

INSIGHT, CULTURAL DIVERSITY, REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

JOINED UP SEMANTIC THINKING FOR DEVELOPING MARKETS

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INTRODUCTION

“What goes up must. What comes down is just going up the other way” (Edward Harrison, British explorer, 1929)

Well established academically across the human sciences, semiotics has recently achieved mainstream recognition and use in consumer insight and marketing consultancy. Some major client corporations such as P&G and Unilever, using tried and tested suppliers, have achieved considerable success in applying the methodology globally. Many clients and supplier agencies, however, still see semiotics as an optional extra rather than an essential part of a thought through research process. Nowhere is the role of semiotics more important than for international business units looking to learn about developing markets and the increasingly diverse and fluid cross-cultural patterns that characterize globalization today.

As a flexible tool for joined-up thinking, semiotics played a key role in formulating communication strategies for global brands entering developing markets in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It also had, and continues to have, a critical part to play in the development of highest common factor cross-cultural communication platforms. In both cases the expert semiotic overview and grasp of the detail in cultural and communications landscapes serves a head above the parapet path-finding function, helping brands keep up with rapid and culturally revolutionary change in countries such as the BRICs. Added to its unique capacity to focus relatively quickly, holistically and cost-effectively on cultural diversity and change, semiotics also delivers culturally salient, category-relevant hypotheses and fine-tuned local stimulus material with which brands can engage consumers in more informed and productive qualitative and quantitative research.

By 2010 this research pattern is well established with the client and agency-side early adopters of semiotics. As its practical application in improving cultural connection and inspiring consumer-relevant communication codes evolves, so also does the insight it generates. In developing markets this involves tracking richer and more nuanced patterns of cultural diversity as the old linear assumptions behind an essentially Westernized view of global modernization tips towards an emergent globalization which is culturally more mixed, fluid and heterogeneous. Individual developing markets meanwhile live with and increasingly celebrate their own inner diversity (India, for example, being as internally diverse as Europe)

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while the global, in all its variety, simultaneously sweeps in. In this context the modern becomes a clash and creative synergizing of past and present, inside (already heterogeneous) and outside (increasingly pluralistic with the ebbing of the Western modernization norm). All this flows into a future prospect of yet more dramatic diversity and change.

At this time these developing markets become ripe for semiotics as a methodology to be disseminated locally and practiced by local market experts. Internal BRIC country clients are starting to enjoy the benefits experienced by insight and marketing people in the global business units of multinationals over the past decade – in terms of the innovative hypotheses and stimulus as well as the joined-up thinking and point of view that semiotics can bring, its ability to map and bring to conceptual order cultural diversity and revolutionary change. This emerging understanding of what semiotics can do applies to these companies growing brands within their own markets (e.g. India or China) but equally, and increasingly, to how a developing market's brands can themselves communicate effectively on a global stage.

Semiotics started to emerge on a significant scale as an actionable insight and consultancy tool in the 1990s – the decade that saw the emergence of brand strategy, globalization and also, critically, a post-Cold War international order with the opening up of former Soviet bloc markets and cultures. The next phase of its history begins, in 2010, at the threshold of changes likely to be at least as great, and which are as yet hard to imagine. Our conclusions will deal with possible future roles for semiotics in this context.

This paper is written by a UK-based semiotician who has worked cross-culturally since 1990 and an experienced Indian brand strategist and planner relatively new to semiotics but already applying this approach successfully in her home market as part of a mix of research methodologies. Using 'we' and 'I' beyond this point could be confusing in a paper by two authors whose work overlaps for some purposes but whose spheres of operation are very different in others. For clarity we have decided to refer to ourselves in the third person as Hamsini Shivakumar and Malcolm Evans.

IN THE BEGINNING...

"The science of the life of signs in society" (Ferdinand de Saussure's definition of semiology, 1906)

Semiotics is the study of communication of all kinds (verbal, visual, olfactory, digital, etc.) In ancient Greek culture Semiotike – derived from semeion (σημειον) meaning 'mark' or 'sign' was considered, alongside Ethics and Natural Philosophy, to be one of the three pillars of human knowledge. Via philosophy, biblical and textual hermeneutics, art history, iconography, and Ferdinand de Saussure and C.S. Peirce's formalizing of the discipline in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries semiotics (also known as semiology) arrives at the modern age. It has a strong academic presence around the world – its applications ranging from linguistics to anthropology and medical symptomatology, from art and cinema theory to the practicalities of computer interface design, from religious iconography and archetypology to analysis of comic books, video games and celebrity culture. (Cobley and Jansz, 2010; Chandler, 2007) This is no upstart methodology created for marketing or consumer insight purposes alone.

After a slow and relatively intermittent start, marketing applications of semiotics broke through in the mid to late 1990s and early 2000s to become a familiar part of branding and consumer insight's offer to clients. Key drivers for this were:

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- The development of brand valuation, management and strategy in the 1990s (Arvidsson, 2005; Lury, 2004)) and the gap this opened for a methodology specializing in analytical understanding of a brand's symbolic and cultural equities.
- The crafting of a simplified and more actionable version of applied semiotics which also made a significant client-friendly addition to the discipline. The addition was the ability to map cultural and category trends by identifying Residual, Dominant and Emergent codes. This offered the clear benefit of improved foresight. Consumers expect brands to lead, not follow. Brands have to think and plan ahead of the curve of cultural change not just reflect the current status quo as played back by consumers in research.
- The rationalization of corporate brand portfolios and creation of global megabrands. Along with its ability to give a fresh perspective on change, the other immediately clear benefit of semiotics was its ability to create highest common factor cross-cultural platforms. Local market experts analyse the client's brand's local cultural and communications context. The shared semiotic methodology allows for a flexible synthesis of local findings into a common strategy. Then the detail from the individual markets feeds into guidance on local opportunities and taboos to be addressed through tactical and executional tweaks.

There are different strands of the academic discipline (e.g. Peirce's semiotics vs. Saussure's semiology) and many within the semiotics of popular culture, advertising and marketing (Barthes, Eco, Judith Williamson, Floch, the U.S. group around the 1980s journal *Marketing Signs*, Canadian, neo-Peircean, etc.). The history of marketing semiotics would require another paper. It is important to note these differences, however, as new clients and potential agency collaborators for semiotics will still currently need to look first into specifically what is on offer from each supplier in terms of approach and deliverables.

