and the signs are described as the constituents in any communication that are used for the interpretation of meanings (Schramm & Porter, 1982). The word “semiotic” is derived from the Greek words “semesion”, “semainon” and “semainomenon” meaning indicated or denoted. Semiotics, in general, is the philosophy of knowledge concerning the existence of signs in daily life (Yakin & Totu, 2014). Most of the critics and researchers such as Roland Barthes, Roman Jakobson, Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, Charles Morris and Umberto Eco (Eco, 1979; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993; Chandler, 2002) agree on the simple definitions of semiotic. Semiotic accounts for anything that can be observed or understood as a sign in order to provide greater clarity and comprehension. In his work “A Theory of Semiotics” Umberto Eco (1979) suggests that semiotics is concerned

with the study of signs and symbols, everything that could be interpreted as a sign. A sign is something that can be used to significantly replace another thing. He further asserts that the “something else” in question does not necessarily exist in the same exact form and the position is represented or replaced at the same time. Umberto Eco refers to it as the “theory of deception” because it can be applied to deceive or mislead others (Eco, 1979).

According to Oehler (1987), the word “semiotics” was employed for the philosophy of signs and most of the terms related to this field that are used even today, originated from the Greek. Considering its historical origins particularly related to the evolution of the classical semiotic, Greek thinkers such as Plato (Manetti, 2010), Hermogenes (Keller, 2000), Socrates (Danesi, 2010a; Keller, 2000) and Aristotle (Seung, 1989; Modrak, 2001; Manetti, 2010) started it about two thousand years ago. The purpose and application of signs in later middle ages have been thoroughly discussed by the Stoics (Baltzly, 2019) and other academics. The systematic use of signs and the ideas behind them started to attract public attention later in the 20th century (Yakin & Totu, 2014). Since then, scholars and academics have continued to turn to the study of semiotics as a focus for their works and research. A Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and an American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) contributed towards the development of modern semiotic theory mainly.

In a series of lectures which Ferdinand de Saussure delivered between 1907 and 1911, he introduced the term “semiology” by which he meant the “science of signs” (Dweich & Al Ghabra, 2020). Later on, these lectures became a significant source for the creation of the theory of structuralism (Yakin & Totu, 2014). The following quotes from Saussure (as reported by Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993) are thought to have inspired the development of the field of semiotics:

“A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it semiology (from Greek semeion ‘sign’). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them. Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology; the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and the latter will circumscribe a well-defined area within the mass of anthropological facts” (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 4).

Saussure defined “semiology” as the factors encompassing the construction of signs and claimed the fields of psychology and linguistics as part of this. According to him, the linguistic signs relate not a name and a thing, but a sound-image and a notion. The term “symbol was insufficient for him to describe the link between the “signified” and the “signifier” as symbols are not totally empty rather they have their own interpretations (Yakin & Totu, 2014). According to Henault (2010), Saussure’s theory that “man is a born semiotician” holds truth because man: - cannot survive without communicating and using signs; is able to produce several types of indications that could be expressive, but speaking is more effective and the most eloquent; aims to establish a science of languages “semiotics” in order to use it effectively. The central idea of Saussure’s theory emerged from his belief in a dualistic basis. In his view, a significant sign is something that denotes another meaning and the sign consists of signifier and signified meaning the physical object and abstract ideas respectively (Okuyama, 2016; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993).

Contrary to Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce presented the term “semiotic” which he said is synonymous with the notion of logic (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993) that focuses on the understanding of human thought process, as illustrated in his writings. Peirce divided the theory into three elements of a) sign b) object c) interpretant (Peirce, 1940) and the interaction of these three formulates the theory of semiotic (Chandler, 2002; Short, 2007). Peirce himself defined these terms in the following words;

“I define a sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the later is thereby mediately determined by the former” (Peirce, 1902).

The signifier is the sign which is a spoken or written word e.g. the word smoke can be used as a sign for the fire. Whatever is signified is the object, it is the thing to which the spoken or written phrase refers like the fire that the smoke indicates to. The interpretant is the general perception of the relationship between the sign and the object and Peirce believes that interpretant is the most important. A sign only has meaning when it is understood and its significance is manifested in the interpretation it produces (Afisi, 2020; Sathvika & Rajasekaran, 2022; Mahmood, Arif, Tariq & Yazdani, 2022).

