Semiotics and Marketing

A Case Study of the Renault Co. on Iranian Market

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This thesis is dedicated to:

My mother, Mahin Behyan - Sepehr

&

My boss, Claude Ingaud Jaubert
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Semiotics or the “study of signs” is a very broad science because everything can be taken as a sign (Chandler 2). The study of signs, and the application of semiotics in different sciences, shows there is an overlap between semiotics and other sciences; one of those sciences is marketing, and semiotics can be applied as tool in marketing. Marketing is very broad and covers different activities such as branding, communication, as well as product planning in order to create or modify economic goods, and semiotics can be applied in all these marketing activities.

In this thesis, semiotics is applied as tool in the process of creating or modifying a product on the basis of customers’ needs and expectations. In this case, the Renault function and products in Iran have been chosen to be studied within the frame of semiotic analysis of products and market.

1.1. Purpose of Study

Jean Baudrillard (1968) suggests that “An object (Fr. objet) must become a ‘sign’ in order to be consumed” (Umiker-Sebeok 46). Following Baudrillard, the aim of this study is to investigate how considering a product as sign is associated with product consumption and consequently how marketers apply semiotics to analyse a product and a market in order to know customer’s needs and to understand the market potential. Manufacturers exploit customers’ needs and the market potential to launch a new product or modify their current products. From this, the customers’ buying intentions can be raised and a product will be consumed. In this case, the importance role of the semiotics as a tool in marketing comes into consideration. Moreover, the fundamental role of interpretation as culture specific in order to make signs meaningful is an important aspect of the semiotic analysis of product and market.
1.2. Research Questions

- How is a product taken as a sign in the marketing context?
- How does a semiotic analysis of product and market provide a better understanding of customers’ expectations?
- How do manufacturers exploit the semiotic analysis of a product and market to manufacture a sign based on customers’ expectations?
- What is the role of interpretation as culture specific in the semiotic analysis of product and market?

1.3. Research Method

In this study, a qualitative research method is used. The data is collected through the Marketing Department of the Renault Commercial Division in Iran.

The research questions are based on the Jean Baudrillard’s idea. The research questions reflect what is going to be achieved through this study. Following Baudrillard’s idea, the Renault products are considered as signs and the consumption of Renault products is studied through the Iranian customers’ expectations. All studies are done within the semiotic analysis of the Renault products in Iran and the Iranian automobile market.

The theoretical background is based on Baudrillard’s suggestion. In order to build up the semiotic analysis of a product and market, this study starts with taking a product as a sign and ends with manufacturing a sign; it was necessary to use other theories to have a better understanding of the semiotic analysis of a product and market. The introducing of the Renault function in Iran provides a better image of the semiotic analysis of the Renault products and Iranian market.
Chapter 2
Theoretical Background

2.1. A General Definition of Semiotics

A very simple or basic definition of Semiotics is the study of signs (Chandler 2). Chandler quotes Umberto Eco’s definition that “semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign” (Chandler 2). This is the very broad and general definition of semiotics, as signs in a semiotics context can refer to many things, such as words, images, gestures, sounds, or a sign can refer to or stand for something else, such as the logo of a company or the badge on a car. Thus, the sign world is very broad; as a sign can stand for anything. Semiotics involves “the structures of meaning – producing events, both verbal and nonverbal” (Glen Mike 197). Semiotics refers to the concept of carrying or extracting a message through signs systematically.

It is interesting to note that in general, the sign transmitted through semiotics may have any of the following natures:

- Visual,
- Linguistic,
- Aural,
- The implied communication situation,
- Textual structure,
- Information structure,
- Visual emphasis,
- Genre,
- Binary oppositions and contrast pairs, and
- Communication codes. (Lawes 4)

A sign may exist in more than one of the above categories. For example the logo of a company or the badge on a car may be in both the visual and the communication categories.

Ferdinand de Saussure believed “It is possible to conceive of a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life” (Chandler 3). The role of signs as part of social life studies refers to the overlap between semiotics and social science. Social science is
very important as if involves human needs (Wood et al. 3), and this is why, semiotics is important.

