

## **Celebrity Endorsement in Pakistani TV Advertisements: A Semiotic Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

*Celebrity endorsement is an everyday marketing tactic used in media advertisements worldwide including Pakistan. The use of celebrities in advertising is driven by the belief that if a product is associated with a celebrity who is admired or respected by the public, that product will be purchased more. In this research paper, a purposive sampling technique has been adopted to select the sample of the current study. A semiotic analysis method has been adopted to analyze the use of celebrity endorsement in Pakistani TV advertisements. The underlying meanings of the advertisements through identifying signs, signifiers and signified behind these successful marketing methods were determined. Furthermore, the current study discussed the importance of visual signals, body language, and context in showing the celebrities in the advertisements to endorse the brand.*

**Keywords:** *Celebrity endorsement, TV advertisements, Pakistan, Semiotic Analysis*

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### **1. Introduction**

Celebrity endorsement is a common marketing approach used by businesses worldwide, including Pakistan. In this strategy, a celebrity gets employed to endorse a product or service through an advertisement. The intention is to utilize the popularity and influence of the celebrity to inspire people to purchase the service or product. The use of celebrities in advertising is driven by the belief that if a product is associated with a celebrity who is admired or respected by the public, they will be more likely to purchase it.

In this research paper, a semiotic analysis of Pakistani TV advertisements that use celebrity endorsement has been conducted. Through this analysis, underlying meanings and messages conveyed by celebrity endorsements have been explored. The impact of celebrity endorsements on viewers has also been analyzed along with how this technique influences them to purchase the product or service.

The semiotic analysis is aimed at revealing how celebrities are used to create brand associations using visual and verbal cues. For example, an advertisement featuring a celebrity using a particular product can create a visual association between the celebrity and the product, suggesting that the celebrity

endorses and approves of the product.

The objective of this research is to acquire a deeper understanding of TV advertisements through the lens of semiotic theory. The current research focuses on the significance of celebrity endorsement in Pakistani advertisements. This research will add to the existing literature on celebrity endorsement and will have practical implications for marketers who adopt this strategy in their advertising campaigns.

## 2. Literature Review

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols, as well as how they are used to create meaning in a wide range of contexts such as language, art, culture, and communication (Barthes, 1967).

According to Barthes (1967), the word "semiotic" suggests any system of signs, regardless of its substance or boundaries, visuals, musical sounds, gestures, objects, and the complicated connections between all of these elements comprising the content of ritual or public entertainment. Saussure's split of the sign into two components; the signifier or "sound-image" and the signified or "concept" as well as his claims of the connection between signifier and signified is arbitrary. These are the fundamental elements for the development of semiotics (Berger, 1991)

Semiotics refers to the investigation of how meaning is formed and how meaning is transmitted. It examines the function of signs on images to understand the sign system used in magazines or anything else linked to sign systems (Saputra et al., 2023). Both linguistic signs (words) and iconic signs (visual images) function as signs, contributing to the overall code and meaning. These symbols may designate the item, person, or thing(s) they stand for, or they can have implications and meanings of cultural and societal significance. We are aware of a few, whereas others are not known to us (Kumar et al., 2012). Moreover, this universe is pervaded with signs, if it is not entirely made up of signs. Whatever we do may be seen as a message, or as Peirce suggests, a sign. If everything in the universe is a symbol, semiotics become quite essential (Peirce, 1974).

On the other hand, advertising is defined as a type of communication in which the creator or sponsor sends a message to a consumer with the explicit goal of persuading them to purchase a good or an idea (Cabyova et al., 2014). The visual depictions logically serve as the primary focus of any semiotic examination of television advertising since they can convey far more information than words and sounds (Solik et al., 2014). Many studies on semiotics have been conducted by different researchers. The difference between this research and previously conducted research is in the respective subject. The purpose of this study is to examine celebrity endorsement using semiotic analysis.

