



Corporate Identity of Political Party: A Semiotic Analysis

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Abstract

This research study presents a comprehensive semiotic analysis of the corporate identity of political parties, aiming to uncover the intricate symbolic construction underlying their political branding. By examining the visual, verbal, and gestural elements employed by political parties, this study provides insights into the semiotic strategies employed for the purpose of identity construction and communication.

The findings highlight the diverse and strategic use of symbolism by political parties to establish and maintain their corporate identity. The semiotic analysis reveals how political parties adopt certain signifiers to evoke emotions, project credibility, and appeal to specific target audiences. Moreover, the study explores the relationship between semiotic elements and the broader socio-cultural contexts within which these political parties operate.

This research contributes to the fields of political communication, semiotics, and branding by shedding light on the construction and communication of political identity. The findings offer valuable insights for political strategists, communication experts, and scholars in understanding the nuanced mechanisms through which political parties create and project their corporate identities in the contemporary political landscape.

Keywords: Semiotic analysis, corporate identity, political parties, political branding, signifier, signified, political communication.

Introduction

Corporate identity is different from the corporate image and corporate reputation. According to Joep Cornelissen, Corporate image is the profile and values communicated by an organization (p. 51). Initially only referring to logos and other visual design components, the phrase eventually expanded to cover all types of communication, including sponsorship, corporate advertising, etc. (p. 129). To distinguish an organization's position from the perspective of significant stakeholder groups, corporate identity entails the creation of an image of the organization (p. 131).

According to Prashant Kishor, a renowned political strategist, there are three vital elements for politicians and political parties to be successful. First, there should be a messenger, whom the public trust (leader). Second, the leader should deliver the right message, which concerned the public's issues and problems. And the message should be delivered in a credible format, that engages to public (Kishor, 00:18:05- 20:19), but at the same time, it is equally important for any political party and organization to build an organization identity such as logo, symbol, and slogans, posters, etc. which differentiates them from other political parties across the constituency.

Semiotics is not only the study of signs rather it is the study of everything that stands for something else, not just what we call 'signs' in everyday speech. Signs can be words, images, sounds, gestures, or things with a semiotic meaning (Chandler p. 2). The figurative and cultural features of two different profile photographs are examined in this essay. This is performed by studying background, color, and form aspects to gain comprehension.

Semiotics

Umberto Eco stated that "semiotics concerns everything that can be perceived as a sign." Signs constitute printed and spoken words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. Individuals interpret signs as "signifying something." (As qtd. in Tsotra, et al. p. 4211). One such basic semiotic concept is Saussure's distinction between the two inseparable components of a sign: the signifier, which in a language is a set of speech sounds

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or marks on a page, and the signified, which is the concept or idea behind the sign (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica).

"Nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign," Peirce said. This process of interpretation occurs by linking a sign to familiar systems of conventions; as a result, the sign becomes part of an organized collection of interactions and cannot exist outside of such a collective. Signs serve as a code between people, and they trigger or "unlock" previous experiences. In short, a human is a "homo significant," or a meaning-maker who employs signs to receive, understand, and transmit information (As qtd. in Tsotra, et al. p. 4211).

The semiotics approach can be used to discuss language-based media and image-based media because in either case, we find signs which carry meanings. Since language is the most fundamental and pervasive medium of human communication, semiotics takes the way that language works as the model for all other media of communication, all other sign systems (Bignell p.6). A medium is conventionally something that acts as a channel, passing something from one place to another. But if language and other sign systems are not simply channels, if they give form and meaning to thought or experience instead of just naming what was already there, then there is nothing that exists before signs and media communicate thoughts and experience (pp. 6-7).

The first two important ideas from Saussure those are the first, linguistic signs are arbitrary and agreed upon by convention, and second that language is a system governed by rules, where each instance of speech or writing involves selecting signs and using them according to these rules (Bignell p. 9).