Semiotics can be involved in many other sciences, disciplines or activities, such as marketing, communication, advertising, packaging, designing posters, television commercials, designing objects such as clothes, jewellery, logotypes or industrial design such as cars (Solomon 201). Oswald believes that semiotics is involved in influencing customer behaviour (Oswald 1) and Umiker-Sebeok explains that semiotics has an important role in selling a product. (Umiker-Sebeok 1987)

2.2. Sign Specification

Analysing the specification of a sign as the fundamental element of semiotics provides us with a better understanding of semiotics. Saussure’s model of the sign shows how a sign indicates of a signifier and a signified. In the model below, the term signifier refers to the form or shape of a sign and the signified refers to the concept of a sign. This model of the sign depicts the relationship between the two main elements, the signified and the signifier. The relationship between these two main elements is referred to as “signification” and the arrows show the relationship between the signifier and the signified. The horizontal broken line, is “the bar” separates the two main elements of the sign for analytical purposes. (Chandler 15- 17)

![Saussure’s Model of Sign](image)

Figure 1: Saussure’s Model of Sign

Denotation and connotation, which refer to the general meaning and the deeper meaning of a sign respectively, describe the relationship between the signifier and the signified. This is very important, as a sign is meaningless in isolation and cannot generate or indicate any meaning. In this regard, Saussure stated that signs only can be meaningful “[...] when they are interpreted in relation to each other” (Chandler 147). Hackley’s point of view can be added to complete Saussure’s idea: “generating meaning through
signs, semiosis and definition was a process of extracting messages and significance from signs, and thereby generating meaning.” (Hackley162). Chandler mentions the important role of “code”, because the meaning of a sign depends on a code (Chandler 147).

The role of signs can be studied in a marketing context. In this regard, a product and a logo can be considered as signs. The signifier indicates the denotative meaning of a sign and refers to the external part of the sign such as the material, technology, design, colour, brand name, logo, etc. The signified indicates the denotative and connotative meaning (Umiker-Sebeok 45). The signified dimension of a sign not only refers to the external parts of a sign but also it refers to the product’s non-material meaning which corresponds to customers’ psychological needs.

It is important to mention that a sign is usually divided into the three elements: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. Jahan and Biricik, provide us with a general definition of the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic elements.

**Syntactics**: “Relations among signs in formal structures” (Jahan 6). Thus, in this case a syntactic analysis refers to the structure of an image (Biricik 4).

**Semantics**: “Relation between signs and the things to which they refer; their denotata” (Jahan 6). Semantics refers to the meaning of an image. The meaning of a sign can be varied within and throughout different customers groups (Biricik 4).

**Pragmatics**: “Relation between signs and their effects on those (people) who use them.” (Jahan 6) and refers to the study of the origin, commons uses and communicative effects of signs (Biricik 4).

**2.2.1. Denotation versus Connotation**

According to Chandler, (Chandler 137-138) denotation and connotation are involved in the relationship between the signifier and the signified.

Denotation refers to the general and literal meaning of a sign; in this case a sign carries a common sense meaning or impression to all users. A visual sign is a good example of
this. The visual sign has a unique denotative meaning to all its viewers regardless their culture, like the logo of a company, the badge on a car or traffic sign.

Connotation refers to the deeper meaning of a sign; it is found in Socio-Cultural realm of the sign’s interpreters. So different factors can influence connotative meaning, such as the interpreter’s social class, age, gender or ethnicity. In fact, connotative meaning varies among different people, places or contexts, as each interpreter has his/her unique background, ideas, emotions and feelings. A sign may indicate different meanings in different societies. Further, a sign might be interpreted differently in different classes of the same society. Thus connotation is complex and complicated.

In the marketing context, the denotative meaning is the surface meaning of a sign, such as the technological and functional meaning while the connotative meaning indicates the product’s deep and hidden meaning, which is tactically applied as a non-material and imagistic meaning and meets a customer’s psychological needs (Umiker-Sebeok 45). Therefore, a marketer must be familiar with the culture and anthropology of customers or users of the target market to gain more market share.

2.2.2. Coding and Conversion of Codes

According to Saussure, signs are not meaningful in isolation. Therefore, signs only can be meaningful if they are interpreted and the meaning of a sign depends on the code (Chandler 147). Codes are divided into social, textual and interpretative groups; each group of codes can be divided into sub-codes. (Chandler 148-153)

A code can be taken in different formats such as letters, body movements and the style of clothes or even a colour. It is important to note that the receivers with the same cultural background and in the same cultural framework interpret the sign in the same way as they are all familiar with the code. As a general conclusion, the sign interpretation process is very important and complicated, because extracting meaning from a sign and the interpreting process occur in a community and the people of the community have similar cultural backgrounds. So culture plays a vital role in this process or in other words, interpreting a sign is culture specific. In fact, a community must be agreed on the process of extracting meaning through a sign and interpreting a
code and the code is specific to a society and an individual. In this way a code can be preserved.

Hackley believed signs are interpreted differently and bear different meanings in various cultures and community and consequently the codes indicate different meanings. Such codes are not sustainable and cannot be preserved (Hackley 162). This issue requires broad consideration when a visual sign such as the logo of a company or badge of a car crosses borders and is presented in another region, geographical location or country.

