

Brand Management
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Hello all, welcome to the last lecture of this course called Brand Management. Till now you have heard me over last 19 classes on various topics and those topics began with a simple introduction to the idea of brands to it went to very complex details into the value calculation of these brands in monetary terms. We saw some stock market jargon how they can be used in the field of brand management like price earning multiple or EPS which is earning per share or simple share price. We also saw that how when brand acquisitions are done the companies go about calculating the value of the company and value of the brand before they actually make the bid. So, from something so simple where a sheep or a cow or a horse is being branded to something where an abstract idea is getting branded and converted into a valuable symbol something like say Google. Now when we think of Google what is it? It is nothing but a search brand a brand that allows you to search knowledge on a topic that you are wanting to find some information about.

Now this idea of search this idea of exploration this idea this serve this idea has been converted into a service and that service is a search service on internet and that service of search that service of exploration has been presented or developed as a brand and today that brand is called Google. In fact internet search and Google has become synonymous. So, today when we say why do not you Google this idea what we are saying is why do not you explore this idea or search about this idea. So, you can see that from branding something which is a living being something which is so down the value chain like a sheep or a cow or a horse to something which is an abstract idea like an exploration or search.

So, this whole journey this whole continuum from something so simple to something so complex is possible to be handled by this subject called brand management and we have seen this happening in the course of this lecture series of 20 sessions. In between we have seen some concept some complex and abstract concepts such as brand personality brand identity brand equity and so on and we have also seen some concrete concepts like five product levels or financial calculation or calculation of financial brand equity of brands. So, these are all very concrete ideas which we have dealt with during this lecture and of course the abstract concepts. Now, today what we are going to do is semiotics of brands. Today's lecture will be in two parts.

First part would deal with the semiotics of brands and semiotics is nothing but study of symbols. Now, we know that brands are nothing but symbols they can be a sign or if they become little deeper and complex they become a symbol. So, it is either a sign or a symbol and how do we study these symbols is something that we are going to look at in today's lecture and I would introduce you to one very simple concept which from philosophy and one school of philosophy called structuralism from that school I will introduce one concept which is which we will see how it can get applied into the field of brand management. So, that is the first part of today's lecture. Second part of the lecture would be brand glossary.

Now, brand glossary means that you know brand is a very exciting subject and what people do is take any word and associate the word brand with it and then it they say that it becomes a concept. So, because it is such an attractive field of inquiry everybody is creating new and varied terms related to brand. So, today we would see a few such concepts which have come into existence because of the excitement that surrounds this subject called brand management. However, we will look at some concepts which are reasonably serious and we are not going to look at frivolous associations. So, this is what we are going to do today in the last and the final lecture of this course on brand management.

So, let us begin with the first part of today's lecture which is semiotics of brands. Now, the as I said that I am going to introduce you to one simple though not so simple or seemingly not so simple concept called sign signifier and signified. Now, all of us understand that a brand is a sign, it can be a symbol, but first it is a sign. Now, there was a philosopher called Saussure and he created this equation called sign is equal to signifier by signified. What does it mean? It means that he broke the idea of sign into two parts.

He said that in sign there are there is one signifier and then there is one signified and the points that are given below I will come to these points a little later. Before that I would like to explain the signifier and signified as constituents of sign in greater detail. Let us look at one sign. Now, this is a sign that all of us are quite familiar with say sign of a dog. Now, when we walk onto the streets, we see some street dogs roaming around many of us have pet dog as well.

So, let us look at dog as a sign. Now, if we can divide this idea of dog as a sign into signifier and signified, how will it look? Now signifier in this case is the word or the sound dog. So, when I say dog, I am sure people around those who understand English language, they will conjure in their mind a picture of an animal of a being which has four legs, which has a tail, which has if it opens his mouth and it tries to speak the sound that

comes out is something like a bark. So, the sound dog or the word dog or the letters D O G, these are the signifiers. So, they form the function of being a signifier and these sound or the letters or the word, what are they signifying towards? What is the signified? Signified is that animal which has four legs, one tail and which perhaps barks.

So, signifier is the sound word is the sound dog and the signified is that four legged animal which looks like this. So, this is how the sign is this is how sign as an idea is broken into two parts signifier and signified. Let us see one more example before we apply it to the field of brand management. Let us see let us take the example of a tree. Now again tree is suppose the sign is tree.

Now what is the signifier and signified? Signifier is again the word the sound tree. So, when we utter the word the sound tree most people who are familiar with this language of English would create in their mind a picture where there is a brown perhaps a brown colored thick trunk on trunk there are several branches and on branches there are some green colored leafy kind of structure which are covering that whole thing. So, the signifier is the sound tree and the signified is the this kind of structure which has a thick round cylindrical trunk which perhaps has roots inside and on the top there are branches and which we have leaves. So, I hope you are getting the point that a sign any sign has these two parts signifier and signified. If you look at this picture in this slide you will see that the sound of the word is a signifier and concept that signifier or word sound refers to is signified.