The key distinguishing feature of the approach discussed here is the addition of Residual, Dominant and Emergent code mapping to the repertoire of traditional semiotic analysis. This innovation, now in widespread use commercially, was first introduced at the UK-based consultancy Semiotic Solutions in the early 1990s, adapting this tripartite framework and the notion that aspects of past and future are always here in the present from the work of Welsh cultural theorist and critic Raymond Williams. Its power was soon recognized by commercial clients as a tool for understanding trends (mega and micro, in popular culture, media, advertising, packaging and retail codes). Incorporated into an already commercially compelling version of applied semiotics the whole package drove high-profile success for the new approach. This was backed up by case studies of code-breaking semiotics-inspired UK campaigns such as BT's "It's good to talk", Glaxo's award-winning *Imigran* launch communication and "You know when you've been Tangoed" which launched a wacky laddish surrealism that reverberated through British popular culture and advertising across categories for the next decade (Alexander et al, 1995; Evans, 1999).

Another significant success factor in the model crafted by Virginia Valentine and her colleagues at Semiotic Solutions was to pitch semiotics as first and foremost a cultural methodology. So while niche practitioners in other markets might focus on fine detail of visual design and verbal communication in, say, a comparative study two examples of packaging, this modified approach could do that while also having the tools and confidence to adopt a wider view and paint broader brush-strokes of change around, for example, youth culture or the changing role of women. It was this positioning of semiotics as a cultural methodology which

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also, inevitably, spoke to the whole 1990s trend towards cross-cultural communications, entering developing markets, and globalization.

SEMIOTICS IN GLOBAL AND DEVELOPING MARKETS: THE FIRST WAVE

"If I'd known about semiotics earlier it would have saved me \$18 million" (Drinks Company Marketing Director, 1999)

By 2010 this orientation towards semiotics, engaging with the dynamics of change in cultures and communication, extends globally. Focusing on linguistic and cultural detail, it necessarily draws on the skills of local analysts steeped in the language and culture of the specific markets under investigation. The central coordinating function focuses on briefing out analysis to the local teams, monitoring quality and comparability of outputs, synthesizing cross-market learnings, then working with the local market analysts to develop the highest common factor strategy and local nuances.

The move towards an international focus began in the early and mid-1990s, with Semiotic Solutions running cross-cultural projects for among others de Beers, Unilever FMCG brands, Body Shop, BMW and for the Gold Council – on cultural meanings and codes around gold globally. After working with founding partners Virginia Valentine and Monty Alexander at Semiotic Solutions, Malcolm Evans went on from 1995 to work with Added Value developing their international semiotics offer. The projects mentioned below as part of this first wave of international semiotic work are based on his experience at Added Value, from the mid-1990s to 2001, and subsequently as co-founder of UK semiotic consultancy Space Doctors.

Market entry

In *The Brand Gym* (2003, p.31), David Taylor gives a good example of the role played by semiotics as part of an integrated research process investigating beer in Russia. Putting semiotics in harness with ethnographic observation, qualitative groups, accompanied drinking sessions and quantitative 'session tastings' and segmentation studies, South African Brewers (subsequently SABMiller) deployed semiotics extensively in preparation for entry into a number of developing markets.

When markets like Poland and Russia opened up to international brands, semiotics offered an invaluable view of the big picture in each country, the way that had developed through time, and the ways in which current changes were panning out into future trajectories. The luxury of working towards informed and substantiated hypotheses (which can then be refined and tested with consumers) gives semioticians the opportunity to map out, in an accessible and structured way, what an outsider would need to know to grasp the essential, and often largely subconscious, 'cultural software' a Pole, Russian, Indian, etc. would have taken on board in relation to beer as part of growing up, consuming media messages, and living day to day. These maps of the big picture add a different kind of focus and stimulus to the work with consumers, while also giving the client and agency teams tools for grasping whole and being able to navigate their way around a complex cultural space – all invaluable in the process of discussion and decision-making around creating, positioning and communicating brands.

So in 1999, for example, the kind of software an anthropologist from a distant planet would need to load in order to function in the world of Russian beer would include some of the following (and here it is only possible to give glimpses):

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- children were historically brought up on, and still drank, a non-alcoholic beer-like drink (kvass) brewed at home or distributed in the street by kvass wagons;
- beer was seen essentially as a soft drink, something an adult might enjoy after some serious drinking the night before – not as hair of the dog so much as a morning refresher;
- to make beer serious you would need to add vodka, a combination known as “beer with electricity”;
- while in Poland beer had already become the focus of modernity and light socializing (with vodka slipping back into more ritualistic, celebratory and special-occasion slots in the culture) this development in Russia remained an Emergent code, only a horizon of possibility in 1999 rather than an already established Dominant code;
- vodka, still of immense cultural importance, was there for serious bonding, emotional depth and intensity – man to man, with a prospect of undying loyalty (and the risk of a fight).

So the picture builds culturally, then the semiotic detail of brands and their communications are analysed within that context (e.g. in Russia, beer packing codes harking back for their cues of quality and authenticity to before the era of adulterated beer and to pre-revolutionary names, iconography and design cues).

The sources for the semiotic research in Russia included: scholarly tomes on food and drink; the Russian language, proverbial lore and folk tales; the archives and current wisdom of Moscow’s equivalent of the real beer or real ale society; film and literature (a character in War and Peace describes vodka as an aid to suffering, something Russians are better at doing with style and conviction than other people are – a point echoed by the Russian commander of the stricken Mir space station as he bundled British astronaut Mike Foale into the one-man escape module in 1997); all contemporary Russian beer packaging and 300+ examples of drinks advertising.

How the semiotic process worked, to reduce it to its simplest outline form – thorough, grounded, no mystery – was to funnel the emergent codes (from Russian popular culture, beer and other drinks advertising and packaging) into a number of potential beer brand creation areas. These creation areas were white spaces for positioning and communication identified from a mapping of existing Russian beer brand communications and a comparison of this Russian map with some typical mappings of beer brands and their semiotics in other markets. Examples of some ingredients emerging from this process for new brand creation and expression were: the importance of and specific pre-revolutionary design cues in packaging (e.g. names, shapes, colours, symbols, other graphic features) to signify heritage, authenticity and differentiation from the world of poor quality Soviet-era beer; the fact that there was a gap in the Russian beer category for classic male bonding language and imagery – often the market leader beer communication in more developed markets; and that vodka drinking culture in Russia had its own specific bonding codes that could be appropriated and adapted to the world of beer – re-engineered to communicate beer as something more than a soft drink while also encoding a lighter and more modern drinking and bonding experience than vodka.