2.3. Semiotics and Marketing

As mentioned previously, for Baudrillard (1968) semiotics is important to marketing as “An object (Fr. objet) must become a ‘sign’ in order to be consumed” (Umiker-Sebeok 46). And Zinkhan suggested that products are considered as signs and they are analysed in a world of the signified by a system of signs (Zinkhan 119). Market is a world of meaning which is sent and received between consumers and marketers through signs in a cultural framework and time (Glen Mick 196). Thus, the semiotics or the doctrine of signs enables marketers to do market surveys with different approaches and marketers use semiotics as a tool. In other words, there is an overlap between semiotics and marketing.

Marketing science itself is very broad and covers branding, communication, product planning to create or modify economic goods, etc. In all the above mentioned marketing activities, semiotics can be involved. Hackley’s definition clarifies and provides a better image of the relationship between marketing and semiotics.

Brand names and logos, advertising, public relation coverage, product design and packing are some of the most obvious areas of semiotic importance for producing organizations. Marketing management itself can be seen as the management of consumer semiosis in a sense. Marketing specialists have the task, through communication strategies, of trying to manage and control the semiotic interpretation consumers place on company signs (and those of competitive rivals). Semiosis in marketing and consumption occurs mainly through language (both spoken and printed) and other visual and aural signs. (Hackley 163)
2.4. **Semiotic Analysis of a Product Structure**

The semiotic analysis of a product as a sign studies the signifier, which refers to denotative meaning and the signified which indicates both the denotative and connotative meaning of a product. The denotative and connotative meanings refer to customers’ physical and psychological needs respectively. The Semiotic analysis of a product clarifies how marketers make a semiotic analysis of a product in order to have a better understanding of how it corresponds to customers’ needs and expectations.

2.4.1. **Creation of Economic Goods and Exchange Value**

Umiker-Sebeok (33) explains that the creation of economic goods and exchange values is composed of three elements technical, business and cultural.

> [...] we must use the concepts of value and currency (which are clearly signs), the objects produced by social work and technology become “goods”. These economic goods [...] are seen as cultural items. This means that they signify and that they are signified by needs, intentions, images, symbols, and other psychological entities. (Umiker-Sebeok 33)

The technical process consists of all the operation, materials, etc of a technical product. The technical product can be very simple like nuts or as complicated as automobile. In the technical process, semiotics science is involved and goes with the concept and the technical name of a product or sign which refers to the product evolution and technical specification of a product (Umiker-Sebeok 34). The name of a product or sign signifies some specification of a product and communicates some data to the customers or receivers.

The business process indicates identifying a product by customers, goods value which expressed through money and customers’ individual and collective needs. Therefore, a product as a sign can be signified in different dimensions in the business process. (Umiker-Sebeok 35)

The cultural process clarifies the factors which can drive customers and raise the customers’ buying intentions. The cultural process refers to how buying or consuming a product may bring customers in different communities, different satisfaction or pleasure such as prestige. In this case, a product is not only signified as economic goods but also a cultural symbol and the role of culture is, to make a link between economic aspect and
cultural aspect of a product. In order to make a link, interpretation as culture specific is needed. At least two interpreting steps are applied. It is important to note that there is an overlap between the cultural and business process in terms of the customers’ individual needs.

Since every object, signified as exchange value, becomes the interpretant of a complex of cultural values, and each cultural value, signified as a semantic set of connotations of economic goods, becomes a possible interpretant of a set of such goods. Accordingly, beyond technical and exchange value processes, the marketing side of economic life gives birth to strong feedback. (Umiker-Sebeok 35)

Table 1 provides the better understanding of the semiotic structure of a product.

Table 1: The Semiotics Structure of a Product

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signifier</th>
<th>Signified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product (economic)</td>
<td>Connotative meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Denotative meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>(Technological and functional meaning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corresponding to consumer’s physical needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corresponding to consumer’s psychological needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ref: (Umiker-Sebeok 46)

### 2.5. Semiotic Analysis of a Market

The semiotic analysis of a market clarifies how marketers do a semiotic analysis of market to have a better understanding of how a product corresponds to customers’ needs and expectations. Semiotic analysis of a market goes into observing and discovering signs or marked signs and interpreting the marked signs.

By observing signs, marketers explore and discover significant phenomena or marked signs. The marked signs indicate important and hidden meaning in various areas of
customers’ daily, real life and subculture (Umiker-Sebeok 49). Exploring marked signs helps marketers to have better understanding of customers’ expectations and needs.

