

An Analysis of Private School Advertisement in Hyderabad, Pakistan – A Semiotic Approach

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Abstract:

This study is multidisciplinary in nature. The theoretical foundation of this research is based on Barthesian denotative and connotative model of semiotics, introduced early in 1967 in his book “Mythologies”, later modified in 1970s. Semiotics is study of meaningful linguistic entity called sign. In language, each text, animation, an image, or graphics acts as meaning making entity, the sign. Present study provides a semiotic insight into an advertisement of The City School in Hyderabad, Pakistan context. Where, power structures, ideological loading and myth making is in process by adopting various moods of linguistic sign usage on advertisements. Research finds that private schools use advertisement as promotional tool to attract the target audiences for their interest with multi-graphical advertisement.

Keywords —Semiotics, sign, semiotic analysis, denotative meaning, connotative meaning

I. INTRODUCTION

The language, keeping in mind its use in modern era, has changed its mode and function to be merely used as a tool of communication. Or, in other words, additional aspects of communication have merged with language that induce almost a different discourse than the conventional spoken or written discourse demonstrate. The enormous use of the language sign, whether text or images, in provided social space has perplexed the meaning of the language. The use of visual signs on billboards, signboards, advertisement, pamphlets, magazine covers, newspapers and commercial shop signs, has been growing with rapid pace. The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration[1]. These signs

have waste role to play in our understanding of things, conceptualization of space, producing meaning and framing of our minds accordingly. They do not act as symbols as such only. Our community and societal living is rich of various relationships – between things and ourselves. We observe and interpret relationships via a contextual tool of culture and history. Text and signs on advertisements are form of engravings, expressing this culture and society.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The signs have waste role to play in our understanding of things, conceptualization of space, producing meaning and framing of our minds accordingly. They do not act as symbols as such only. Signs, in form of words, colours, frames and images are continuously used on signboards or advertisement canvas to play with and produce

discursive modes to engage various spectators vis; political, social, economic and cultural.

One of the main areas of sign usage in linguistic landscape, among all – political, religious, social and moral - is occupied by the advertisements of the education sectors, public as well as private. Private institutes, specifically speaking, are more involved in advertisement than public sectors. Signboards of private schools are richly spaced with colourful large multi-modelled signs of text and pictures. Each serving a specific role or roles, depending upon the organisation's motives and target audience. Goldman says that advertising, as an institution, produces and reproduces ideologically loaded and commodified subject matter. Wherein relationships are presented as neutral and certain[2].

Generally, it seems worth conversing whether similar, power centred semiotic siege in the field of education as well in all the fields where social relations are clear. In the fact in the field of critical education philosophers argued regarding mass education that it organized for the necessities of capitalist economy which is an ideological cultural process overrun via programs and content [3]. All innocent-looking elements, physical structures, styles, artefacts, images, and so on that are used throughout the educational phase bear meaningful values that belong to the power ideology, along with their primary meanings (Bernstein, 1990; Giroux, 2007). From the perspective of critical education.

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Advertisement is a tool of globalization and cultural diffusion. It is playing an important role in communication, mass awareness and consumerisation of commodities. Lamba (2016) describes that advertisement implies various semiological techniques to act as a medium of transformation of message or act in itself as a message. These employed strategies can be of any form vis.; verbal and nonverbal; in any sphere of life vis.; psychological, religious, social, academic, moral or discursive[4].

Private schools use semiotic advertisements for promotion of their academic activities. Linguistic

landscape of advertisement of private schools in Hyderabad, Pakistan is a prime example of such spaces. The research is aimed at analysing the signs used on schools advertisements with respect to semiotics.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Roland Barthes model of Semiotic analysis will be used as theoretical research framework. Roland Barthes introduced model of semiotic analysis by analysing an advertisement of PanzaniSpegetticompany, an Italian firm. Roland Barthes, in his semiotic analysis set up two orders of signification, which he referred to as denotation and connotation. His particular usage of these terms derives directly from Saussure's dyadic (signifier-signified) model of the sign[5][6].

The data in research is collected from advertising of private school. A process of semiotic analysis of advertising of private schools in Hyderabad will be carried out to explore symbolic description of signs, themes portrayed therein and comprehend linguistic discourse in order to look at variety of social, cultural and connotative representation of schools message and communication.

V. DISCUSSION

An image of The City School – one of the private schools in Hyderabad, Pakistan – is analysed by describing and analysing the signs of colour, animation and text.

The using of color is a vital aspect of art direction in printed media and billboard advertisements[7]. Animations are created by recording a series of still images – drawings, objects or people – in various positions of incremental movement. When played back, the still images appear as one continuous image that gives the illusion of motion [8].

A. Data Description



Fig. 1 An image of Beacon House Schooling System

The sign in above image below the logo reads “I am- to learn”. Sign, basically, denotes the slogan or motto of the *The City School*. Applying Barthesian model of semiosis, in connotative level of signification what sign wants us read is that it provides individuality and being different from other institutes. The year “since 1978” does not only mean the year of establishment of school but also emphasises the enriched experience of the institute. The title name of the school below icon with respect to context shows the benchmark sign of the institute. In addition, hashtag in school image “#ChooseToChallenge” is a sign of being a trade mark and popularity. It also connotes that the institute is internationally aware of every social phenomenon, and always ahead in participation.

The icon of city schools has a light tower with sunrays coming from it along with two egret bird. One is feeding to its small counterpart. Lighting tower is the sign of enlightenment and rays a sign of hope as it seen from the learning and education point of view. Further, a big bird feeding its small baby bird connotes the nurturing. Hence, City school is playing its part with its benchmark in nurturing kids to enlightenment.

Moreover, three men and three women in image denotes a group of people and a sign of expression of its meaning. But at the same time this group tends to be playing in second level of signification of Barthesian model as connotative sign. Where it express the meaning of gender equality and feministic concept of equal human rights. Hence, *the City School*, being an academic institution, equally establishes the fact that it does care for protection of equal rights.

Finally, the background colour – purple- connotes girlish and feminine colour. Since the occasion is women’s day special, hence a mutual correspondence between the event celebration and the day celebrated.

VI. CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

The findings, after applying the semiotic model of Ronal Barthes, suggest that advertisements play an important role in ideological manipulation of signs on advertisements. Semiosis used on advertisements assist in secondary meaning formulation that are culturally oriented, which Ronald Barthes termed as connotative myth making. These social construction of myth making include persuasion, superiority, excellence, westernization and breaking of the archaic norms of odd society.

The analysis focused on examining the varieties of verbal and nonverbal signs portrayed on advertisements, which ultimately helped in representing the desired image of the schools to the audience. A qualitative inquiry made on one image of a private school *The City School* in this regard into the textual features, both linguistic and semiotic. A handful textual and animation signs were taken for denotative and connotative analysis. The private institute, along with informative ads promote the content and persuade the targeted audiences for their gain.

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