Roland Barthes, a French theorist whose theories got the wider recognition during the period of 1970s was most importantly influenced by the views of Saussure regarding the theory of signs. His very first book looked at the arbitrary nature of linguistic constructions (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022). The major credit of Barthes was being the first to use the theory of semiotics in the fields of media and culture in his “mythology” published in 1957 (Danesi, 2010b). Barthes (1972) believed that in order to fully describe mythology, forms, ideologies and history must be taken as a whole. Signifiers like images, objects and behavioral patterns can never indicate without the use of language; as a result, visual elements are desired to be replicated by language to confirm the meanings of the messages. However, in this instance, a portion of the semiological “iconic” message would be unnecessary due to the visual example; written language would be more appealing; none could interpret the signs without reference to a language (Barthes, 1964).

Roland Barthes (1977) viewed image as the direct method to convey the meaning and he divided meanings into three sections. The first one is regarding the linguistic statement referencing the text as being subject to denotative and connotative analysis. According to Barthes, this message is important as it works in two ways to draw the attention of the audience; anchoring and relay. Anchoring occurs most often in language signs containing the responsibility for focusing attention to a particular connotation among many of them. This connotation is mostly reliant on morality and society’s ideas and relay is just a fragment of dialogue getting its meaning intended from the pictures (Barthes, 1977 & Hugh, 2009). The second message is non-coded iconic which directs to the denotative examination of what Barthes referred to as the first degree of comprehensibility; explanation of the images is made without any code. The third category is the cultural message that is coded-iconic or symbolic and relates to the study of the image’s connotations (Barthes, 1977).

The advertisements present diverse messages including aesthetic ones and advertising is the essential by product of cultural values and these cultural standards in turn impact advertising (Ali & Ullah, 2015). The images presented in the advertisements must not be looked as an object containing some pictures and texts; they work as a separate means of communication delivering information and expressing hidden meanings and ideas (Isfandiyary, 2017). Another research highlights how the cooperative construction of signifier and signified work smoothly to convey the desired message (Saykur, Rusdiawan & Sukri, 2018). The role of social and cultural aspects

of a society in the development of advertisements cannot be ignored (Patel & Bhutiani, 2018). The culture of a society affects the major concepts behind the very idea of a product and resultantly the thought of the advertisers is affected. Likewise, the idea of beauty behind the L'oreal Paris brand is under the influence of the beauty standards of French society (Syahdini, 2019).

The advertisers are inclined to take help from the latest technologies to influence the viewers' thoughts and change their perception about the products of their respective brands (Mustafiz, 2019). Afrin & Muniruzzaman (2020) reveal that in *Rhetoric of the Image*, Roland Barthes points out that images are rhetoric which means that behind the surface view of the image there are different social and cultural representations and advertising companies use this rhetoric to promote their products. They manipulate people's ideological and emotional beliefs to engage and influence them for purchasing the product. Barthes' theory is the most significant approach in understanding the actual meanings of the advertisements and it is obvious that the advertisers use such signs which have social, cultural and emotional connotations to affect the audiences (Moin & Fatima, 2021).

The purpose behind the excessive use of colors is to manipulate the decisions of the consumers and attract them towards the product. Another significant element is the use of linguistic techniques including code switching and the use of Roman Urdu to convince the customers (Hussain, Pathan & Shah, 2021). The female models are treated as objects of beauty to attract the customers (Sathvika & Rajasekaran, 2021) and other signs used by the advertisers affect the purchasing decisions of the targeted consumers. In the process of decoding signs, semiotics provides such tools which are helpful in explaining the denotative and connotative meanings. The products are promoted through coded and non-coded signs and texts by the advertisers (Sathvika & Rajasekaran, 2022). All the previous researches referred earlier make it clear that the production of advertisements is affected by the sociocultural norms and practices of a society and the living standards of that society are reflected through advertisements. The advertisers use such signs which not only attract the targeted population but also affect the decision of the public regarding purchasing that particular product.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Semiotic Theory of Barthes containing linguistic, coded and non-coded iconic messages have been used to uncover the denotative, connotative, and symbolic elements of ten advertisements from different Pakistani apparel manufacturers. This research follows the theoretical model of Roland Barthes presented in *The Rhetoric of the Image* (1964) through which he analyzed the Panzini advertisement. This model describes three messages in an advertisement namely the linguistic message, the non-coded iconic message and the coded iconic or symbolic message.

The Linguistic Message: It is the analysis of the denotative and connotative meanings of the brand name, logo, slogan, caption, and any other language elements in the advertisement. The literal meaning of the labels, for example, is the designated message, whereas the connotative message is the societal and individual associations drawn from the text.

The Iconic Message That Isn't Coded: Rather than being a socially and historically produced image, the landscape looks to be one that is "natural." Images are explained as they are perceived without the use of codes in the denotative analysis of what Barthes referred to as the "first degree of intelligibility."