After identifying marked signs, semiotics involves two steps. The first step is to extract the hidden meanings of marked signs or explore existing meaning, and the second step is to interpret the hidden meaning and produce new meaning (Umiker-Sebeok 8). Interpretation is a fundamental element in the semiotics marketing process and is shaped through observing signs and interpreting meaning (Umiker-Sebeok 49).

2.6. Production Process

The semiotics marketing process ends in the production process. The production process refers to production of meaning and sign. Manufacturers exploit the semiotic analysis of product and market to launch a sign, based on customers’ needs and expectations.

The production of a meaning is interpreting the hidden meaning of marked signs which associate and reflect the consumer’s physical and psychological needs. Product strategy is defined according to the customers’ needs and expectations. It is interesting to note that even industrial designers exploit the semiotic analysis of products to produce the concept of the product which indicates new denotative and connotative meaning and correspond to customer’s needs.

The production of a sign exploits the new product concept and product strategy. In fact, the new idea or product concept will be delivered to engineers and designers to produce a new product or modify the current product.
Chapter 3
Introducing the Renault Company

A short introduction to the Renault Company is provided to allow a better understanding of analysis. The Renault Company in Iran has been chosen as the case study in this thesis and is studied from the aspects of semiotics and marketing analysis.

3.1. Renault in One Glance

Louis Renault founded Renault in 1898. The Renault Co. rapidly became the largest manufacturing company in France over 100 years and has expanded its function around the world.

Ref: World Locations of Renault factories.PNG.¹

Figure 2: Global Locations of the Renault Function

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renault

According to reference, the map title is “the global locations of the Renault factory” but according to the Renault Commercial Director in Iran “factory” is not proper and correct word as Renault has no factory in Mexico and Iran. Thus “function” should be used instead of “factory”.

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3.2. The Renault’s Function in Iran

The Renault Co. function in Iran started under the name Renault Pars 31st May 2004. The Iran Khodro Co. and the Saipa Group, two Iranian car manufacturers are Renault’s partners where to manufacture two of Renault’s automobiles, the Logan and the Megane with the Renault badge on them. It is important to mention that the accordance with the Iranian automobile market potential and customers’ expectations, more Renault products will be launched on Logan’s platform and other Renault models will be imported to Iran.

![Diagram of Renault Pars Structure](image)

Ref: Renault commercial booklet 21

**Figure 3: The Renault Pars Structure**

3.2.1. The Renault Strategies Expectation in 2005

Renault’s target was to gain 25% of the market share by 2009 using an adapted price positioning. In Iran, the market is price oriented and 60% of the car market is for automobile costing 8000 Euro. The Logan is not only modern and spacious but also economical; it corresponds to customer expectations and needs. Middle class Iranian families are able to buy Logan by just raising 20 - 25 % of their purchasing power and this amount is paid for a high quality, modern car.
3.3. The Renault Commercial Division in Iran

The commercial division is headed Mr. Claude Ingaud Jaubert. According to Ingaud Jaubert, the commercial mission in Iran is “To support and advise our both partners at any time and under volume, customer satisfaction and brand image”. The commercial division is made up of five different departments: Service, After Sales, and Spare Parts, Network and Marketing and Product Planning. The marketing department’s mission is to establish medium term strategy, product planning and to position each Renault product on the Iranian market to correspond to customers’ needs. The Renault commercial director in Iran strongly considers about the Renault share market in Iran and sustaining the Renault brand through customer satisfaction.

Brands cannot, therefore, be reduced to a mere sign on a product, a mere graphic cosmetic touch: They guide a creative process, which yields the new product A today, the new products B and C tomorrow and so on. Products come to life, live and disappear but brands endure. (Kapferer 52)

It is important to note that customer satisfaction can be achieved through corresponding to the customer’s expectations. In this regard, Ingaud Jaubert mentions the importance of the Renault image to the commercial team all the time and on all occasions. Therefore, Renault can position a desirable image of itself through customer satisfaction, and consequently Renault can gain more market share. Thus, the Renault image is important and becomes a major concern for the commercial director.²

Renault is modifying its current products and will launch new products on L90 platforms to correspond to Iranian customers’ needs and expectations and also gain more Iranian market share. This can raise customers’ buying intentions and consequently strengthen the image of the Renault.