Celebrity endorsement refers to the use of celebrities or well-known public figures to promote a product or service. Celebrity endorsements in advertising are a popular marketing strategy for many companies that want to gain attention and establish a long-term link. The followers of celebrities view them as trustworthy and reliable sources of information. This factor is greatly utilized in industries like health and beauty. Advertisers may use celebrities' perceived knowledge and authority by associating their brand with them. This persuades consumers to try their goods or services (Balakrishnan et al., 2011). According to Rashid and Nallamuthu (2002), using a well-known personality as an endorser can improve the subject's rating of the ad. Celebrities in advertisements can be considered a form of signification, where the celebrity becomes a symbol for specific beliefs, qualities, or attributes. A

celebrity known for being fashionable and stylish may be employed to market a clothing company as this conveys the message that the brand is trendy and up-to-date (Rashid and Nallamuthu, 2002). Companies should consider using a well-known celebrity as an endorser rather than a nameless spokesman.

Semiotic analysis can be used to examine numerous signals and symbols used in celebrity endorsements, including the celebrity's look, body language, tone of voice, and general demeanor. However, the advertising practitioner must note that the use of a well-known celebrity is capable of generating initial interest and attention for an advertisement, but it occasionally results in an attitude change toward the product (Balakrishnan et al., 2011). Moreover, semiotics might be used to examine how the colors, typefaces, and slogans used in the advertisement along with the celebrity endorsement convey a certain message or image. To figure out how the endorsement is being used to convey certain meanings or values, the presentation of the connection between the product and the celebrity must also be examined.

In addition to creating buzz and media attention, using celebrities for commercials may be beneficial for businesses looking to stand out in a competitive marketplace. Furthermore, celebrities are frequently seen as trendsetters. Their support of a product might be interpreted as a sign that the company is modern and fashionable.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

In the process of signification, a meaning is given to the signifier and it links it to the object getting signified. It establishes a relationship between the celebrity signifier and the product signified. As an example, a celebrity with an image of beauty and style may promote a cosmetic. Here, the signifier (celebrity) communicates the signified (beauty and style) in connection to the product.

This research covers several facets, including celebrity endorsement, semiotics, and consumer behavior. 'Social identity' and 'schema theory' will be presented in this research as they explain the use of celebrity endorsers to establish a connection between the product and the consumer's social identity, as well as, how celebrity endorsements can be employed to activate existing schemas or to develop new ones that impact consumer behavior.

According to social identity theory, people get their sense of self-worth and identification from belonging to certain social groups, including the ones based on their race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic class. Consumers may identify with a certain celebrity in the context of a celebrity endorsement and experience a feeling of connection or affiliation with them. Customers who identify with a celebrity supporting a product may be more inclined to buy it so that they can display their identification and affiliation with that celebrity.

Similarly, within the framework of social schema theory, people organize and analyze information about their environment using pre-existing cognitive frameworks or schemas. When a product is recommended by a celebrity, customers may already have mental images or schema of the celebrity in mind impacting how they see the endorsed item. For instance, if a customer has a perception of a celebrity as athletic, they could be more inclined to buy a sports or fitness-related product endorsed by that celebrity.

These ideas are in accordance with the notion that consumers' social identities and schemas may have

an impact on how they view and react to celebrity endorsements. Based on the social identities and schemas of their target audience, marketers might carefully choose celebrities to promote their products.

In the context of Pakistani advertisements, numerous theories propose a link between the variables of celebrity endorsement and cultural environment including the 'cultural branding theory'. This theory helps in explaining how brands may become cultural icons and have cultural significance. For example, if a prominent Pakistani celebrity endorses a brand, that brand may be viewed as more culturally relevant and appealing to Pakistani viewers. Cultural studies, when applied to Pakistan TV advertising, would investigate how the celebrity and the product build meaning in connection to wider cultural discourses such as gender, class, and national identity.

As semiotics is used to analyze the visual and verbal messages conveyed in advertisements, 'semiotics theory' investigates how the use of a celebrity in an advertisement may be perceived as a sign or symbol and how the cultural context can influence the understanding of viewers about that sign or symbol. The semiotic analysis could additionally look at how celebrities and goods are represented visually and verbally based on the use of certain colors, visuals, or expressions. These signifiers may transmit connections and meanings that promote or challenge current cultural discourses, as well as contribute to the overall creation of the identity of the product and celebrity.

In addition, the brand equity theory suggests that the value of a brand is determined by customers' opinions of its quality, image, and other aspects. Brand equity theory, when applied to Pakistani commercials, would examine how the celebrity and the product build meaning and identity in connection to the brand's image and qualities and how these meanings and identities contribute to the brand's total worth.