The final outcome of the whole integrated process kicked off by the cultural and semiotic analysis was the creation of what became in its first year the fastest growing beer brand in the market, Golden Barrel (**Золотая Бочка**) – with a male bonding positioning, a pack communicating premium, high quality, and beer credentials via authenticity cues, and advertising applying to the world of beer Russian vodka’s ‘rule of

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three' (three friends enjoying escapades, relaxing, story-telling, having fun together) as the surest route to harmonious friendship facilitation.

As a thoroughly grounded yet creative approach to understanding and developing brand hypotheses within an unfamiliar cultural space, semiotics adds depth, vision and energy to the research process. Just interrogating or observing consumers, in contrast, delivers more fragmentary insights based on the norms of today rather than the big picture and informed hypotheses on the dynamics of popular culture and the category.

Directions of change

In another example from this first wave of studies, a major food company commissioned cultural and communications analysis in Poland as a context for canned soup. The learning in this case was about trajectories of change and processes of modernization accompanying the liberalization of markets. A linear model of modernization and progress might well assume that what works in one society at a particular point in time will work in another when it starts to reach a similar stage of development. This was not so with soup in Poland, and for reasons that became clear with a step back from research direct with consumers to the big picture drawn up by expert local analysts working on Polish soup culture and the development of related advertising and packaging codes.

Cultural analysis revealed the deep (almost archetypal) associations of soup in Poland, and its strong emotional connection with the Polish mother – not unlike pasta in Italy. This would be problematic for processed packaged soup perhaps, but not the end of the world. The detailed semiotic analysis suggested a number of ways around some of the potential cultural hazards. These included the possibility of exploiting the trend by which home-made soup, once so fundamentally associated with the mother, could with the help of aspirational media representations of women's roles be edged more into the cultural space of the grandmother – creating an emergent gap for branded soup as long as the soup itself could be presented in a sufficiently aspirational way.

This connects with a final and executionally key semiotic learning. Modernization is not necessarily a linear process from culture to culture. A key indication in Poland of uneven patterns of development in this respect was that canned soup on the supermarket shelves was no reliable sign of aspiration or market development at a time when pet foods, for example, were already in the same stores packaged in ways that appeared much more modern, sensorial, richer in visual freshness and health cues. These cues all represented a different and more contemporary version of modernity to that transmitted by the can. Added Value's founder Mark Sherrington, with characteristic generosity, cites the killer insight from the cross-cultural semiotic work carried out in this category, and one which applied just as much in Poland as it did in a developed market like France, where the same packaging as used for UHT milk had already been introduced for soup to convey freshness, taste and home-made cues. Canned soup is entombed, sealed off from its environment, symbolically inaccessible to the porosity and interchange that represents life: "Canned soup is dead food', (he semiotician) said, and like all great insights everyone knew instantly that he was right – and what we should do about it." (Sherrington, 2003, pp.24-5)

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Representations of women

The next example comes from a piece of cross-cultural semiotic analysis carried out by Space Doctors for Procter & Gamble, an early project in a working relationship applying semiotics across categories and markets which, by 2010, spanned nine years and over 250 projects (for more on this assimilation of semiotics into client culture at P&G see Maggio-Muller and Evans, 2008). Here the challenge was to understand Mother Love in relation to the evolving representation of women in popular culture, and to home in from there on key client fabric care communications viewed in their competitive context. The brief was to look at three countries, one of which was Mexico. Just one strand of the Mexico analysis will suffice here as a bridge to some larger issues in the application of semiotics to developing markets and to crafting platforms for cross-cultural communication.

Recalling patterns of modernization interrogated in the soup project, one of the key questions that arose across the three cultures here was: will the cultural evolution of women in all markets tend towards individual empowerment and multidimensionality in terms of role (career, friendship, wife, mother, etc.)? And if so, what are the cultural indicators as to when and how quickly this transition takes place?

As occurred then, and remains the case nearly a decade later, there is no definitive answer to this question. Looking across markets and semiotic projects there is an inescapable drive towards relative independence and empowerment in representations of women as well as the evolution of roles and behaviours. At the same time there is evidence in some developing markets and cultures of a reticence about following (or indeed a recoil from) high-profile Western codes of female empowerment and corresponding female-male polarization and contention. In the Mexican analysis, for example, an attachment to softer and more nurturing codes of femininity came out not only as a relatively Residual code (traditional patriarchy's definition of women's roles) but also in a more mainstream and Emergent context as a conscious resistance of a US model in which women are seen to increasingly resemble men, in spite of the exaggeration of superficial differences, and the culturally all-pervasive female-male struggle and mutual disrespect (however ironic or ritualized) stands as a signal example of somewhere you would most definitely not want to go culturally.

This cross-current in a narrative of universal female empowerment was confirmed by self-help literature and other media targeting US Hispanic women in a semiotic analysis of acculturation and culture-based segmentation carried out by Space Doctors for P&G in 2005, a case study presented to ESOMAR's Congress a year later (Anderson and Evans, 2006). A continuing trend towards women's independence and empowerment is accompanied, across many markets globally, by an emergent softening and 'refeminization', which deploys codes very different from postfeminist glamour and the semiotic carapace of femininity associated with, say, Madonna or Sex and the City.

From soup and femininity across a range of other themes and cultural symbols, modernization is moving from an assumed linear progress to something clearly more heterogeneous and multidirectional.

Global codes (and scalability)

One of the best known case studies from this first wave of cross-cultural semiotics is the award-winning work for Guinness defining the unifying international language of beer – later extended for Diageo to verbal and visual codes covering drinks in general (Harvey and Evans, 2001). The task in this case was to

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develop a map of global category advertising, drawing on cultural contexts and seeking out highest common factors as well as identifying local market emphases or skews. The codes and their mapping were then extended to accommodate mapping of key competitive propositions (via what the client called the study's 'semiotic keyhole' into the minds of competitors) – which would also serve to help Guinness/Diageo brands identify white space territories for new drinks propositions.

The African (Cameroon) and South-East Asian (Malaysia) markets used as the cultural sampling for this study yielded some interesting results compared with developed markets. A key difference in developing markets was the presence of unmistakably outer-directed badging codes – making an impression, appearing to be hip, being clearly 'on form'. The more developed a market the more apparently thoughtful and 'authentic' rather than 'showy' became the modes of self-projection. In these developed markets inner-directed (independence, freedom, intellect, self-containment) appeared to be the new outer-directed – a trend subsequently echoed in luxury with the movement away from status and bling to codes of experience, the authentic and crafted, sustainability and true discernment.