²This policy comes by a trading off between exploitation and exploration concepts unless the policy will suffer the cost of experimentation (Gupta et al. 697). Exploitation refer and applying Mr. Ingaud Jaubert 25 years job experiences in the Renault Co. (since 1982) and in different countries as Benelux, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico and Iran. And, exploration indicates his strong recommendation to achieve customer satisfaction in order to gain more market share.
This study analyses semiotic structure of the Renault products and the Iranian automobile market to know how the Renault products correspond to customers’ needs and expectations in order to raise customer’s buying intentions.
Chapter 4
An Analysis of the Renault Co. Semiotics and Marketing

Baudrillard’s idea creates elements of ambiguity which refer to how considering a product as sign associates with product consumption. In order to clear the elements of ambiguity and have a better understanding of Baudrillard’s idea, his suggestion has been applied the Renault function in Iran. Therefore, Renault products have been analysed from the aspects of the semiotic and marketing studies and in different steps to build up the semiotic and marketing analysis of the Renault products in Iran.

The first step is, to discover how the Renault products are identified by viewers and customers. The approach is a semiotic analysis of the Renault logo. The Renault Logo is studied in three elements syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. The three elements refer to structure, meaning and communicative effects of the sign or logo respectively (Biricik 4). In this study, the Renault logo is analysed pragmatic in two different dimensions. Social and world phenomena affect the Renault logo changes, and also the relationship between the Renault logo with its customers.

The second step is, to concentrate on the pragmatic analysis of the Renault logo to find out how the Renault logo as a sign is codified to the Renault products in Iran. Thus, the Renault products are identified through the Renault logo by viewers or customers. Consequently, the Renault products are taken as signs. Then, the semiotic analysis of the Renault products in Iran indicate the denotative and connotative meanings which may correspond to Iranian customers’ physical and psychological needs respectively.

The third step is a semiotic analysis of the Iranian automobile market in order to explore and discover marked signs. Then the marketers interpret the marked signs. Interpretation of marked signs is culture specific and in this case, reflects the Iranian customers’ expectations. It is important to note that the customers’ expectations somehow reflect the customers’ culture. Finally, manufacturers exploit the semiotic analysis of the Renault products and the Iranian automobile market to launch a new product or modify the current products.
Therefore, having sufficient knowledge about customers’ expectations and from this manufacturing a product which corresponds to the customers’ physical and psychological needs can be a very important aid to raise customers’ buying intentions.

4.1. The Renault Logo Semiotic Analysis

Hackley believes a “Sign is something that can stand for something else in order to communicate and generate meaning” (Hackley 102). According to Hackley’s definition, a logo is a sign. The logo refers to a company, an organization, a product or a service. The semiotic analysis of a logo shows not only how the customers can identify an organisation, a service or a product through a logo but also how a logo can transfer vast amount of information about a company and an organisation which provides service. Kotler explains:

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or service of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors. (404)

According to the Kotler (404), goods or services can be identified by a brand and a logo is one of the elements that allow a brand, and consequently a product or service to be identified. It is important to mention that a brand identity and culture is defined and positioned by a corporation or a company. And, a logo is one of the ways to present a corporation identity and culture. Thus, a logo must be identified by any viewer regardless of culture, region or geographical location. The logo of a corporation or company is like the flag of a country. Thurlow and Aiello (307) explain that the flag of a country or nation must maintain the symbolic national value of a country or a nation in all international communities regardless of their geographical location and culture.

Therefore, it is not practical and reasonable to consider the cultural factor in the Renault logo syntactic and semantic analysis for each geographical location where the Renault has been active because Renault’s logo must maintain Renault’s identity and symbolic value which is defined by the Renault Co. based on Renault’s policy and culture.

The Renault Company as a globalized corporation has expanded its function into many countries. Figure 2 on page 18 clearly shows the expansion of Renault’s function all over the world. Hence, the Renault logo as a visual sign must maintain Renault’s identity and symbolic value. Therefore, to maintain Renault’s identity, the Renault logo
must indicate the unique denotative meaning for all viewers and customers. According to the semiotic lens, Chandler thinks a visual sign must have a unique denotative meaning to all the viewers from any cultural framework (Chandler 137-138). The denotative and connotative meaning of the Renault logo is defined by the Renault Co. and must connate Renault’s identity and culture all over the world. If the Renault logo indicates different denotative and connotative meanings in any culture or region, Renault’ identity cannot be preserved (Hackley 162).

4.1.1. Syntactic Analysis of the Renault Logo

Syntactics is the branch of semiotics that deals with the formal properties of signs and symbols and refers to the structure of an image; (Biricik 4). Biricik mentions to Charles Morris (1971) idea, Morris explains that the syntactic refers to the physical specification of a logo such as its line, colour, directionality and graphic simplicity and complexity (Biricik 57). The size of the Renault logo varies from 1.5 to 12 cm, according to the occasion of use.