Overall, all of these theories may provide a theoretical framework for the semiotic analysis of the relationship between celebrity endorsement and product in Pakistani advertisements, as well as, help in the exploration of how the meaning gets constructed through this relationship.

#### **4. Methodology**

The technique of semiotic analysis has been adopted for this research. Using this analysis, the addition of celebrity endorsements in Pakistani TV advertisements will be investigated. The population for the study is all TV commercials in Pakistan that have celebrities. A purposive sampling technique has been adopted to select the sample of this study. Commercials were chosen based on particular criteria, such as featuring specific celebrities, the celebrity's relevance to the Pakistani context, a range of product categories, brand-endorser fit, the celebrity's fame and influence, the visual appeal and creativeness of the ads, and the availability and accessibility of the selected ads. These criteria enabled a wide range of assistance for investigating semiotic aspects. The TV commercials in Pakistan that feature celebrity endorsements are the unit of the analysis and semiotic analysis is used to investigate how celebrities are used as signifiers to convey particular meanings to the audience. This has been analyzed and interpreted using semiotic analysis, with a focus on identifying themes, associations, and meanings that are related to the use of celebrities in Pakistani TV advertisements.

#### **5. Data Analysis and Discussion**

##### ***5.1: Radiating Appeal and Pre-eminence***



Figure 1.1



Figure 1.2

SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Human	Man	Credibility, Enhanced product appeal, Social proof
Object	Shampoo	Hair care and Hygiene

The above captivating commercial demonstrates the strategic use of semiotic research by emphasizing signifiers that exude credibility and influence. The celebrities who appear in this advertisement represent achievement, recognition, and popularity and create trust and admiration. The term "celebrity" refers to individuals who get media coverage regularly and generally have a high profile in a variety of fields, including sports and entertainment. They are used to promote goods, services, concepts, or organizations (Black Jay et al 1995).

Furthermore, the company aims to strengthen its reputation and increase its brand credibility and recognition by collaborating with influential people. The use of celebrities in advertisements helps consumers remember the given message and the brand. It also aids in the development of the brand's personality because when a celebrity is associated with a brand, the perception of that brand gets shaped in consumers' minds (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995).

Moreover, these Celebrities stand for success, fame, and popularity. Their appearance in the advertisement showcases their affiliation with the company and adds the element of credibility and awareness to it. Because of semiotic research, we identified signifiers that reflect strength and credibility, such as their looks and demeanor.

Celebrity endorsers are currently used by most television networks to market brands (Erdogan et al.,

2001). According to Erdogan and Kitchen (1998) businesses spend a lot of money comparing brands and organizations with endorsing traits like attractiveness, likeability, and reliability.

Finally, this product represents reliability as well as effectiveness. This advertisement communicates that this product allows for clean and healthy hair while engaging in physical activity.

**5.2: Exquisite Allure and Charisma**



**Figure 1.3**



**Figure 1.4**

SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Human	Man	Fascination, Empathic bond, Relatable appeal
Object	Biscuit	Comfort snack, Refreshing, flavorful

An endorsement is a form of communication in which celebrities act as brand spokespersons while using their fame and personality to validate the company's claim and stance (Kotler, 2009). This advertisement includes celebrity endorsement, utilizing semiotic research to express certain signifiers of authority and credibility. According to Silvera and Austad (2004) a person is regarded as a celebrity if they are widely recognized by a certain set of people and have distinguishing qualities like attractiveness and reliability.

The celebrities promoting the above product, their facial expressions while eating the biscuit, such as a smile or a contented glance, demonstrate that they are having fun. It means that consuming this product provides them with a delightful experience. According to Prachi Raturi (2005) there is nothing quite like a celebrity when it comes to selling. Signing a celebrity helps the company stand out from the crowd and if the relationship between the celebrity and the brand is appropriate, the buzz may grow into a roar. Goldsmith et al., (2000) found that consumers often see celebrities as trustworthy sources of information about the product or company they promote.

Moreover, this semiotic analysis identified signifiers such as their looks and behavior, which convey relatability and pleasure. Finally, the product’s packaging represents both flavor and convenience. Together, they offer the concept of a wonderful munching experience.