Saussure's model of the sign

Saussure's sign model is based on the dyadic tradition. Previous proponents of dyadic theories, in which the two pieces of a sign are a 'sign vehicle' and its meaning (Chandler p. 14). According to contemporary interpreters, the signifier is the shape that the sign takes, and the signified is the thought to which it refers. Saussure distinguishes between the following terms:

A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name but between a concept [signified] and a sound pattern [signifier]. The sound pattern is not a sound; for a sound is something physical. A sound pattern is the hearer's psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses. This sound pattern may be called a 'material' element only in that it is the representation of our sensory impressions. The sound pattern may thus be distinguished from the other elements associated with it in a linguistic sign. This other element is generally of a more abstract kind: the concept. (As qtd. in p.14)

If we take a linguistic example, the word 'Chair' (when it is invested with the meaning of the president of the USA) is a sign consisting of:

- a signifier: the word 'Chair'.
- a signified concept: that the authority holds by the president).

Denotation and Connotation

While the distinction between literal and figurative language functions at the signifier level, the distinction between denotation and connotation occurs at the signified level. We are all aware that a word may have connotations in addition to its 'literal' meaning (its denotation) (Chandler p. 137). Denotation and connotation are concepts in semiotics that describe the relationship between the signifier and its signified, and analytic distinctions are established between two sorts of signified: denotative signified and connotative signified. Denotation and connotation are both included in meaning (p. 137).

In analyzing the realist literary text Barthes concluded that connotation produces the illusion of denotation, the illusion of the medium as transparent and of the signifier and the signified as being identical (As qtd. in Chandler p. 138). Thus, denotation is just another connotation. From such a perspective, denotation can be seen as no more of a natural meaning than its connotation but rather as a process of naturalization. Such a process leads to the powerful illusion that denotation is a purely literal and universal meaning which is not at all ideological, and indeed that those connotations which seem most obvious to individual interpreters are just as natural (pp. 138-139).

The first order of signification is that of denotation: at this level, there is a sign consisting of a signifier and a signified. Connotation is a second order of signification that uses the denotative sign (signifier and signified) as its signifier and attaches to it an additional signified (Chandler p. 140). Fiske warns that 'it is often easy to read connotative values as denotative facts' (As qtd. in p. 142). Just as dangerously seductive, however, is the tendency to accept denotation as the literal, self-evident truth. Semiotic analysis can help us to counter such habits of mind (p.142).

Brand identity is linked to the differentiating qualities that allow for the recognition of a product. The brand, and the set of corporate values that drive the selection of decisions over the life cycle of the brand. Brand identity, also known as organizational identity, is the synthesis of a company's culture, history, structure, traits, status, and reputation among competitors, customers, and society at large, and it is formed and consolidated over time. Identity encompasses everything important, distinct, and enduring about a company, as communicated through its mission, vision, actions, and association with the company's values and aims. Organizational identity theory reveals how identity influences and drives organizational goals and strategic objectives. Simply said, identity refers to how internal and external constituents and stakeholders perceive the firm (As qtd. in Bonera and Bogi pp.81-82).

Objectives

- (1) To examine the semiotic elements used in the construction of corporate identity by political parties.
- (2) To compare the corporate identity strategies employed by different political parties.
- (3) To investigate the role of symbolism, logos, colors, slogans, and other semiotic elements in shaping the corporate identity of political parties.

Research Methodology

Though there are many political parties in India successfully using corporate identity to differentiate themselves from others, Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress (INC) both are quite successful in the state as well as national level politics in India. Both political parties are active on all the social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc. Therefore, researcher uses the purposive as well as convenient sampling method under non-probability sampling technique for this research. Two profile photographs of the official Twitter handle of two national Indian political parties Bhartiya Janata Party (<https://twitter.com/bjp4india/?lang=hr>) and Indian National Congress (https://twitter.com/INCIndia?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor) (as shown on figure 1.1).

The researcher uses these two profile pictures for semiotic analysis to deconstruct the chosen political parties' corporate identity elements and identity for underlying symbols, and signs. And meanings. This can include visual analysis of logos, colors, and visual representations as well as linguistic analysis of slogans and messaging.