The Renault logo comes in three versions; four-colours and two-colours and monochrome. The logos are presented in figures 4 to 6 below. And, figure no. 7 illustrates the colour combination used in the Renault’s logo.

Ref: Renault Graphic Guidelines
Colour is one of the important elements in composing a logo and logo identity. According to Qingbin “Standard colours refer to a certain chosen colour or a group of colours used in visual media by the companies as stimulus to sensory reactions and psychological responses to highlight the attractive characteristics of their products and their operation philosophies.” (Qingbin 277).

Following Qingbin, three important roles of colour come into consideration and are applied Renault logo semantic analysis. First, colour can be considered as visual identity; second, colour can present the corporation culture and thirdly, there are the physiological responses to colour. According to this study, the physiological responses are studied instead of psychological responses as it is more relevant in this context and analysis.

Firstly, in terms of visual identity, Renault preferred colour is yellow and the Renault logo is surrounded by a Yellow square. The Yellow colour of the Renault logo is an important element for the Renault visual identity. Secondly, the Renault logo’s Yellow colour and the Renault logo surrounded by a Yellow square connote “a symbol of
quality” (Renault Logo- Design and History); that somehow shows one of elements of the Renault corporation culture, identity and symbolic value. In this regard, Coca Cola is a good example. The Coco-Cola Co. logo is red which “symbolizes energetic, healthy and joyful youth.” (Qingbin 277); and Coco Cola has positioned this concept in all cultures and geographical locations. Thirdly, colours are generally categorised in different wavelengths. And yellow is in the middle of the wavelengths and the physiological human eye can detect the colour yellow very easily. That is why the Yellow pages are yellow. So, the colour yellow causes the Renault logo to attract attention easily.

In to Western culture, yellow symbolises joy, warmth and happiness (Grossman & Wisenblit 80). However, it is interesting to note that colours have different meanings in different countries and cultures, so the Yellow colour may symbolise something different in Eastern cultures such as Iran. But, as mentioned earlier, culture specificity of colour analysis is not practical in semiotic analysis and the Renault logo must maintain its identity and culture in any geographical location and must create the unique impression in any geographical location.

4.1.2. Semantic Analysis of the Renault Logo

Semantic analysis refers to the meaning of an image (Biricik 4). Biricik has used Morris’s idea (1971), Morris’s definition of semantic refers to the study of the meaning of signs, the relationship of signs to what they stand for. Charles Morris (1971) adds the relation of signs to their designation and the objects which they may or do denote. Morris believes that “While each of us may see the same general image, we each have our own understanding of the image, and thus, our own meaning. Catfish does not mean the same to each of us” (Biricik 60).

http://www.dinesh.com/history_of_logos/car_logos__design_and_history/renault_logo_-_design_and_history.html
As was mentioned earlier, the Renault logo is a global international logo and the Renault logo must maintain the Renault identity, culture and symbolic value that is positioned by the Renault Company. So by looking at the diamond alone as the badge on the car or the diamond which is located in the yellow frame regardless geographical location any viewer must be able to identify it as the Renault logo and define it as quality and French creativity (Renault Trucks)⁴. So, to consider all the different cultural element in the Renault semantic analysis, in different locations where Renault is active such as Iran, is not practical. And, the semantic analysis of the Renault logo just refers to the meaning of the Renault logo regardless of the culture or geographical location.

The Renault logo is shaped like diamond and has a rhombic form. The Renault logo is simple and imaginary. The badge is chromed and “there are two “creases” in the diamond running from internal upper and lower corners to the top right and bottom left external corners” (Subliminal Messages in Renault Company Logo)⁵. The chrome finish of the Renault badge symbolises modernity. According to the Oxford Advanced Dictionary, a diamond is: “A clear colourless precious stone of pure carbon, the hardest substance known”. The shallow meaning of the Renault logo, diamond synonyms as purity, luxury, durability and noteworthiness (A History of Car Logo)⁶ but the Renault Truck Co. defines the symbolic value. The Renault Truck Co. mentioned that the diamond shape of the Renault logo connotes quality and French creativity worldwide (Renault Trucks).

According to the BBC, the Renault logo format connotes the female sexual organ. “The overtly sexual nature of the badge is undeniable” (Subliminal Messages in Renault Company Logo). The BBC believes that this powerful feminine sexual sign makes the Renault brand different from other brands such as Citroen, Ferrari, Maserati, Peugeot, Rover and Vauxhall Marques whose logos commonly symbolise masculine.