The Symbolic or Iconic Coded Message (meanings according to the receivers): It involves the analysis of the image's connotations in light of the viewer's social norms, ideologies, and cultural background.

The selection of the sample for this study is made on equal distribution as the first five images belong to the female clothing brands while the next five belong to the brands specific for men. A qualitative research approach is used to analyze the semiotic perceptions of advertisements. Additionally, the study has used exploratory and interpretative ways for conducting the analysis. The researchers have used the technique of purposive sampling as the selected advertisements fulfill the need of the research.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS



The Linguistic Message:

There is a long linguistic message in this web-based advertisement of a clothing brand named 'Johra'. The foreground statement says that “A fashion call to all the style icons and the glamorous women” and the background states that “a perfect party wear in the season for the women who would like to play their femininity playfully”. The statement used in the foreground of the image is an interesting and capturing slogan. The words like “style icons” and “glamorous” show that the

product must help to improve the fashion sense of the users. The repeated use of the word women reflects that the product is designed purely for the female section of society. The word femininity enhances the impact of the product on the users. Connotatively, this slogan is a special call to glamorous and stylish women only. It means that the women who want to prove themselves modern and stylish must wear the dresses of this brand. The advertiser wants to influence the customers that if they need to be glamorous, they should buy the product. The background statement makes it clear that wearing the dresses of this brand will enhance the femininity of the female users. The phrase “to play their femininity playfully” inspires women that they must not take it as a weakness. It is their strength and they should enjoy it. When we talk about the brand name that is ‘Johra’, the name has its origin in Arabic language that is ‘jewel’ which means intelligent and princess. The word is used to enhance the certain qualities commonly associated with women. And this brand ‘Johra’ specifically argues that females with beauty and intelligence can wear the dresses of this brand. It will definitely enhance their beauty and make them feel special and different from others as the name of the brand is different and filled with uniqueness.

The Non-Coded Iconic Message:

The non-coded iconic message deals with the surface view of the image and describes it without any social and cultural interpretation. The background of the image is quite natural and seems that this is the scene of someone’s home lawn. The presence of a building and the lawn chairs clears the idea that this is a domestic setting; greenery presented in the background is creating a beautiful scene. There is a beautiful female model standing in a stylish way and carrying a beautiful dress containing bright colors. The combination of accessories with the dress makes the look perfect and the side profile of the model is enhancing her beauty in this particular dress.

The Coded Iconic or Symbolic Message:

The coded iconic or symbolic message depicts the image with social and cultural connotations. The background image is showing us a domestic setting, a home garden. It means that the dresses of this brand are not only perfect for party wear but also easily manageable in performing one’s home tasks. The dress consists of shalwar, kameez, and dupatta a representation of Pakistani

national dress for women. In this way, the brand promotes the national dressing of Pakistani society and encourages its users to wear it.