This connects to the anthropological logic of 'cool', a quality which appears to be always already somewhere else – as soon as it is named and defined no longer really cool. Semiotically in Anglophone markets the term 'cool' itself has, of course, suffered this fate – used now primarily by assiduously uncool middle class parents and their children (who understand what their parents are up to and stop around the age of 10 when they realize it's uncool). Genuinely cool people will only use 'cool' ironically, or with a flat tone (like a dead bat in cricket) which signals no clear directional irony but at least the presence of quotation marks. These people also keep up a ceaseless process of transition to new signifiers communicating the underlying quality once known as 'cool' – in 2007 in the United Kingdom this might have been 'sweet'. In 2009 it was 'random', before this term, in turn, was colonized by brands and semioticians (Gadsby, 2010) while the once truly random people now purposefully moved on.

Another revealing national skew, and a foil to intensifying cultural diversity elsewhere, appeared in German beer advertising codes. There was a preponderance in this national sample alone of one code cluster involving nature cues, harvesting, affirmations of purity (literal and metaphorical) and water – which in the sheer quantities seen in Germans ads would have been potentially disastrous in a market such as the United Kingdom, for example, where one of the attractions of bottled beer is that pub and club landlords, perhaps unfairly in some instances, are widely believed to add water to draft beer. Adding to these cues all the blond peasants and wanderers seen in the German ads, an innocent spectator might have thought s/he had wandered into one of the Heimat ('Homeland') movies still beloved by German daytime TV viewers at that time, or into an Aryan theme park. Underpinned by the Reinheitsgebot (national purity law), German beer became the cultural equivalent of a trash folder for once-cherished values and imagery that became taboo at the end of World War 2. Since the 2006 World Cup, a tipping point for positively re-embracing national identity, many Germans have come to see themselves as most others see them – as being among the most friendly, open-minded and tolerant people in Europe. Alongside this cultural development German beer advertising codes too have become more relaxed.

Another dimension of the beer and drinks work for Guinness/Diageo was that the semioticians and brand strategists who produced it also embedded it in the Competitive Advertising Decoding Kit, still in use by the client, through which their people in local markets can interpret competitor communications for themselves

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and identify the white space territory available for new propositions. A key takeout from this experience was that the “black art of semioticians” (Sherrington, 2003, p.24), far from being a mysterious activity practiced only by academics and gurus, is amenable to clear process, accessible and if handled appropriately scalable.

APPLYING SEMIOTICS IN INDIA

“India is like an ancient palimpsest in which layer upon layer of thought has been inscribed and yet no succeeding layer has hidden what was written previously” Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 1946
This section reflects the experience of Hamsini Shivakumar and her colleagues Meera Patwardhan and Ishwari Store at Leapfrog Strategy Consulting who are based, respectively in New Delhi, Mumbai and New Jersey.

Buying into the methodology

The Leapfrog team first heard of semiotics in the late 1990s, via some introductory training and a review of the work of an academic semiotician whose interests extended to brands and communication. Brand strategists and advertising planners tend to get excited by all new methodologies and this was certainly the case with semiotics. A concern shared within the team at this point, however, was that this particular approach to semiotics seemed to focus on analysing the status quo and then freezing it into rules to achieve certain brand goals. As such it appeared to be prescriptive in proposing, for example, that if you are a brand wishing to be perceived by consumers as an authority on beauty, then you need to present yourself in this way - use these sorts of pictures, this sort of tonality, etc. At a time when the ongoing challenge for brand growth was to break rules, challenge the status quo, lead consumers and excite them with fresh ideas – as was and remains the case in India - this rule-bound methodology did not seem very relevant. This did not immediately come across as a good way of yielding insights or inspiring creatives.

In 2008 the Leapfrog team became aware of another approach to semiotics, better suited to the sort of challenge they were being confronted with by Indian clients. After two decades of liberalization, middle class Indians had become savvy and demanding as consumers, seekers of variety and value in their consumption behaviour. Consumers wanted excitement and stimulation from brands and from advertising. Meanwhile marketers in India, as in the other BRIC countries, realised that their consumer base was predominantly young. So, repeating a pattern which emerged in Europe in the early 1990s, appealing to youth and connecting to youth culture became a key preoccupation – and an opportunity for an application of semiotics which offered not only richer cultural insight but also a forward view on changing consumer culture.

Having worked with Indian consumers for over two decades, the Leapfrog team sensed the limitations of the individual motivation and choice model that lies at the heart of qualitative research, questioning the consistency of mindset assumed by various profiling and segmentation models. Consumers defied easy stereotyping – so it became appropriate to label them chameleon consumers, people who adapted their choices to different contexts of consumption. More and more it seemed that consumer attitudes and perceptions were being shaped by collective forces such as culture and media – television programming, movies, advertising, the internet (for the more emergent segment) and the plethora of products and newer shopping environments. The idea of ‘modernity’ and being ‘modern’ had taken hold in the Indian middle class. Whether or not they subscribed to all elements of it, whether they reacted against it, or whether they

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aspired to it, almost all urban consumers encountered in research and socially day-to-day had an idea and an image in their mind of what it meant to be 'modern' and 'progressive' – living in tune with the times vs. being left behind or appearing to be of the previous generation. Brands, marketing and communication were strongly integrated into this idea of modernity – with key markers in terms of products used, that signaled certain attitudes integral to the phenomenon and mindset.

In this context of rapidly changing Indian society and urban culture, semiotic analysis opened up the exciting prospect of decoding the underlying structure of the changing cultural context as well as the new meanings being proposed to consumers in terms of ways to live and to be. It offered a powerful complement to qualitative research and a possible alternative to (or methodology to run in parallel with) ethnography, the primary tool for cultural analysis to date in India.

At another level one of the fundamental premises of semiotics, that context creates meaning, has a particular resonance with Hindu thought. Traditional Hindu thought attaches great importance to context in understanding a man's actions and judging him as a result of these. It starts by assessing actions in the light of four different aspects – the person's origin, his position in society or where he comes from, his life stage, his innate qualities or gunas and the immediate circumstances. Truth is relative and hence punishment is also altered depending upon the above four factors. While India is modernizing at a rapid rate, underlying cultural DNA is based on many elements of thought which have lasted through the centuries. These are reflected in the codes, the 'cultural software' through which humans, each in accordance with the structures they are brought up and develop in, exist as social communicating beings.