A Semiotic Analysis of profile photographs

The analysis focuses on two profile photographs of the official Twitter handle of two Indian political parties Bhartiya Janata Party (<https://twitter.com/bjp4india/?lang=hr>) and Indian National Congress (https://twitter.com/INCIndia?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor) (Figure 1.1). The specific profile photographs were found on the political party's official Twitter handles and are convenient samples, chosen because both the political parties are national political parties across the country, with contrasting messages towards the public (As the Analysis will show). In addition, both political parties spent a considerable amount of time and money making positive political identities and political advertisements and campaigns in all the mass media such as print, radio, television, digital and social media. this should also be mentioned that these political identities, advertisements, campaigns etc. are also used by the political parties in the physical world, a fact that proves that, both Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress (INC) have a presence on online platforms and their publicity models are different from initial classic models.

These two profile pictures are analyzed using semiotic principles of Saussure's Signifier and Signified, and Denotative and Connotative meanings. The research paper analyses the external characteristics and forms of these profile pictures to construct meaning. The points of interest are how the components of two profile photographs stand for something else, along with the something else, along with social norms and group experience that they represent After a general description of the two profile photographs, we then focus on specific elements such as background, colors, and forms.



Figure 1.1 BJP's Profile Picture (on the left side) and INC's Profile Picture (on the right side)

BJP's Profile Picture features the following parts: (1) the Party logo (Lotus flower under the circle comprises three colors, orange, white and green), (2) An image of Narendra Modi, J P Nadda, in the background, Narendra Modi wearing Saffron turban and greeting, Narendra Modi with a world leader, (3) Texts comprises Vasudhaiava Kutumbakam that means Entire world is one family, and G20 Summit, (4) Colour: Saffron, A schematic of BJP's Profile Picture is shown with Figure 1.2.

INC's Profile Picture features the following parts (1) An image of Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi wearing sweaters and shawls and hugging each other, (2) a Background picture: tricolor, and snow falling, (3) Colour: Black and white, A schematic of INC's profile picture is shown with figure 1.3.

An in-depth semiotic study focuses on the political party's profile picture and background. The BJP picture forwards Narendra Modi's image in favor of its background. A close reading of Narendra Modi with saffron turban and greeting suggests being a well-wisher of people who belongs to the Hindu Religion and tries to win the belief of the Hindu and Hindutva. Narendra Modi as a world leader tries to say to be a world power with Countries like USA, UK, Russia, China, etc. In short, these elements try to gain the attention of the people's belief in religion and religious organizations like Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) which is the world power, and Vishwa Guru (World Teacher).

The Indian National Congress's profile pictures show the humanity and brotherhood in society and the party's contribution to the freedom movements in the pre-independent era. And tricolor in the background claims to be a nationalistic and secular party in India.