**5.3: Glamour and Resonance**



**Figure 1.5**



**Figure 1.6**

SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Human	Women	Lifestyle enhancement, sophisticated simplicity
Object	Detergent	Efficacy and cleanliness

According to Miller and Baseheart (1969) the influence of untrusted communicators was poor in comparison to the impact of messages from highly trustworthy communicators. This advertisement

has well-known celebrities endorsing a product.

These intriguing endorsers add a touch of glamour and glitter to the mix, attracting viewers with their captivating beauty and engaging expressions. Persuasion occurs through a process of identification in which the receiver is compelled to seek some form of relationship with the source and consequently acquires similar views, attitudes, preferences, or actions (Liu, 2009).

Consumers create one-way, imagined para-social relationships with celebrities when they grow more familiar with them. This is a result of greater media exposure. These relationships exist in consumers' perceptions and are a significant aspect of their subjective social experience. This phenomenon has the potential to be a strong generator of demand for luxury products in emerging nations (Zhou & Belk 2002).

Moreover, because of semiotic analysis, we recognized signifiers for their appearance and expressions, which stand for cleanliness and efficacy. These celebrities can be seen in the advertisement wearing flawlessly clean and bright clothes. This shows that the product successfully removes stains, brightens colors, and keeps garments clean. The packaging of the product and the bold colors suggest outstanding cleaning and radiant outcomes. Therefore, the product's link with a celebrity is a powerful marketing tool that may dramatically influence its impression on the consumer.

**5.4: Fame and Connectivity**



*Figure 1.7*



*Figure 1.8*

SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Human	Man	Reliability, Social connection, Advancement
Object	Sim Card	Connectivity, dependability.

When managed effectively, celebrity endorsement helps the company stand out, improves brand memory, and promotes quick exposure. The above figures represent celebrities endorsing a networking product. It is worth noting that not all celebrities are successful endorsers, making the selection process more intricate (Giffin, 1967).

Celebrities are carefully selected by advertisers because if any factor in this selection process goes wrong, the celebrity-endorsed advertising campaign may fail. These factors have a great influence on the audience since most of them like celebrities who are reliable and reputable, while others favor those who are attractive and have endearing features. However, both factors are considered.

Advertisers also seek a proper match between celebrity personality and product attributes, and this is useful because the resemblance of features with the celebrity and the product targets the customer's senses more positively. This leads to the development of favorable perceptions about the brand (Michael, 1989; Ohanin, 1991).

Through semiotic analysis, signifiers are identified in this advertisement such as their appearance and behavior, which implies trustworthiness and entertainment. According to Kamins (1990) opinions towards advertisements and items improved when celebrity endorsers' attractiveness increased.

This may serve as a metaphor for the products and connectivity offered by the product. According to Sharma (2007) today's consumers are not readily convinced by a celebrity in an advertisement, but they also need detailed product information, followed by brand name, overall attractiveness, and music/jingle. Therefore, the above product represents network connectivity and technical progress by featuring these personalities speaking and using their phone, emphasizing connectedness and communication

### *5.5: Popularity and Hygiene*



*Figure 1.9*

SIGN
Human
Object

*Figure 1.10*

SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Women	Trust, credibility, Influence
Soap	Hygiene, Cleanliness

The above figures show celebrities endorsing a hygiene product. According to Erdogan (1999, p. 299) likeability is described as affection for the source as it is an outcome of the source's physical appearance and behavior. Therefore, a semiotic analysis revealed signifiers including these celebrities' likeability, demeanor, and facial expressions which speak for cleanliness and safety.

Furthermore, it has also been shown that perceived communicator reliability produces a higher attitude shift than perceived expertise (McGinnies & Ward 1980). These well-known personalities represent beauty, health, and hygiene. Their appearance in the advertisement represents the connection between the product and personal hygiene.

The advertisement shows celebrities using the product giving the notion of relatability. Their facial expressions, body language, and interactions evoke feelings of certainty, trust, or confidence. The positive image that celebrities project on the public can make the advertisement's message more compelling (CHOI & Rifon, 2007). Marketers believe that celebrities boost the credibility of statements made, increase the memorability of the message, and offer a favorable influence that could be generalized to the brand (Ohanian, 1991).

Moreover, the concept that using the product offers a sense of comfort and dependability in maintaining personal hygiene was expressed through these emotional cues. The packaging and germ symbol represents cleanliness and anti-germ defense. Together, they communicate the idea of a safe and secure environment.