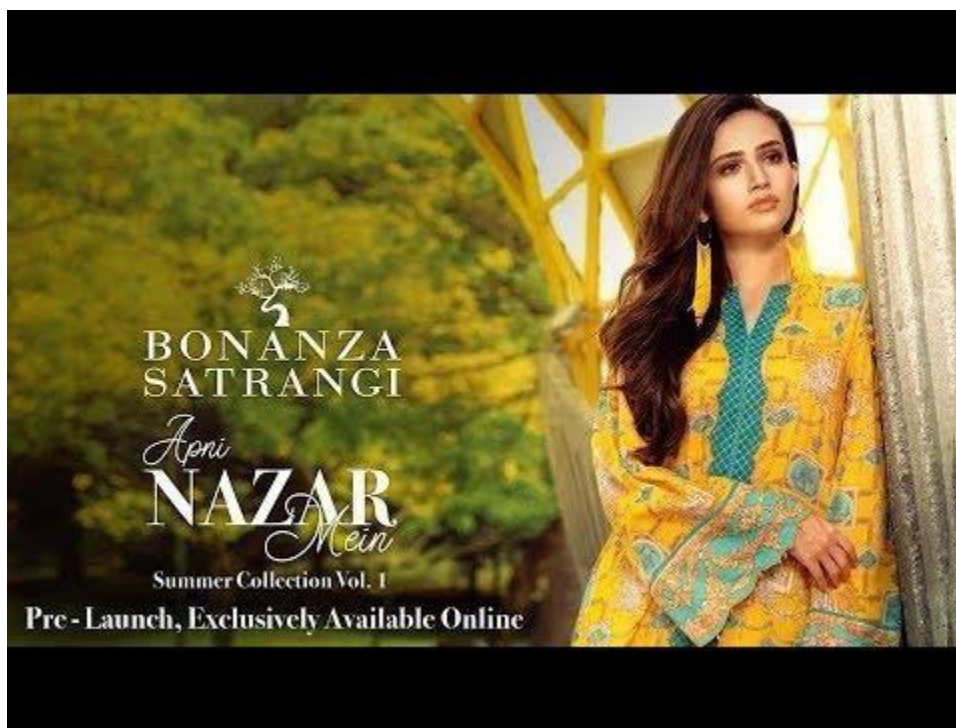


This advertisement belongs to a very renowned clothing brand “Khaadi” and is a part of a campaign meant for the plus sized women. The word “Khaadi” belongs to Urdu language meaning “hand woven” and through this name the designers aim to develop a concept that they design clothes with such care and hard work as practiced by the ancient people who make their clothes with hands. The slogan of this advertisement is “now or never”, the denotative meaning of which is that the most suitable time for any work is the present moment. Connotatively, this slogan inspires people to work for their goals timely and with great determination. It also enhances the possibility that there might be no other chance and it is a final opportunity to prove one’s identity and struggle for a better life. So, one must avail every chance that the life provides.

The image features three models carrying beautiful dresses with quite suitable accessories. The background of the image shows stairs and in the foreground, there is a tree of some kind with full of green leaves which adds to the beauty of the scene. The accessories used by the models are quite

fancy and complementing the overall look. The use of beautiful colors like yellow and blue make an eye catching combination with the green color of the leaves.

The connotative interpretation of the image reveals that the dresses of this brand help the women with all sizes to present themselves as beautiful and well-groomed. Basically, this collection is designed for the plus sized women as the designers of this brand claim that they want to give such women the opportunity to explore new trends in the fashion industry. The bright hair color of the plus sized model presents a bold and confident look and urges all the women to try and adopt new things in life.



The next advertisement is the part of the brand named “Bonanza Satrangi”, a very well-known brand for the women’s dresses. The meaning of the word bonanza is to earn a lot of wealth and another meaning indicates it as a good luck. The word Satrangi is an Urdu word meaning the combination of seven colors. The logo of this brand is the shape of a tree and it looks quite appealing. The slogan of the advertisement is “apni nazar mein” which means “in one’s own eyes”. The connotative meaning of this phrase reveals the importance of one’s thoughts and ideas in one’s own point of view. Through this slogan, the advertisers urge the women that their life and their methods of leading it must be according to their own beliefs. No one has the right to dictate them

and they must look beautiful to themselves. There is no need to adopt a fashion to look beautiful to others rather they should follow the styles to which they find attractive.

In the advertisement, there is a model carrying a beautiful embroidered dress with complementary accessories. She has quite presentable and well-styled hair and it seems that she is thinking something deeply. The background of the image is full of greenery and creating a natural atmosphere. The yellow color of the dress with the matching accessories is enhancing the beauty of the image.

Connotatively, this image reveals that one should not get affected by the negative opinions of others and one must feel confident in one's own self. The model is looking somewhere far off; it seems that she is perhaps also concerned about people's views about her. But the designers of this brand inspire women to ignore such views and care only about their own happiness.



This advertisement represents the collection of a renowned brand “Gul Ahmed” and the collection name is “the reunion”. Denotatively the meaning of the word “Gul” is flower and the code is Urdu as the word belongs to Urdu language. Connotatively the brand name makes an impression that the particular brand represents the Pakistani society and it is an initiative to promote the Pakistani culture. The linguistic message of the said advertisement “the reunion” signifies the opportunity

of being united again. The denotative meaning of the message shows that the users are reunited again, perhaps after a long time. The connotative analysis makes an impression that the advertisers want to provide an opportunity to their consumers to reunite with their loved ones.

In the non-coded iconic message, the image shows four female models carrying beautiful embroidered dresses. The background of the image is luminous with bright and fancy lights determining that there must be a wedding function or family get together of some kind. The skillfully designed accessories used by the models are complementing the dresses. Two of the female models are carrying head ornaments which is a traditional jewelry used by Pakistani women.

The coded iconic message of the image reveals that wearing the dresses of this particular brand not only enhances the charm of the personality of the users but it also doubles their happiness of reunion with their dear ones. The dresses of this brand are quite suitable for wedding functions and get together of friends. All the dresses used in this advertisement are shalwar suit with dupatta, thus representing the national dressing of Pakistan. In this way, the advertisers want to make an impression that this brand promotes wearing cultural dresses.