So, concept is the signified and the sound or the word which is functioning as the indicator. So, sound is indicating you towards something. So, that indicator is signifier and indicated is signified. So, with this understanding now let us go back to this slide where we are saying that there exists no natural relationship between signifier and signified. What does it mean? It means that say we use the word here what it means is that suppose the word tree is the sound tree and signified is that concept called tree which has a wooden trunk and leafy structure.

Now, is there a relationship with between this sound tree and the actual body of object actual object called wooden trunk and leafy structure. What Soshur is saying is that there is no natural relationship because the word tree will stand for that object the word gach which is in Hindi or in Hindi we use the word paid. So, the word paid will also refer to the same object the word gach will also refer to the same object. So, what he is saying is that just because a tree has a certain structure it does it is not necessary that the word that expresses that object will have some similarity or will be tied to that object. So, there is a freedom between the word that expresses the object and the object itself.

So, what Saussure is saying that there is no natural relationship between signifier and signified as we can see that the word tree, the word paid and the word gach all three of them refer to the same object which is something like a wooden cylinder with a leafy structure. So, this is one thing that we must keep in mind because it suddenly as a brand manager it will offer you enormous freedom which we will see how. Second point he says is signifying or this it signifies through its relationship with other signifiers which means what when we say tree we are fixing the meaning of that object tree. So, when we say it is a tree we are also saying that it is not just branches we are saying it is these are not just it is not just a leaf it is a tree we are also saying. So, within the language it gets structured and this tree and not a tree is getting defined through the relation.

So, tree and say branch, tree and root, tree and trunk, tree and leaf, tree and ground all of them are related to each other as signifiers. So, root will indicate towards that part of the tree which is under the ground. So, what I am trying to say is that there is a relationship within the signifiers because they belong to one particular language. So, what Saussure is saying that sign is equal to signifier by signified is actually represents some kind of a structure. So, sign is equal to signifier by signified itself is a structure because he has broken sign into two parts which is like a structure.

Second thing he is saying is that language functions like a structure because language performs the function of a signifier and within that signifier family of words they find meaning in opposition to one another. So, a door is not a window and a window is not a door even though both of them are located on the wall. So, window finds its meaning from the context of wall and wall finds its meaning from the context of window and all three of them belong to the same structure of language called English language. This is called structuralism as introduced by Saussure and we are trying to take this and apply it to the field of brand management. Let us move forward and see how it gets applied.

Now, the study of symbols and science is called semiotics as we have mentioned earlier. Let us look at another example called Apple. Now, Apple of course is a computer also today. Today when we think of Apple we think of phones, we think of Apple laptops and so on. But let us first look at the original Apple.

Now, when we see an Apple, an Apple as a sign. So, let us look at Apple as a sign. Moment we think of Apple as a sign many ideas come to our mind. Apple's ideas could be health, it could be fruit, it could be many other things. Now, if you break it into the structure that we have spoken about earlier signifier and signified you see that the signifier function is performed by the physical existence.

So, which means Apple is a fruit which is red in color, it is healthy, it is red, it is round

and it has it is sometimes it has a leaf, it has a if you cut it out inside it is white, there are seeds inside. So, these are all signifiers towards the sign of an Apple. But what really it signifies, what is this signify? The mental concept that we have of an Apple. The mental concept is first it is a fruit. Just because it is round and red and leaf around does not mean that it needs to be a fruit.

Suppose it is a plastic an Apple made out of plastic then it is not a fruit. So, what I am trying to say is when you look at an Apple there are signifiers and then the signified is that it is fruit, it has freshness. So, if it is a fruit you have plugged it or you have bought it in the marketplace and it is edible. So, it is assumed that it is fresh, it is healthy, but there are other things other associations as well with the fruit of Apple or with the symbol or sign of Apple.

One association is temptation. Where does this temptation come from? It comes from the biblical origin of of Christianity. And if you remember in Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were created and God told them that you are free to do everything except eat fruit of this tree. Now, all of us know this story that Eve plugged the Apple and she was of course encouraged by the Satan and she took that temptation. She obeyed the Satan, she plugged that Apple and she offered it to Adam. Adam had that temptation and he consumed, he ate that Apple.

This is a picture, this is a story that all of us know and the fruit that is often talked about as the tempting fruit was the fruit of Apple. So, moment we think of Apple, we think of this idea of temptation as well. We also think of the phrase called Apple of the eye. The moment we say Apple of the eye, we know we are talking about perhaps a student in the class who is teachers favorite. So when you think of Apple and you think a little deeply, you also think of this idea that someone is a teacher's pet or teacher's favorite.