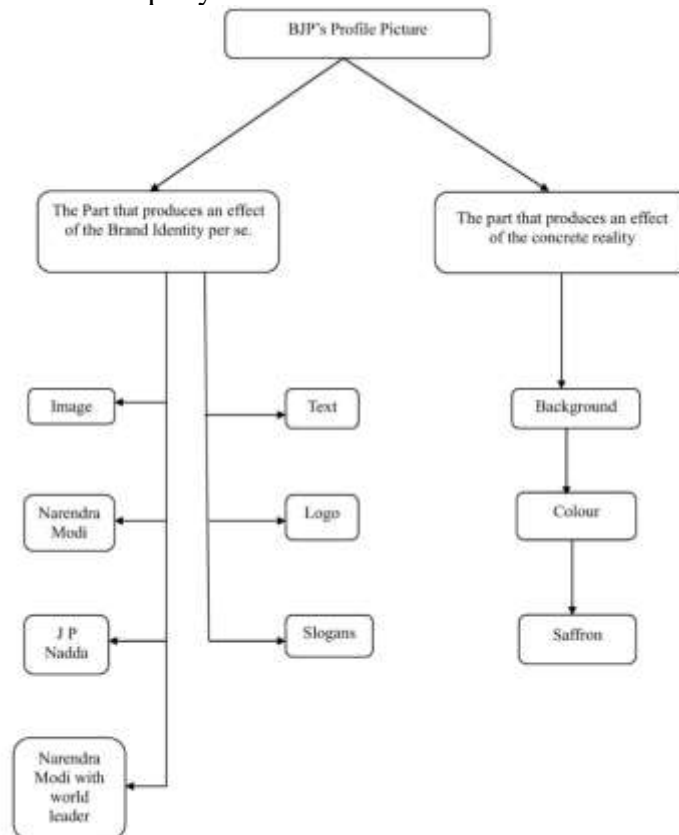


Figure 1.2 The BJP's Profile Picture

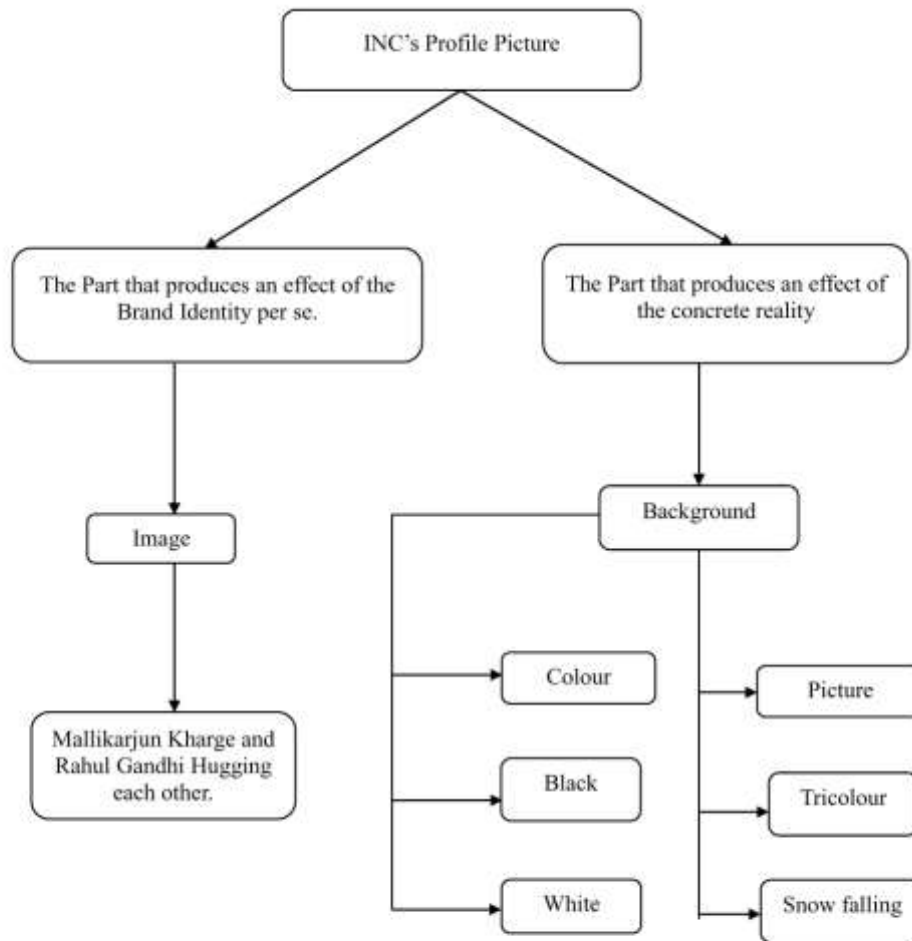


Figure 1.4 INC's Profile Picture

As far as the existence of background is concerned, both BJP's profile picture and INC's profile picture have precise backgrounds. One of the characteristics of white is that it is not always perceived as color thus it helps other chromatic elements of the profile picture to be more prominent, but in another sense, the black and white color is used in INC's profile picture's background shows the contribution of the Congress party in the freedom movement in the pre-independent era. For BJP, there is only one color "Saffron" that claims to be the party of Hindutva.