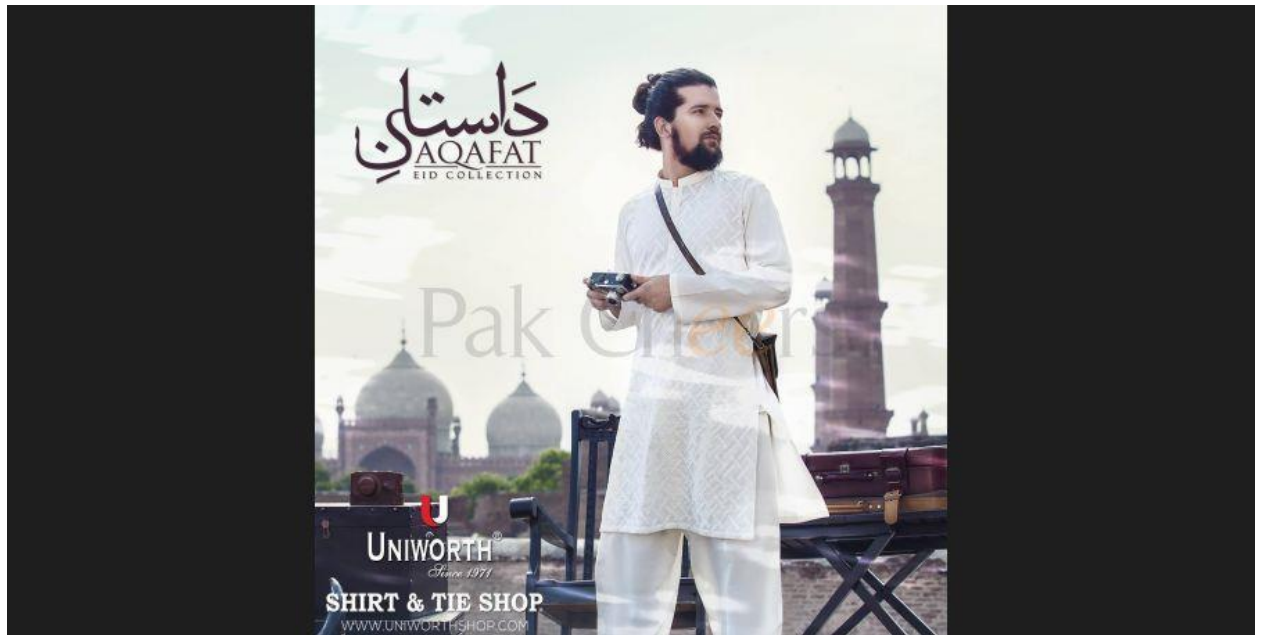


The next image belongs to the clothing brand “Beech Tree” and the collection name is “Morbagh”. Denotatively the brand name reflects the beautiful tree of a particular kind. The logo of the name of collection also contains the symbol of the beech tree. The name of the collection “Morbagh” is a combination of two words which are the Urdu version of the words peacock and garden respectively. The connotative analysis shows that the products of this brand are as beautiful and fresh as the beech tree, gardens full of flowers and peacocks with wonderful colors. The slogan is “Ankahi” which means unsaid or untold denotatively while the connotative meaning shows the hidden or unexpressed feelings of women.

The image shows a female model wearing a beautiful dress with matching and easy to use accessories. The side profile of the model fits the image and enhances the beauty of the scene. The background of the image shows the ruins of a historical site.

Connotatively the image reveals that the advertisers promote visiting the historical sites and remembering the remarkable past of Muslims in South Asia. The slogan urges all the repressed

women to express all their feelings and thoughts which they have not said for a long time due to the social differences they are facing. It also inspires Pakistani women to talk about all the things which are considered as taboo according to social norms but are compulsory for their physical and mental health.



This image belongs to the famous brand named “uniworth” and it means fulfillment of dreams and the sense of empowerment. The connotative meaning of the brand name suggests that it encourages its users to struggle for their dreams. The logo of the brand is a capital alphabet letter “U” which is a combination of two i.e. red and white. The slogan of this advertisement is “dastan e saqafat”; the words dastan and saqafat are taken from Urdu language meaning a story and the culture respectively. So the denotative meaning of this slogan is “the story of culture”, it is a unique slogan and attracts the consumers.

The background of the image presents the view of Badshahi mosque, a famous historical monument presents in the very well-known city of Lahore, Pakistan. There is a male model carrying a kurta shalwar dress holding a camera in his hand and it seems that he is visiting the historical site. The presence of the chair in the background shows that he is planning to spend some time in the place and the suitcase shows that he is a traveler.