Convincing the client

At a more practical level, the Leapfrog team felt that in India both clients and their research partners had fallen into fairly set patterns of qualitative and quantitative work. Semiotics offered the potential to disrupt the familiar approach and help clients see consumers' relationship with their categories in a fresh light. By deploying in presentations material selected to illustrate current developments in popular culture and brand communications (juxtaposing the visual and the verbal; news stories, TV features, movie clips etc.; familiar and code-breaking images), semiotics offered the potential to inspire creatives as well, adding to the repertoire of its decoding tools the ability to directly inspire and help re-energize client communication executionally.

When introduced to semiotic analysis as a potential tool to enhance their marketing approach, however, clients repeatedly raised three questions:

1. Do you not talk to consumers at all? Is it purely expert opinion based? Is this not entirely subjective and interpretative?
2. If semiotics decodes culture, then what consumer culture is being studied? India is so diverse and is changing at a different pace in different parts – so is a unified cultural study even possible?
3. Are the emergent codes that you present, predictive? Who does this apply to? If these are the codes of a niche, leading edge consumer group then how can we be sure that these will become mainstream and dominant? If this indeed happens, then what's the typical time frame in which it happens?

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There are ways of reassuring potential clients around all of these issues – semiotics is informed and evidence-based expert opinion which includes a positive element of interpretation as all such opinion does; it embraces diversity through cultural sampling, analogous to the way qualitative research would approach the issue but applied to a diverse spread of media, discourses, local cultural forms (and analysts who can decode each of the respective cultural segments) rather than consumers per se; and the emergent codes may be predictive in terms of identifying patterns that are in keeping with the ways in which culture is evolving – but they also identify opportunities, trends that brands can actively bring into being and in some way ‘own’ rather than always just surf or piggy-back. Beyond these specific rejoinders, however, lay a more straightforward and immediately productive strategy – to introduce semiotic analysis to clients in India according to the way in which it works most effectively anyway, in conjunction with other motivational research and in a larger ‘join-the-dots’ approach to finding brand or communication solutions – with semiotics in the role of the big picture and joined up thinking provider, head-above-the-parapet pathfinder, and substantiated kick-starter of new ideas.

Integrating semiotics into client projects

The first opportunity to integrate semiotics came with a pitch for a brand portfolio redesign project. The project was for the long established market leaders in men’s suiting fabric in India, who also had strong presence in the men’s apparel market. The company had expanded its portfolio, recklessly proliferating brands. Consolidation of the portfolio was required, into two power brands which would also be total wardrobe brands for men. For each of these power brands, the main challenge was to arrive at the most compelling and contemporary way of refreshing the positioning while also connecting the brand to younger consumers and their culture.

The Leapfrog team went in with the conviction that semiotics had the power to offer fresh perspectives on evolving male identity in India. In a crowded category in which brand image drew heavily from fashion imagery, it was important to search for newer insights that the re-positioned brands could draw on for their communication. The semiotics component was woven into a project that had multiple elements of consumer understanding – a large scale quantitative study to project shift in category preference from tailor made to ready-made apparel as well as a quantitative study to map needs from apparel, irrespective of format of purchase.

The semiotic analysis of masculinity codes revealed that even in a modernizing India the patriarch figure continues to be the culture’s key male archetype. To understand the dynamics of change, all other male types have to be understood in relation to the patriarch – in opposition, contradiction or complementarity. The lover, the man of action and the sage were the three cornerstone male types that stood out strongest in relation to the patriarch. Given the extent to which the young are driving change in India, what was interesting was that the emergent codes of masculinity were moving away from the codes of the patriarch (to do with structure, stability and order) in the direction of harnessing and directing youthful energy and passion towards achievement and exploring creative pursuits and newer talent pathways. Indian culture has a strong DNA that inclines it towards making gods out of mortals and what was most interesting in the study was the revelation that modern popular culture seemed to be showcasing a ‘Super Male’ figure, a man who embodied all that is desirable in a modern man: an amalgam of a good son, a creative genius and a visionary - supremely good looking, talented and confident, having family pedigree and the sensitivity to be a woman’s man.

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Semiotic analysis was used not only to identify the Dominant (or mainstream) and Emergent codes of masculinity, but also to effect a pragmatic rule-of-thumb integration of the codes into the consumer needs map. This helped create a picture of the more unchanging underlying need structure alongside contemporary insights into the expression of those needs. This gave the brand re-positioning direction a real freshness and a rich set of stimuli to incorporate into communication development.

A second project opportunity showed how integrating a semiotic insight piece alongside conventional qualitative research gave the client penetrating insights into youth culture. The client here was looking to enter an impulse foods category dominated by a well-established leader brand. In the minds of consumers that brand was, in effect, the category. The client's market entry had to target a consumer segment under-served by the market leader and to challenge the category codes. The client decided to commission two pieces of consumer insight work in parallel – in-depth qualitative motivational research into the youth target group as well as a semiotic study of urban youth culture. In the client's words, the expectation was that the motivational research with consumers would yield the 'what to say' of the brand proposition and the semiotic study would deliver the codes and creative stimulus for 'how to say it' and for presenting the brand in a way that resonated with youth culture.

What was interesting and reassuring for the client was that significant elements of the semiotic analysis were aligned to what consumers said and articulated – the Dominant codes. However the Emergent communication codes from impulse categories and the culture mappings added fresh insights, far beyond what consumers could have articulated. Thus the hypotheses on ways ahead that semiotics brings, as well as the nuances of how to communicate to the target audience in a manner that connects, were of great additional value in this instance.

A third project involved studying cultural codes around a large Indian manufacturing and service group's brand positioning theme (and devising appropriately segmented ways of communicating it) among audiences as diverse as rural consumers and urban youth. In the case of rural consumers where the media material was limited, the semiotic analysis of cultural material was supplemented with ethnography – visiting villages and photographing any iconography, signs and symbols relevant to the brand theme.

The semiotic analysis threw up fascinating insights into the dynamics of socio-cultural change in rural India and how the new drivers of change of the past 15 years were creating new meanings. Rural culture, being the most traditional, is characterized by more set boundaries and rules. Stability in the social order is created by conformity to age-old rules rigidly imposed and the idea of boundaries represents the anchor point of rural culture. Education for change is a supporter concept of which the most aspirational and modern element is English education. Enterprise, requiring nothing other than freedom and energy is the new idea thrown into the rural context as a powerful agent of change and a potential destroyer of boundaries. Access via media, technology and creeping urbanization is the other idea and force that stands in opposition to ancient boundaries. Unsurprisingly, many of the emergent codes of change in rural India are reflective of the interaction zone between enterprise and access. In this instance, the client had already done extensive qualitative research and believed that only a new methodology could yield fresh insights to inspire both design and communication development. The project remains in progress at the time of writing this paper.