Both the profile pictures also differ in the use of color and objects used on the profile picture as the party logo is there on BJP's picture while the logo is not there on INC's picture. The way objects have been placed in the picture is also different from BJP's picture, Narendra Modi wears a saffron turban and greeting, Narendra Modi with global leaders, JP Nadda is also there and the logo of the G20 summit is there. This shows the power and influence of Narendra Modi not only as Prime Minister of India but as a Global leader also. Congress's picture on the other hand, Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi wearing sweaters, and shawls, and hugging each other with a black and white color background which shows the importance of Mallikarjun Kharge especially during the Karnataka assembly election not as party president but as a son of the soil of Karnataka state also that appeals the peoples of Karnataka to vote for Congress party.

On Semiotics

The various elements of BJP's profile picture suggest that BJP's aims and objectives are to be a world power and Vishwa Guru (World Teacher) and at the same time, to influence and gain votes from Hindu peoples across the country and make India a Hindu Rastra (A country where all the peoples follow the Hindu religion and

culture) and shows how popular Narendra Modi in India and across the globe. The elements of Congress, on the other hand, suggest being a secular, nationalistic political party from its establishment and its contribution to India's freedom struggle and movement, etc.

Party	Elements	Signifier	Signified
BJP	Image	Narendra Modi	PM of India
		JP Nadda	President of BJP
		Narendra Modi with world leaders	Positive international relationship with foreign countries and been a world power
		Narendra Modi greeting with saffron turban	strength and courage of the country
	Background	Saffron colour	Hindutva and
		Logo (Lotus Flower)	spiritual enlightenment, Goddess Laxmi, beauty, fertility, purity, prosperity, and eternity
		Logo (G 20 Summit)	Being a global power
Text	Entire world is one family	all living beings on the earth are a family.	
Party	Elements	Signifier	Signified
INC	Image	Mallikarjun Kharge	Party president
		Rahul Gandhi	Former party president
		Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Ghandhi hugging each other	romantic intimacy, security, emotional support, friendship, or love.
		Tricolour	The Tricolour is our national flag. In the national flag of India, the top band is of Saffron color, indicating the strength and courage of the country. The white middle band indicates peace and truth with Dharma Chakra. The last band is green in color showing the fertility, growth, and

			auspiciousness of the land.
		Sweater and shawl	Winter
	Background	People gathering with black and white background	Freedom movement
	Colour	White	Purity, simplicity, and cleanliness.
		Black and white	Life and death rituals

Table 1.1 A Semiotic Analysis of the BJP and INC's profile picture

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper has explored the corporate identity of political parties through the lens of semiotic analysis. By examining the signs, symbols, and meanings embedded in their visual and verbal communication, we have gained a deeper understanding of how political parties construct and convey their identities to the public. Throughout the paper, we have seen that political parties utilize a variety of semiotic elements, such as logos, slogans, colors, and imagery, to shape their brand identities. These elements play a crucial role in differentiating parties from one another, creating emotional connections with supporters, and projecting their core values and ideologies.

Moreover, the research has highlighted the importance of consistency and coherence in the corporate identity of political parties. A well-designed and effectively executed identity can enhance party recognition, improve brand recall, and foster long-term loyalty among voters. Conversely, inconsistencies or conflicting messages can lead to confusion and a loss of trust among the electorate. The semiotic analysis has also revealed that the corporate identity of political parties is not static, but rather evolves over time in response to societal, political, and cultural changes. Parties adapt their visual and verbal communication strategies to remain relevant, appeal to new generations, and reflect shifting public sentiments. However, it is essential for parties to strike a balance between evolution and maintaining a recognizable core identity to avoid alienating their existing supporters.

Additionally, this research has underscored the role of political branding and semiotic strategies in influencing public opinion and shaping electoral outcomes. By crafting compelling narratives, employing persuasive symbols, and using emotional appeals, political parties can effectively communicate their policy agendas and garner support from diverse segments of the population. Overall, this research contributes to the broader understanding of the relationship between politics, communication, and symbolism. By employing semiotic analysis to examine the corporate identity of political parties, we have revealed the intricate interplay between signs, meanings, and power dynamics. This knowledge can inform political strategists, campaign managers, and policymakers in their efforts to shape and communicate political messages effectively in an increasingly complex and visually saturated media landscape.

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