The connotative meaning of the presence of Badshahi mosque strengthens the claim made by the advertisers in the slogan. From the appearance of the model and his belongings, it seems that he is also a part of some ancient folk story. The viewers also feel themselves to visit the past for some time after looking at this image. The kurta shalwar represents the national dress of Pakistan and advertisers try to present an idea that this brand promotes the Pakistani culture.



This advertisement belongs to a well-known brand “Riwaj” the denotative meaning of which is customs or practices. Usually the word is used for social and cultural connotation in Pakistani society and the brand name reveals that the designers of this brand promote the traditions and customs. The name of the collection “culture” again strengthens the idea that the advertisers promote culture of Pakistani society. The logo of the brand contains the Urdu word “Riwaj” written in calligraphy. The slogan of this brand is “revive the golden days” which means that the brand wants to revive the glorious past of Pakistani people.

The non-coded iconic message contains two male models wearing white kurta shalwar dresses. It seems that they are sharing some cheerful secret and enjoying their chat. The background of the image shows the presence of some domestic setting and the model figures are closely related either as friends or relatives. There is a mirror in the background which is showing the images of candles

and the red window curtains from the opposite direction. There is a table which contains some papers and there is also a beautiful candle stand in front of the mirror.

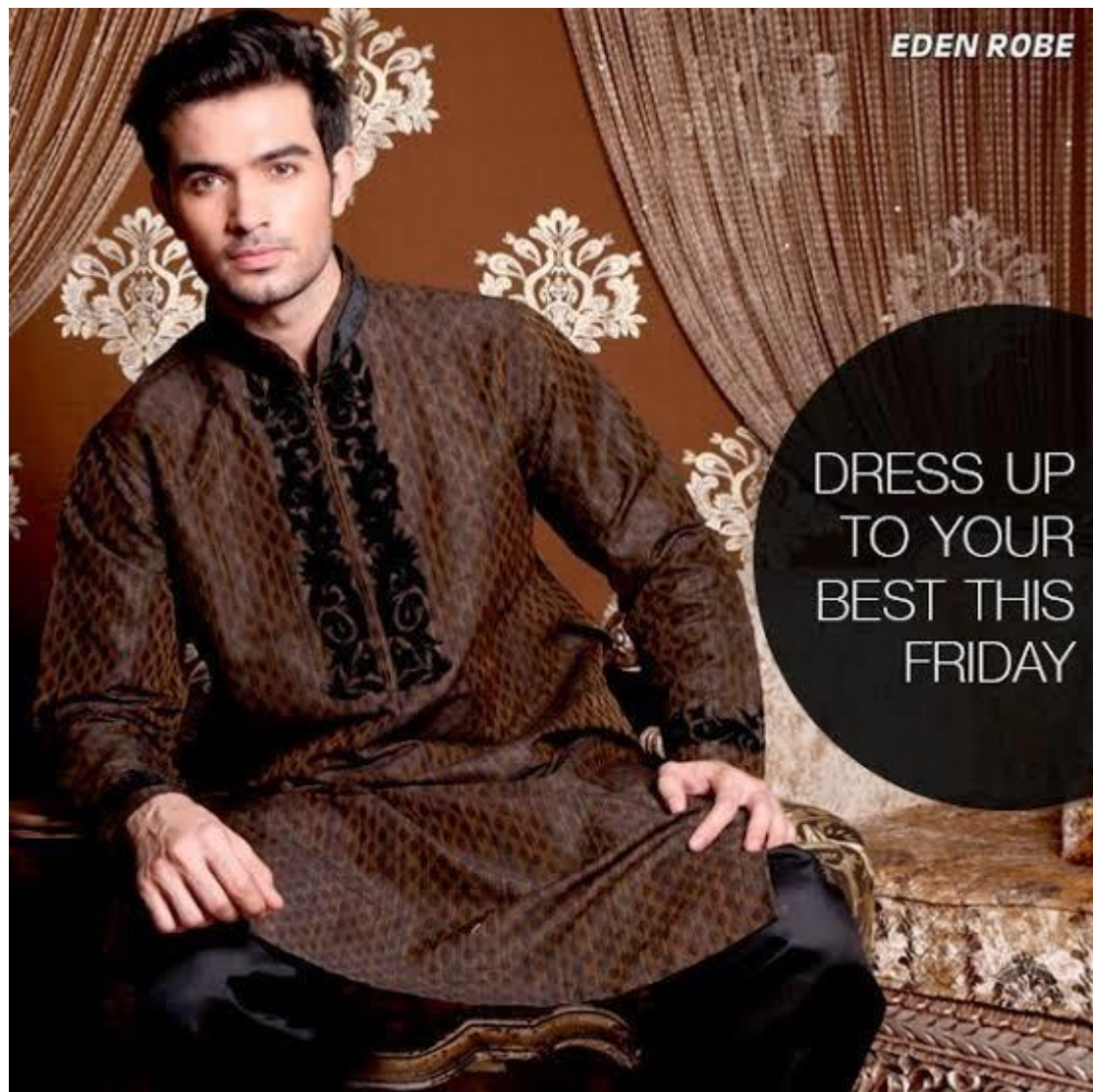
The coded iconic message of this image explains that the advertisers aim at promoting the social and cultural customs and practices of Pakistani society. The models wearing the traditional kurta shalwar dress signify the importance of the national dress of Pakistan. The designers want to imprint an image in the minds of their customers that by wearing the dresses of this brand they will revise their golden past and feel closely related to their culture.