### ***5.6: Self-Assurance and Modernism***



Figure 1.11



Figure 1.12

SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Human	Man	Dependability, credibility
Object	Real-Estate company	Luxury, comfort, modernism

The advertisement above shows a famous person promoting a real estate business. Through semiotic analysis, signifiers are revealed as a celebrity's appearance and expression signifying trustworthiness and sophistication. The use of attractive people in television advertising is a standard practice. This is because physically appealing communicators prove to be more successful in influencing customers' attitudes and views than unattractive spokespersons.

Being a well-known personality, he represents success, elegance, and dependability. Agrawal and Kamakura (1995) argue that when a celebrity is associated with a brand, the association shapes customers' perceptions of that brand. The celebrity's appearance in the advertisement may represent the product's affiliation with a trusted and respected figure, improving the brand's credibility and grabbing attention. Moreover, many customers like it when celebrities talk about their interests and feel satisfied after learning about their lives and recent decisions (McCutcheon et al., 2010).

According to Giffin (1967) positive outcomes of trust include favorable disposition, acceptance, psychological safety, and a perceived supportive atmosphere. As the celebrity appears in advertisements in a variety of real estate scenarios, it builds a sense of connectivity between buyers and sellers in the real estate market.

### 5.7: Glamour and Modern Trend



*Figure 1.13*



*Figure 1.14*

<b>SIGN</b>	<b>SIGNIFIER</b>	<b>SIGNIFIED</b>
Human	Women	Positive brand image, desirability, trust
Object	Mobile phone	Communication, Convenience, Modern trend

The above advertisement displays well-known celebrities promoting a mobile product. Signifiers defined by semiotic analysis are their look and behavior that indicate style and attractiveness.

Consumers often see celebrities as trustworthy sources of information about the products or services they advocate. Source credibility has a great influence on the acceptance of the message by the receivers (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). The source credibility model examines the factors influencing the communicator's perceived credibility. According to the paradigm, a communicator's or endorser's perceived knowledge and dependability determine the success of a message (Belch & Belch, 2001).

Moreover, the advertisement shows famous figures using the product to demonstrate its features and capabilities. Advertisers choose celebrity endorsers based on their physical beauty in order to benefit from the combined impacts of celebrity status and physical appearance. Likability is the result of affection for the source based on their personality, physical attributes, or other characteristics (Ohanian, 1990).

Furthermore, this visual indicator shows the brand's technical accomplishments while also emphasizing the phone's functionality. The product and these renowned figures represent technological development and an innovative way of life. Together, they communicate the idea of a modern and

sophisticated product experience.

**5.8: Eminence and Coolness**



**Figure 1.15**



**Figure 1.16**

SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Human	Women	Coolness, Trendy, Emotional Appeal
Object	Pepsi bottle	Flavor, Refreshment

The advertisement above depicts social media stars advocating a product on television. Social media influencers are a new sort of third-party endorsers who change the opinions of the audience through blogs, tweets, and other forms of social media content (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). Endorsers can take the shape of a celebrity as an expert, a long-term spokesman affiliated with a product, or an aspirational figure with no understanding of or affiliation with the product (Seno & Lukas 2007).

These celebrities' appearance and age, which represent excitement and freshness, were identified as signifiers through semiotic analysis. Being social media stars, they represent freshness, enthusiasm, and style. According to certain scholars, physically appealing celebrities can predict advertisement effectiveness (Till & Busler 2000).

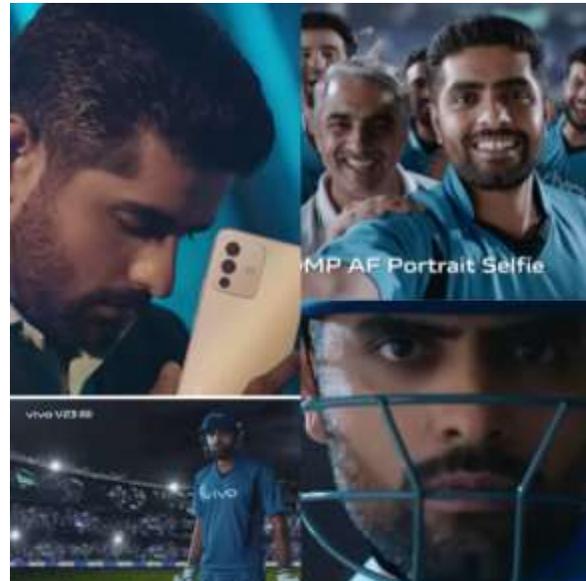
According to Joseph (1982) attractive endorsers have a more favorable influence on the products they endorse than non-attractive endorsers. Their appearance in the advertisement represents the product's affiliation with a prominent celebrity, improving the brand's attractiveness and grabbing attention from

the target demographic. In addition, the visual signal and brilliant colors emphasize the product's freshening and delightful feeling.