It is not clear whether this semantic analysis of the Renault logo has the same impression among women and men. At least, my unscientific investigation in this area

⁵ http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A411779&clip=
⁶ http://www.signselectric.co.uk/work/car%20logo%20history.html
suggests that females have no such impression. My female friends and colleagues found this idea very new. They told me that they had never had such an impression and they consider the Renault logo as just a diamond. But it seems that men have a different feeling and the Renault logo has a different impression on them. They see it as a female sexual organ. This may raise the Renault cars’ desirability among men. Thus, it seems that “Gender” is a very important factor in semantic analysis and must be added to Morris’ idea.

According to the BBC studies, the empty space in heart of logo refers to “the womb and foretells of the grave”, it refers to whole of the life. In this case Renault tells us that it is well aware of our needs at the starting and ending points of its customers and users’ lives. “Renault reassures us that they give us this space for ourselves. We can drive through that void without fear”. (Subliminal Messages in Renault Company Logo)\(^7\)

### 4.1.3. Pragmatic Analysis of the Renault Logo

Pragmatic analysis refers to the study of the origin, common uses and communicative effects of signs (Biricik 4). Biricik mentions to Morris (1971) and Floch’s idea (2001) on pragmatic analysis. Morris believes that pragmatics studies go with the relations between signs and their users. Floch (2001) has a different point of view. He believes “logos are sensitive to context. Their meaning is largely determined by convention- the prevailing interpretation of what would otherwise be purely arbitrary symbols-combined with impressions culled from actual brand experiences” (Biricik 57). So, pragmatic analysis indicates social effects on sign and the relations between signs and their users. In this regard, the Renault logo pragmatically is analysed in both aspects. First, the Renault logo is analysed by how it is affected by sociological and world changes. Second, the Renault logo is analysed its relation with the customers. The Renault logo analysis in terms of its relation with customer is the starting point of the semiotics and marketing process.

\(^7\) [http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A411779&clip=]
4.1.3.1 Social Effects on Changing the Renault Logo

The following table shows the Renault logo evolution since it was established until today. Renault changed its identity, and the Renault changing identity is depicted through the changing Renault logo. The changes to the Renault identity are affected by sociological and world changes.

It is interesting to note that the Renault commercial director in Iran added one more reason for the changing Renault logo. Ingaud Jaubert believes Renault losing market share can be another reason for Renault changing the logo to establish a new identity.

Table 2: The Renault Logo Evolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>The first Renault logo was designed in 1900. The Renault logo was interlaced of the initials three Renault brothers Louis, Fernand and Marcel. In fact, the 19th century was the modern speed era and the human way of life was changed. The 19th century was ended with many inventions as Bell’s telephone, Otis lift, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>The Renault logo changed in 1906, due to two reasons. First: finding direct drive transmission as a very rich idea in 1899. In fact “Renault patented the first direct drive transmission system and built the first covered cap” (Nieto 18). Second: Fernand Renault died in 1903 and afterwards Louis Renault named the company Société Renault cars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Although the first world war began in 1914 and ended in 1918, Renault replaced its logo with the image of a tank which symbolized force and motion in 1919. In fact, Renault changed its logo one year after the first world war was ended. Renault changed its logo to the image of a tank because Renault had made a great contribution during the first world war by manufacturing military vehicles. “The first world war was the first mechanised war with trucks, automobiles, tractors, tanks, planes, submarines and automatic arms.” (Nieto 44).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1923

| Renault replaced its tank logo with the Grille-Shaped logo only for two years and introduced the name of “Renault” in its logo for the first time. Renault changed its logo because the first world war was finished and Renault use of “the technology of Renault’s tanks and war machinery found a new outlet with the Mechanisation of agriculture” (Nieto 62). |

### 1925

| Changing the Renault policy was a reason that the company changed its logo in 1925. On March 17th 1922, Louis Renault modified the statues of the Renault Co. La Societe des Automobiles Renault became La Societe Anonyme des usines Renault or S.A.U.R. Louis Renault personal separated his assets from the Renault Co. Renault’s official function was defined as metallurgy and general mechanical engineering. It was a definition which paved the way for the creation of trust. The other change was opening up the firm’s capital to other shareholders and the creation of a five-member board of directors. Renault changed its logo to the rhombic form. Thus, we can see that changing Renault logo was affected by the series of events that happened in the Renault’s policy. (Nieto 65) |

### 1946

| The Renault brand became nationalized. This happened because the French government changed its strategy and nationalized very important sectors such as main transport networks, energy production and part of the banking and insurance system. Nationalization happened in France due to the destruction across the whole of France and renewed productivity (Nieto 136). |