And then of course today when we think of Apple, we also think of a computer or a mobile phone. So, if we try to transpose all this whole structure into Apple computers, we will see what is the signifier in the context of Apple brand. The signifier is the elegance, the design, signifier is the phone or a computer, signifier is that logo of Apple and so on so forth. So these are all signifiers. And what is the signified? Signified is class because those who use Apple phone, they consider themselves slightly superior than the rest.

Then expensive because at least in country like India, Apple phone is considered to be an expensive phone. Then it is also the signified part when it comes to Apple brand or Apple sign is that it is very user friendly. So that element also gets signified when we try to break these the idea of sign Apple into these two signifier and signified. So see how a

concept from philosophy is getting applied into the field of brand management.

Let us look at another example. Now, again, this is a hotel that most of you would recognize. This is the Taj Mahal hotel in Mumbai. Many of us also are familiar with it because on 26-11 terrorists came and attacked this hotel. Now, let us analyze this brand Taj Mahal hotel from the perspective of this structure or this theory, which divides sign into two parts signifier and signified. Now in this picture in this slide, you can see that the signifier the sign is of course this hotel, but if we break it down, the signifier is this building, you can see this building and this is a very recognizable building in Indian cities.

So this building itself is a signifier that dome at the top, you remember that dome was bombed and it broke down then it was repaired later. That dome is also a signifier it the fact that it belongs to Tata group that Tata brand or the Taj brand that is also a signifier. So these are all signifiers, it is a five star hotel. So these are all signifiers of this sign called Taj Mahal hotel. But what really is signified is something that you must understand and on the right hand side you see five points written, they are all the concepts that this sign is signified signifying or the concepts that the signifier is signifying towards.

First is identity. Now what identity? How is this identity different from the identity of Taj or Tata? The identity is different because first it is a hotel and it is hotel within Taj and it is one of the oldest hotel of Taj and particularly because of the crisis that they faced in 2611, this sign of Taj Mahal hotel of Taj group of Tata group has acquired a new identity and that new identity is how they fight a crisis situation. So many of you may have heard that many employees of this hotel, they actually sacrifice their lives while they were trying to save the guests from the terrorists. So this identity has become something slightly different from the other hotels of Taj group. So this pride taking pride in the fact that you are a part of this hotel, a pride in the fact that there were people who gave up their lives to save the guests and they exceeded themselves. So their job was not to save guests, their job was to save themselves, but they were driven by a very sublime sense of duty and they felt that these people are our guests and our guests cannot be exposed to danger if we are there.

If danger is coming, the danger should first come to me and not to my guests. So what I am trying to say is that the signifier might be the building and the brand and so on, but the signified is always something at the concept level, at the abstract level, something which is also inexhaustible. You cannot finish it, you cannot get over it and because it is something so deep and so inexhaustible, that is why this brand or any such brand which can leverage on these abstract ideas, there will be no end to its growth. So this is

something that I wanted you to understand and especially from the angle of signifier and signified. I will give you another example and this example is of a simple luxury bag from the house of Louis Vuitton.

Now all of us know that it is a luxury brand and I am sure this bag would be a very costly bag. Now if the sign is that of a Louis Vuitton bag, what is signifier and what is signified? This is something that we must think about. A simple analysis would tell us that the signifier is of course, if you look at the slide carefully, you will realize that the signifiers are first that LV logo which is crafted in metal. So that is a signifier. What other things are the signifier? You see the leather, the quality of the leather when you touch the bag, the experience of touch of that leather will be a signifier.

So you see the pattern, the design which is there on the leather bag that square, dark square and the light square, brown colored, dark and light square alternatively that is a characteristic design of Louis Vuitton bags. So that is also a signifier. Then perhaps when you get to know the price of it, that is also a signifier. So these are all signifiers within this item or this object called bag. But what really is it signifying towards? What are the signifiers? Now for example, if you touch the texture of the bag or the leather of the bag, you will realize that this is an original leather.

This is not a fake leather. Perhaps this is a very expensive, very high quality leather. So what is getting signified is genuine nature, originality and of very high quality. So signifier may be this pattern and the ordinary touch, but when you understand the quality of the touch, you would realize that signified is something of a very high quality leather. So leather is not signified, but high quality is signified. Now if the signifier is a very high price, if high price is the signifier and when you actually purchase that bag and you make that payment, what are you making the payment for? Are you making the payment for a bag in which you can keep maybe a notepad and a phone and a few things? Are you buying that utility? No, because just for that utility a 500 rupee bag is also enough.

You are buying something else. What is it that you are actually buying by spending 20,000 , 50,000 or 5 lakh rupees to buy a bag which is so simple? You are not buying the utility we have to understand you are actually buying that status. You can flaunt the fact that you are carrying a Louis Vuitton bag. So you are buying that abstract idea that abstract concept called status. So signified is that status. So this is how I think we have to understand this idea called the structure called sign which is divided into signifier and signified. Thank you very much. .