Multimodal semiotic and semantic analysis of advertising billboards: a pakistani perspective

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All my senses, after doing numberless efforts, failed in search of finding from the oceans of knowledge of this universe such words that may illustrate His Greatness, His Mercifulness, His Praise …. in a proper and well organized manner. From which word should I start His Praise I don’t know? Because my knowledge cannot estimate His blessings that constantly remained with me while writing this whole thesis. In short, I could not write even a single character of this thesis without His help. This happened all due to His wonderful, magnificent and superb blessings which I cannot elaborate in my own words.

TOUSEEF YOUNAS
Declaration:

I hereby announce that this study is my own work including my best efforts to complete it under the kind, helpful, vigilant and highly significant supervision of my supervisor, Dr. Arshad Khan. The study does not contain any past text material work that is available in publish form of other researchers, except with acknowledgement where it is needed.

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Approvement

Multimodal Semiotic and Semantic Analysis of Advertising Billboards:

A Pakistani perspective

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Dedication:

I dedicate this work

To my mother whose prayers, in numbers, are more than sixty seconds of a minute for me.

To my father whose prayers in the last part of every night proved as a candle in the darkness of this world for me.

To my wife whose implicit support was not less than a ridge pole of cottage.

To my younger brother, Hafiz Omer, whose special religious supplications were proved a light house for me in the stormy nights of voyage of thesis.
Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ......................................................................................................................................... ii
Declaration: .................................................................................................................................................. iii
Approvalment .................................................................................................................................................. iv
Dedication: .................................................................................................................................................. v
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................................. vi
Abstract ......................................................................................................................................................... ix
CHAPTER ONE .............................................................................................................................................. 1
  1.1 Chapter Overview: ...................................................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 An overview and background of the study: .............................................................................................. 1
  1.3 Statement of the problem: ...................................................................................................................... 1
  1.4 Focus of study: ......................................................................................................................................... 1
  1.5 Objectives of the study: .......................................................................................................................... 1
  1.6 Significance of the study: ...................................................................................................................... 1
  1.7 Research Questions: ............................................................................................................................. 1
  1.8 Framework of the thesis: ....................................................................................................................... 1
  1.9 Summary: ............................................................................................................................................... 1
CHAPTER TWO ............................................................................................................................................. 1
  2.1 Chapter Overview: ...................................................................................................................................... 1
  2.2 What is advertisement? .......................................................................................................................... 1
  2.3 Definitions of advertising and advertising slogans: ............................................................................... 1
    2.3.1 Slogan/headline: .............................................................................................................................. 1
  2.4 History of advertising: ........................................................................................................................... 1
  2.5 Types of advertising: ................................................................................................................................ 1
  2.6 Outdoor advertisement and advertising billboards: ............................................................................ 1
  2.7 Visual Literacy: ....................................................................................................................................... 1
  2.8 Ideology: .................................................................................................................................................. 1
  2.9 Multimodality: ......................................................................................................................................... 1
  2.10 Images and Multimodality: .................................................................................................................. 1
2.11 Mode: .................................................................

2.12 Combination of different modes: ........................................

2.13 Semantics and its development: ........................................

2.14 Leech’s seven types of meaning: ...........................................

2.15 Prescribed size of advertising billboards ............................

2.16 Summary: .................................................................

CHAPTER THREE ..........................................................

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .........

3.1 Chapter Overview: ......................................................

3.2 Methodology .............................................................

3.3 Qualitative Descriptive Research ........................................

3.4 Theoretical Framework ...................................................

3.4.1 Semiotic: ..............................................................

3.5 Signifier + signified = sign: .............................................

3.6 Founders of Theory, Semioticians: ......................................

3.6.1 Ferdinand de Saussure: .............................................

3.6.2 Charles Sander Pierce: .............................................

3.7 Halliday and Visual Communication Grammar of Kress and Van Leeuwen: ............

3.8 Halliday’s metafunctions and semiotic resources; speech and writing: ....

3.9 Representational meaning: .............................................

3.10 Interactive function: .....................................................

3.11 Act of gaze, a semiotic resource: ......................................

3.12 What is Salience: a semiotic resource? ..............................

3.12.1 Colour schemes under the shadow of salience: ...........

3.13 Data collection: ...........................................................

3.13.1 Nature of data set: ...................................................

3.13.2 Sampling technique: .................................................

3.14 Summary: .................................................................

CHAPTER FOUR ..................................................................
Abstract

Situating the current study in the paradigm of Visual Literacy, the researcher has employed method of qualitative descriptive research to make analysis of advertising billboards not only to explore the meaning of signs but also to find out in what manner different types of semiotic resources with the combination of linguistic process convey specific meaning in a particular social setup. In addition the researcher’s intention is to discover hidden ideology of persuading and beguiling the target viewers in a particular social context with the combination of semantics and different types of semiotic resources. Before doing the analysis of advertising billboards, a detailed and meticulous literature review has been done of previous researches’ studies in order to validate not only the importance and significance of the topic but also highlighting and evaluating the current study from new and different perspective. The researcher has chosen three aspects i.e. ‘gaze’, ‘salience’, and ‘vector’ of multimodal social semiotic approach by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1990, 1996 and 2006) to explore the meaning of sign in visual composition of advertising billboards and Leech’s (1981) semantic theory; associative meaning to make analysis of Urdu slogans in the wake of manipulation of language to beguile the target viewers. In this connection the researcher has analyzed 25 advertising billboards, erected on different sites of Lahore city. After analysis it is evident that by combinations of these two approaches, the producers of the advertisements beguile the target audiences’ at large extent. Besides this the combination of different semiotic resources in right direction not only creates elements of social affinity and involvement for the viewers but also clutches the attention of the target audience. The producers communicate effectively by using different colours, 3D effects, gestures, image, layout, typography and Urdu slogans. Furthermore, the researcher discovers how ideology is
being developed and this ideology is not only changing the living standards of the general public but also shaping the new ideas related to life styles of the public.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview:

In this chapter the researcher will give not only a fully-fledged introduction and background of the study but also point out all the constituents of the chapter in a comprehensive manner that will provide a platform in the connection of better understanding of the topic and the study as well to the readers. In the section of the focus and objectives of the study the researcher will give a brief description about the two approaches that have been incorporated in this study to explore not only the hidden ideology behind these advertising billboards but also how producers of the advertising billboards manipulate the language to sell their products. The portion of significance of the study will tell the employment of combination of semantics and semiotics with a different perspective which not only captivate the attention of the target viewers but also construct an ideology which plays an important role in the living standards of the people. Last but not the least, the research questions will elaborate the whole and core focus of this research study.