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Reflections

Looking back on an exciting initial phase of applying semiotics to insight gathering and brand consultancy in their Indian home market, the Leapfrog team is conscious of having acquired a powerful and flexible tool for responding to clients' needs in the conceptualization and design of projects. By integrating semiotics with other research tools, concerns about its validity were pragmatically addressed – playing to the real strengths of the approach as a great methodological team player capable of generating insight in emergent areas consumers feel the relevance of but are unable to tell researchers about spontaneously and directly without help from the kind of stimulus a semiotic decoding of culture and communication unearths. Their confidence in the easily recognizable Dominant codes identified semiotically leads clients to accept the Emergent, and to do so in the spirit of acknowledging these to be not so much hard black box predictions about emerging trends as an identification of believable cultural currents within which brands can create new trends.

Careful definition of target audience and selection of what felt like a complete set of the relevant cultural material for decoding led clients to accept the cultural codes and maps emerging from the process of semiotic analysis as being representative of a wider urban culture and ongoing dialogue about change being led by the media – with the option of discussion and testing with consumers not there as an alternative to this more adventurous and visionary approach but as a support and validation.

The work continues, with semiotics becoming a more familiar and welcome guest at the table alongside ethnography and talking direct to consumers – partners playing different and complementary roles in the quest for great qualitative insight and executional stimulus. This fits well with India's culture of adding and integrating (and, and, and) rather than opposing and discriminating (but, either/or) while also taking a holistic view of things and people in context: the categories, cultures and communities without which singularity carries no life or meaning. In its holistic approach semiotics brings something which is very much at home in Indian culture: the inescapable importance of context, "the meaning behind the meaning".

SEMIOTICS IN GLOBAL AND DEVELOPING MARKETS: THE SECOND WAVE

"You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke, too" (Andy Warhol, 1975)

Updating the picture, this section returns to the viewpoint of global semiotics, and to semiotic work in developing markets seen in the cross-cultural context.

Consistency and scalability

The approach to semiotics described in this paper enables a breadth and depth of cultural understanding – also a perspective on change, the future and how brands can communicate vibrancy and challenge by breaking the dominant category codes. It also brings the prospect of scalability for this methodology. Process, accessibility and transparency have always posed a challenge in the commercialization of semiotics. Mark Sherrington describes this as "one of the most powerful forms of insight", adding that at Added Value "we have worked hard to demystify it, with limited success" (2003, p.23). Guy Browning – writer, film director, innovation guru – also commented on an expertise which, historically, has had trouble

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communicating itself clearly or systematically: “Semiotically, semiotics does itself no favours” (see Harvey and Evans, 2001).

For semiotics to engage successfully with cross-cultural and global projects for clients this situation has had to change in the years since those remarks were made. On global projects local analysts feed into the co-ordinating agency insights on developing markets by working within a common process, conceptual framework and language. At the heart of a global or cross-cultural project there will be a sequence of actions, undoubtedly varying from supplier to supplier but going systematically through analysis and mapping of the cultural and brand communication materials, analysing specific brands and funneling all the findings down into strategies for leveraging emergent cultural and communication codes to re-energize the client brand’s communications. The more systematic the approach gets, the better the chance of scaling up the semiotic offer. Doing semiotic analysis well however, as with all forms of consultative expertise, draws on significant intellectual creativity, hands-on savvy and single-mindedness. In this respect a great semiotician is no different from a great journalist, researcher or craftsman (see Sennett, 2008).

Knowledge transfer

Ethnography, which emerged as a niche insight methodology around the same time as semiotics, could scale up and mainstream more quickly because the skill-set was easier to graft onto the existing skills of researchers than is semiotic analysis. Move the conversation out of the studio into the home, stick around and observe, add some terminology and (undoubtedly to the dismay of some academically trained anthropologists) you had something that could pass muster with clients as a kind of ethnography-light and help facilitate the transition to the thoroughly accredited and respectable field of applied ethnography that exists in international consumer insight today.

A transitional semiotics of this kind has never been much more than an embarrassing option, feeding any concerns about subjectivity and lack of grounding the client may start with in relation to this methodology. But the will to scale, accessibility and actionability is there (see Dexter, 2007), the translation of semiotics into widely accessible processes and language has begun (see Valentine, 2007 and the advanced semiotics courses run by ESOMAR, the Market Research Society in the United Kingdom and other national market research organizations) and the appropriate adjustments to university semiotics courses will no doubt be on the way. Keep an eye open for what becomes available at the institute with the highest renown and most impressive academic heritage in the business, the Semiotics Department at the University of Tartu in Estonia.

Evolution of project types

During this second wave of developing market semiotics new ways of applying the methodology are emerging. Some of these will be headlined here:

- Local companies in developing markets commissioning international research for global expansion: e.g. a project on cultural meanings and communication of ‘Chineseness’ in European and U.S. culture; with mappings from the cultural archetypes level up to the most emergent cultural codes; objective to identify opportunities for communicating specific Chinese brands
- International projects where the interpenetration of cross-cultural flows in reaching common platforms is becoming more dynamic; as opposed to “which of these developed markets ideas is going to work best in this developing market?” An example of this is the semiotics of complementary medicine applied

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to new product design in beauty – where the design energy between West and East flows powerfully in both directions to create new creative fusions and hybrids. Value and sustainability propositions originally put together for developing markets are travelling, post-recession and also in response to sustainability concerns, in the opposite direction to the developed to developing market flow that would have been almost exclusively the case in the past (reported by Space Doctors MD, Fiona McNae). Finding positive language and imagery to communicate the new cleaner, greener vision of civil nuclear energy is also an area where developing markets, with their quest for energy independence, are finding new communication codes that connect with consumers easier to come by than are their creative counterparts in developed markets with their history and deeply embedded codes of nuclear versus green polarization.