This image represents the Pakistani clothing brand named “Tehzeeb” an Urdu language word meaning “civilization”. The brand name aims at promoting the civilization of Pakistani society and the use of such a name for the brand reveals the technique of impacting the customers’ minds directly. The logo contains the word “Tehzeeb” written in Urdu language.

The denotative analysis of the image shows the presence of three male models wearing the national dress of Pakistan i.e. kurta shalwar dress. The accessories used by the models are complementing the dress choice. All the dresses carried by the models are of white color which is a color of elegance and style. This color is also used as a representative of the traditional and cultural glory of Pakistani society. The background of the image shows the ruins of some historical fort perhaps belonging to the Mughal era.

The connotative analysis of the above described image presents a view that the brand promotes the culture and civilization of Pakistani society as revealed from the very title of the brand. The use of kurta shalwar dresses impacts the viewers by establishing that the advertisers promote Pakistani cultural dressing. The use of the wonderful historical site in the background of the image presents an eye catching view and attracts the targeted audiences. The image also enhances the importance of the need of preserving the historical places of Pakistan which are like an asset for the country.



The next advertisement belongs to the brand named “Eden Robe” the denotative meaning of the name is heavenly clothes or the dress belonging to heaven. This is the most attractive title as it suggests that the dresses of this brand are so wonderful and wearing them gives the most peaceful

and comfortable feelings. The linguistic message is “dress up to your best this Friday” which is a unique slogan. It means that the advertisers encourage their customers to try their level best for dressing up elegantly.

The non-coded iconic image present that there is a stylish and handsome male model carrying a beautiful kurta shalwar dress. The dress is a little bit of embroidered and shows a combination of two colors from which black is the most dominant one. The background shows that the scene belongs to a domestic setting as the presence of curtains and furniture proves the idea.

The coded iconic message of this image presents that the advertisers try to affect the reader by using a religious symbol i.e. Friday. It is an important day for the Muslim society of Pakistan as they make special preparations for this day to perform their religious duties. After seeing this image, the customers begin to think that the dresses of this brand will help them to adopt an elegant Friday look, so they must try it. Furthermore, the designers of this brand urge their customers to follow the traditional and cultural dressing of Pakistani society.



The next advertisement represents the brand “Ideas” and the use of word “man” shows that the collection is supposed to be for the use of men. The denotative meaning of the brand name is the development of some new thought about life. The use of the words “Ramzan Karim” shows that the collection is aimed for the special month of holy Ramzan. The slogan of this brand is “wrinkle free kurta” which establishes that the dresses of this brand are beautifully designed and well styled in their appearance.

The image contains a male model carrying a kurta shalwar dress, there is elegance in his style of standing and he seems quite confident about his look. The colors used in the title of the brand are white and green which attracts the customers. The background of the image shows that the model figure must be standing at an ancient and historical place of some kind. The designs used in the construction of the building prove the idea that the site is historical.

The connotative analysis of the image presents that the advertisers try to target the customers by using the logo of “Ramzan Karim”. As the month has a special significance for the Muslims of the entire world as well as the Muslim community of Pakistan. The designers want to influence the viewers to purchase the product as it is perfectly designed to wear in the holy month of Ramzan. The brand also urges its users to use the national dress of Pakistan and celebrate the religious occasion by wearing the dresses of their collection.