**5.9: Popularity and Technology**



*Figure 1.17*



*Figure 1.18*

SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Human	Man	Credibility, Dynamic lifestyle, Modernism
Object	Mobile phone	Connectedness, innovation.

Figure 5.9 depicts well-known celebrities advertising a mobile phone. A semiotic analysis of this celebrity-endorsed product revealed signifiers such as their popularity and tasks, which represent style and self-assurance.

However, marketers must be mindful that customers see celebrities differently depending on their personal traits. When a celebrity is in a certain scenario and marketing various items or services, buyers prefer a celebrity who is an expert. According to Pringle (2004) marketers should attempt to develop strong a link between the celebrity and the brand in order to accomplish the objective of awareness, interest, desire, and action, as modeled by Strong (1991).

Well-known personalities represent charm, flair, and public appeal. According to the source credibility model, the perceived level of competence and trustworthiness associated with an endorser or communicator determines the impact of a message (Erdogan 1999).

Furthermore, their appearance in the advertisement may represent the product’s link with a well-known figure, improving the brand's legitimacy and grabbing attention from the target demographic. According to research, celebrity endorsement has an impact on consumers’ trust in the brand (Agrawal

and Kamakura 1995) brand preference (Kamins et al, 1989) and purchase intentions (Ohanian 1991).

In Addition, the conversations and activities of these celebrities in the advertisement may symbolize how the product improves various aspects of life, such as recording great moments, remaining connected with loved ones, or enjoying entertainment on the go. These aesthetic cues communicate the sense that is essential to living a modern and happy life.

**5.10: Social Influence and Hygiene**



**Figure 1.19**



**Figure 1.20**

SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Human	Women	Aspiration, Social proof Influence.
Object	Tea Bags	Health, wellness, hygiene

The advertisement above includes celebrities endorsing a healthy product. Semiotic analysis identifies signifiers as their look and expressions that represent warmth and contentment.

Consumers create one-way, imagined para-social relationships with celebrities when they grow more familiar with them. This is an outcome of greater media exposure. These links exist in consumers' perceptions and are a significant aspect of their subjective social experience. This phenomenon has the potential to greatly generate the demand for luxury products in emerging economies (Zhou and Belk 2004).

Being a famous public figure, these celebrities represent friendliness, elegance, and relatability. Since the celebrity is appealing and the connection is within the hands of the fan, para-social relationships

are high reward/low-cost exchanges (Perse and Rubin 1989).

Audiences often see celebrities as trustworthy sources of information about the product or service they advocate. However, Miller and Baseheart (1969) found that the influence of untrusted communicators was irrelevant compared to the impact of highly opinionated messages from highly trustworthy communicators.

Moreover, one of the important characteristics of the source is attractiveness, which includes likeness, familiarity, and likability. Likability is the result of affection for the source because of their actions, physical attributes, or other traits (Ohanian, 1990). Their appearance in the advertisement suggests that the product is associated with a dependable and well-known figure, boosting the brand's reputation and attracting the target audience's attention.

## 6. Conclusion

In this research, the fascinating realm of celebrity endorsement in Pakistan TV advertising was explored through semiotic analysis. The underlying meanings and signifiers behind these successful marketing methods were determined. The results of this research emphasized the importance of visual signals, body language, and context in showing celebrities and the brands they support. The celebrity's reputation and familiarity played a crucial role in increasing the visibility and credibility of the brand. Celebrities' glamour, relatability, and aspirational attributes increased emotional appeal and persuaded targeted consumers to buy the products being endorsed. Throughout this research, it became clear that semiotics is a powerful tool for comprehending the layers of meaning hidden inside each advertisement. Finally, celebrity looks, gestures, and scenarios all become signifiers that convey beyond simple representations of reality.

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