- Collating Residual, Dominant and Emergent data on specific themes and categories. A specialist semiotics agency's ability to do this and develop an overall 'map of maps' looking at cultural codes across time and space helps build a powerful resource that can spark insight for specific brands. In this respect one of the most fascinating topics is gender. Space Doctors works frequently in this area, across categories and markets (in the last two years covering India, China, Japan, Germany, United Kingdom, United States, Russia and Brazil). Some headlines emerging: a) confident masculinity reconstituted culturally around a variant of the 'urban knight' figure in the United Kingdom and United States; b) success and confidence of women as a driving factor in the development of Asian masculinity codes – Japan (masculinity crisis, withdrawal), China (male codes historically wise, adaptable, balanced – but tensions emerging), India (powerfully assertive masculinity codes including Emergent expressions of the Super Male figure discussed above; male-female balance and complementarity – at least in the public arena; release of libidinal energies via dating as a high-profile aspect of youth modernity). In this cross-cultural context India stands in a particularly interesting relationship to other Asian countries, maintaining a balance and positive interaction of modern empowered male and female types not seen currently in the same way elsewhere.
- Design Recoding. The specialism of visual semiotician and hands-on designer, Malex Salamanques Amiel. Extends the formalizing of semiotic process further into actionability by linking design recommendations with the specific codes and signifiers that represent Dominant and Emergent executional possibilities along key dimensions – e.g. pack 3D and shape, materials, substrates, colour, graphics, fonts. So recommendations come with creative stimulus representing a spectrum of executional options attached to each dimension. Applied in 2009 to global pack redesign platforms after semiotic research into luxury and indulgence in Europe, China and United States.
- Digital semiotics. The sources for the 1999 semiotic analysis of Russian beer (listed above) are an indication of how far semiotics has had to travel in the past decade in terms of media it engages with. In developing market youth culture work, as generally, media use and content is key to the tracking of emergent codes – websites, blogs and social networking being increasingly the raw material for insight. The flexibility and direct culture and media engagement of the semiotic method puts it in a good position in relation to digital to maintain the path-finding role of semiotics and produce hypotheses to be followed up with consumers. Cultural and historical context remain key, however fast the pace of change in this area. There is a current trend in the research industry towards representing social media as connecting clients directly to consumer thought processes and threatening to by-pass the role of the researcher. This is reminiscent of the data-fetishism of the 1990s before a constant preoccupation with how 'information' was changing the world gave way to the 'stories' and 'narrative' buzz-words, signaling that

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in fact the more data you get the more interpretation, structuring, prioritizing and communicating you need. There is a kind of cyclical techno-fetishistic geeky ADHD at large where people get over-excited about data. If you are old enough to remember the 'Age of Information', just read Christian Salmon's *Storytelling: Bewitching the Modern Mind* (2010) on what came next. People are going to need the stories, codes, maps, context, interpretation – notwithstanding social media and blog-mining, neuroscience, whatever. This is in no way to play down any of these amazing insight enabling technologies. Semiotic insight will be there too – as it will in understanding and facilitating the degree to which and modes in which virtual intelligence can complement the human in joining up as many dots as possible (see Arning, 2010).

New diverse global

Andy Warhol's words prefacing this section – about watching TV drinking Coca-Cola and seeing that Liz Taylor's drinking Coke, and the President too - are, in context, a celebration of America's cultural egalitarianism and the consumer goods that ubiquitously mirror this back. There is a kind of globalization, 35 years on, that chimes with Andy Warhol in this mood. German sociologist Ulrich Beck, who called this globalblization 'globalism' (Beck and Willms, 2003, p.7) characterized it as posited on a world market, driven by the agendas of neoliberal capitalist growth, with the United States as its core cultural signifier. As a cultural analogy for this the Warhol scenario by now would have moved on to somebody watching reruns of *Friends* on a laptop while sitting in Starbucks with a skinny latte.

Juxtaposed to this is what Beck calls true 'globalization', more pluralistic and multidimensional - with the UN perhaps, however "hesitant and flawed" standing as its core signifier. By cultural analogy this might be more like listening to Bob Marley (or World Music) in an Irish pub on the Bund in Shanghai. This may be you if your response to the Andy Warhol quote is to say "Andy, look in your heart and get in touch with your inner Ukrainian diversity, go outside, get some fresh air, have a drink, talk to some people, run about a bit" and "I know you were being ironic but who cares; postmodernism is complicit with that uniform drabness; treat it with less respect than you would bestow on a value-brand toothpaste - don't let it anywhere near your brain!" This will still be you if you feel the World Music/Irish Pub/Shanghai analogy is still too bland and homogenized – if you want to push further into more integral expressions of local cultural diversity and global heterogeneity.

The biggest cultural switch at the macro level during this second wave is that five years ago, in a contest between these two versions of globalization, you would have probably had to bet on the former, with the relentless progress of what G.W. Bush was wont to call free market democracy making the world safe for Starbucks and eternal reruns of *Friends* and *Sex and the City*. But by 2010 the other, more diverse, version of globalization seems to have won conclusively. Hands down. No contest. There came a tipping point to do with the Iraq War, the bailing out of the American financial system, and public acknowledgement before the bail-out that the system could actually collapse if left to its own somewhat unprincipled devices. It helped too to have different cultural imagery and discourses emanating from the White House – with signifiers of the more diverse version of globalization now sitting at the heart of the old uniformity.

In retrospect there is a sharp contrast between the relative homogeneity of the United States' 'melting pot' in the twentieth century and the enriched diversity of the linguistic and cultural gene pool within and across national boundaries in a new era which begins with Obama's U.S. and opens out onto the century of the

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BRICs and beyond. The next version of semiotics will be about engaging with that intensified diversity and an, if possible, further accelerating pace of change. It will also be about extending the reach of the methodology and the perspective on culture and communication it facilitates. This will involve more dialogue and innovation – within the different strands of commercial semiotics and between the commercial and the academic.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

“The future is already here. It’s just not widely distributed yet” (William Gibson, 2003)

And so to the future...

What’s next for semiotics in India

In India the economic prospects for the next decade appear to be robust and the market-based consumer society is an accepted reality unlikely to be overturned in a return to socialism or radical left political ideologies. The media sector is growing larger and more influential. Consumers are also increasing in sophistication and becoming more demanding of brands. Indian corporates have emerged from the last decade, including the financial downturn, more confident and financially stronger with an enhanced appetite for global expansion. In the light of these developments, there are many possibilities for semiotics to play an influential role in several areas.

As Indian corporates go global, they will be considering whether to make their brands global – as one of the leading companies in the hospitality sector, to give just one example, is doing currently. After their purchase and turn-around of properties in several different parts of the world, a strategic question for them to explore is how much of their brand values and of Indian-ness they should highlight, if at all. Semiotics, with its emphasis on contextual, cultural understanding at a multi-country level, is ideally placed to help answer this question on a methodologically sound basis.