The analysis of all the above mentioned clothing brands advertisements shows that the language used in these images is quite appealing. The advertisers try to bring such a unique slogan which catches the attention of the targeted audiences instantly. These slogans give the brand a unique identity in the field of fashion industry. Mostly the advertisers use simple vocabulary which is understandable for the common people as the consumers belong to every walk of life. Some advertisers have used the English slogans but most of the time the advertisers use the phrases or sentences belonging to the Urdu language as the major part of the viewers can understand Urdu. The slogans used in these advertisements appeal the users in such a way that they develop a feeling that perhaps the product is particularly designed for them. Through these slogans, the advertisers try to capture the mind of the users and influence their thinking. Most of the brands assessed in these advertisements have such names which have a direct link with the Pakistani culture and society. The logos used by these clothing brands are a trademark for their existence in the industry and the advertisers use them quite effectively.

As far as the non-coded iconic message is concerned, the advertisers have used such scenery which brings a fresh outlook for the viewers. All the male and female models are good looking and carrying their styles quite presentably. The accessories used by the female models open new horizons of beauty and style for female customers. Most of the male models have beards which give them an iconic and elegant look. The use of white color in the dresses by majority of male

models provide that the color is suitable for the people belonging to all ages and complexions. The most important quality about the models of these advertisements is that they are carrying kameez shalwar dresses.

The coded iconic or symbolic message presents the social and cultural interpretation of the image and the signs used in these advertisements relate to the Pakistani society and its culture. The advertisers affect the viewers in such a way that they find themselves compelled to think about challenging and establishing their unique identity. The viewers got an impression that there is nothing impossible in this world and the people with ordinary features can transform themselves into stylish and well-groomed persons. The most important idea extracted from these advertisements is that they all promote the national dress of Pakistan i.e. kurta shalwar or kameez shalwar.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research analyzed the dominant signs used in the advertisements of clothing brands of Pakistani origin. The most often used signs like greenery in the background, modest colors used in the dresses and the use of captivating slogans satisfy the aesthetic sense of the viewers and urges a creative sense as established by earlier research conducted by Ali & Ullah (2015). The analysis reveal that the advertisements are not the mere combination of the images of some objects but it is like a third media apart from print and electronic and provides an opportunity to understand the hidden meanings and cultural interpretations. The same findings were drawn by Isfandiyary (2017) while analyzing the posters of the movie Unfortunate Events. The researchers agree on the claims made by Patel & Bhutiani (2018) and Syahdini (2019) that there is the presence of social and cultural connotations in these advertisements. This study also affirms the claim made some earlier researches like Moin & Fatima (2021) that the theory of semiotics by Roland Barthes is the most suitable framework for the semiotic analysis of advertisements. The research also finds that the advertisers adopt all the possible methods to influence the purchasing decisions of the targeted population as discussed by some previous researches made by Mustafiz, (2019), Afrin & Muniruzzaman (2020), Hussain, Pathan & Shah (2021), Sathvika & Rajasekaran (2021) and Sathvika & Rajasekaran (2022). The researchers find that the most dominant element used in these advertisements is the linguistic message which is somewhat ignored in the earlier researchers

despite being an important part of the semiotics theory of Roland Barthes, the most often used framework for such kind of researches. The linguistic message includes the brand name and the slogan which not only provides the brand a unique identity but also captures the minds of the viewers instantly.

The key findings of this research are as follows; a) All the advertisements promote the national dress of Pakistan i.e. shalwar and kameez. b) The advertisers use such signs which are dominant in that particular setting and capture the attention of the viewers. c) The denotative and connotative analysis of the signs used in these advertisements reveal that the advertisers are successful in getting the desired results i.e. affecting the purchasing decisions of the buyers. d) The advertisers use the signs which are effective in the Pakistani context. The reason behind using these signs is to relate the product with the social and cultural norms of the Pakistani society.

This research has tried to uncover the motives behind using the signs in the advertisements of clothing brands through semiotic analysis. The study finds the excessive use of linguistic, non-coded iconic and coded iconic/symbolic messages in the advertisements. The research further unveils the relation between these signs and the society through cultural interpretation. The role of the clothing brands advertisements in promoting the cultural dressing of Pakistan is also discussed.

The researchers believe that this study will pave the way for future researches as it gives new dimensions to the horizon of semiotics. The possibility of gender based semiotic analysis of the clothing advertisements is also present. Apart from clothing advertisements, the same theory can be used to analyze the TV commercials and billboards in the Pakistani as well as foreign context. This study is limited to the advertisements of national and cultural dressing of Pakistan, the future researches can be conducted on the use of diverse clothing and its uses and impacts on the local cultural practices and beliefs.

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