Demanding consumers, activist NGOs and authorities that need to be sensitive to public opinion will lead to an increasing desire in companies to shape opinion around key topics and issues, positioning themselves as socially responsible and as thought leaders. Semiotic analysis which at its heart studies language and meaning is well placed to help shape the direction of the discourse around any subject – for influencers not only in corporates but also in government and NGOs. Consumers are also likely to become more demanding in expecting a forward thinking viewpoint from brands to excite their imaginations. Keeping a finger on the pulse in terms of how consumer culture is changing and media are propagating new codes, meanings and aspirations is something for which semiotics has shown repeatedly by now that it is particularly well equipped.

Marketers are increasingly viewing design as a key element of brand appeal, both as part of its symbolic equity and also in terms of aesthetic standards. Meeting design expectations, in terms of products and packaging, as they evolve with consumer sophistication will become de rigueur. Brands that fail to remain alert and keep up with the game on this dimension will lose their competitive edge. The semiotic study of design codes could be a valuable source of inspiration for product and brand designers as this discourse evolves.

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Of course, semiotics has the opportunity to take its place as an additional tool to motivation analysis in qualitative research and ethnography in cultural insight. All in all the future looks promising for semiotics in India, with a key danger lying in the opportunity being compromised by other forms of content analysis being passed off as semiotics and clients not obtaining the full benefits of current best practice in the methodology.

Space, star date 10th June 2010

In contrast with the positive outlook in India, any semiotic ground control based in the United Kingdom would be more comfortable at the present time to be with Major Tom, enjoying the global view, rather than dwelling too much on the domestic scene. With a new coalition government issuing daily warnings of dire cuts and a prospect of up to 20 years of hardship in the United Kingdom (addressing deficits, cuts in public service) there is a strong temptation to block out the sound of any nearby rolling news media, and concentrate hard instead on anything related to X-Factor culture, Britain's Got Talent, the new Sex and the City film where the emerging femininity crisis takes a trip from New York to Abu Dhabi or news of the England football team getting ready for action in South Africa. By the time you read this England may have won the World Cup and the United Kingdom will be a happy place. Or not. Whatever happens it will all blow over. Scattered showers but clearing up. Brighter later. We think we know all about climate change in Britain. We call it the weather.

The next iteration of semiotics will be about:

- incorporating learnings from our collaborators and clients in India and China, where there is a different mode and level of engagement with semiotics – Barthes (1983) and Derrida (1988) both suggested that there is something inherently liberating for Westerners in Asian thinking and writing systems. For want of a better word they feel intuitively 'semiotic' while for the Western scientific or business school mind sets the 'semiotic' is intuitively divergent, out of the box, against the true and rational current of things which, of course, has its advantages for semioticians working in these environments too.
- Continuing to engage with digital life as this paradigm comes to fruition and begins to understand and define itself more fully. Baby Boomers who grew up within the capitalism and conservatism versus socialism and anarchism (Spirit of '68) dynamic find it difficult to get their heads around the total absence of a functioning opposition of this kind in the minds of many educated people whose consciousness was formed in the Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan years. Something similar will apply in future to children who are around 12 and under today. The real versus virtual opposition will be a bizarre piece of old fogey thinking to them. When discussed in their presence it will sound like elderly people scrabbling in their purses decoding small denomination loose change with numb fingertips. The real won't be the absence of anything virtual (because they will have never properly experienced or conceptualized that), but the place where the fullest plenitude of all things we would today consider real and virtual can be found. When old people talk about reality the young will think of it as a kind of imaginary emporium they had in the old days. You could walk around in it and pick up all known available stuff, play with it, or travel (in real or virtual space) on or in it. The semiotics that can live with these people, understand them in their different cultural configurations, still grasp simultaneously the big picture and the detail as semiotics does today – that will be a pleasure to invent.
- Where the body starts and the inner, outer (or intermediate) enhancement begins. What beauty is. What real beauty is. Not much change there then.

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- Making the findings of analysis increasingly specific and concrete in their actionability. Continuing to understand and build the bridges from semiotic decoding to a thorough structured recoding of communications. Apply the steps already taken in this direction in pack and graphic design into digital media, advertising, word-of-mouth, anything that can be used to communicate a brand to a consumer.

Finally a brief fantasy scenario:

Just before the beginning of the commercial semiotics we have been talking about there was also the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Eastern Bloc. Then came the New World Order, one superpower, the End of History (Fukuyama, 1992), Millennial optimism and celebrity babies, the spread of free market democracy, the trickle down of wealth, aspirational lifestyles and everyday luxuries for all, no them only us. [...]

Followed by a yet more interesting and challenging future for and with semiotics:

The next phase of commercial semiotics begins, in 2010, at the threshold of changes likely to be at least as great as those following the end of the Cold War and fall of the Eastern Bloc, and which are as yet hard to imagine. Discourses and cultural assumptions around market liberalization, deregulation, unfettered economic growth, the spread of new technologies, and an individualistic materialism are now under interrogation and review from many different directions intellectually and spiritually. (James, 2007; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009) They are also being undermined from within by financial crises, a popular loss of trust in politicians and institutions, and apocalyptic scenarios around climate, pollution, resource scarcities, man-made and natural disasters (Zizek, 2010; Harvey 2010).

The continuing movement of populations elective or impelled by circumstances, new more diverse patterns of globalization, and a new era of rapid cultural readjustment and change are now in prospect for developed markets. In this situation the new muscles and capabilities semioticians based in these markets have developed working for global clients in the BRICs will be called upon to engage with unprecedented cultural and communication issues for brands and other interests closer to home. We live in interesting times. Preparing for lift off.

NOTE

More background to this paper and ongoing exchange of ideas and stimulus around diversity, globalization and semiotics at www.semiotopia.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Hamsini Shivakumar - To my partners, dear friends and fellow explorers, Meera Patwardhan and Ishwari Store.

Malcolm Evans - With thanks to inspirational colleagues at Space Doctors and Semiotic Solutions: Monty Alexander, Chris Arning, Gina Budd, Al Deakin, Gill Ereat, Josh Glenn, Mariah Hartman, Gareth Lewis, Fiona McNae, John Murphy, John Nolan, Peter Rock, Greg Rowland, Malex Salamanques Amiel, Stephen Seth, Catherine Sly, Dario Utreras, Ginny Valentine and Jo Whitney.

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