### 1959

| In 1959, the words “Regie Nationale” disappeared. The logo becomes a plate glazed black and white, with the name of the company at the centre. This change happened as the governmental nationalization policy changed and decentralisation policies resumed (Nieto 143). |
In 1972, Renault modernized its logo. The designer, Victor Vaserely redesigned the diamond in the shape of a dynamic 3-D diamond. This change was effected because of the big changes was happening in the world. The world was going ahead towards modernity and developing technology. France was not exceptional here. The Franco-British concord prototype is example of modernity and developing technology in France. “Once commercial flights were underway, Paris- New York would be cut to 3h 40 min.” (Nieto 166)

During the years 1992 – 199, communication revolution and consequently globalization phenomena come into consideration. The world had changed and investment was on the sector level rather than the national. The French government boosted and ceased its aid to the public and independent business in the private sector. Renault privatisation process started in 1994. The Renault “Regie” was converted to the Renault S.A., a fully- fledged private company in 1996 (Nieto 226). In 2004, this logo was placed on a warm yellow colour in background that is still the Renault logo today.

Ref: (La saga du logo Renault), (Albertini 1992), (Nieto 1998) and (Renault Logo- Design and History)

4.2. Semiotics and Marketing Process

Following Baudrillard, the Renault logo pragmatic analysis in terms of its relation with customer and identifying the Renault products through the Renault logo in Iranian publicity is the starting point of the semiotics marketing process. The semiotics

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9 http://www.dinesh.com/history_of_logos/car_logos__design_and_history/renault_logo_-_design_and_history.html
marketing process of Renault products concentrates on how Renault products can be considered signs in marketing context in order to be consumed.

According to Umberto Eco, everything can be taken as a sign (Chandler 2). Thus, The Renault products can be considered as signs in order to be analysed in the world of signified by a system of signs (Zinkhan 119). Semiotic analysis of different dimensions of Renault products in Iran provides classified information systematically. The classified information of different aspects of Renault products provides marketers with the better picture of how much the Renault products in Iranian market correspond to the Iranian customers’ needs. This information is part of the data that marketers must have to manufacture a new product or modify the current product. The marketer information will then be supplemented by semiotic analysis of the Iranian automobile market. In this semiotic and marketing process, the semiotics analysis of Iranian automobile market concentrates on the customers’ needs and expectations.

Then, the semiotic and marketing process of the Renault products in Iran will be supplemented when marketers and manufacturers exploit all this classified information in terms of the Iranian customers’ physical and psychological needs in the Iranian automobile market in order to launch a new product or modify the current product.

4.2.1. The Renault Logo Relation with Customers:

Analysing the Renault logo in relation to customers, viewers or users is another dimension of pragmatic analysis. This dimension of pragmatic analysis concentrates on how the Renault logo is a visual sign is codified into two Renault products in Iran in order to define the relation between the Renault logo and its customer.

![Sign Composition](image_url)

**Figure 8: Sign Composition**
According to Saussure and as was depicted in figure 1 on page 11, a sign has been defined as being composed of a ‘signifier’ and a ‘signified’ (Chandler 14). Figure 8 indicates the relationship between the signifier and the signified in the Renault logo. This relation just indicates the literal meaning that in semiotics is called “Denotation”. For the user who is not familiar with automobile industry, the Renault logo has no particular meaning for him/her, except as a sign or a logo which is surrounded by the Yellow frame.

Nevertheless the logo has another meaning that shows the relationship between the user and logo. The Renault has a secondary meaning, beyond its literal meaning, or its denotation. In semiotics, the secondary or cultural meaning of a sign is defined as “Connotation”. The connotative meaning of the Renault logo is, a French car manufactured with the name the Renault.

As mentioned, Saussure stressed that signs are not meaningful in isolation, but only when they are interpreted in relation to each other and the meaning of the sign depends on the code (Chandler 147). In this case, the Renault logo as sign can be meaningful among the people or customers when the Renault logo is codified to its products the Logan and the Megane as a commodity code (Chandler 149). According to the Hackley (170), the Renault badge on the Logan and the Megane is interpreted in terms of a communicative code in the world sign and stand the badge or logo of a car in communicative category.

In fact the Renault logo is codified to two Renault products in Iranian publicity. Or in other words the Renault products can be identified through the Renault logo.
cars of different brands have nearly similar body designs the logo is one of the ways to identify cars in terms of their brand. In the following process, the strongest and most effective semiotics device is publicity.

As figure 3 on page 19 shows, the Logan and the Megane are manufactured by the Renault’s two Iranian partners with the Renault badge on them. This has negative effects on the quality of Renault’s products and customer services, although the Renault Quality and Commercial departments try to monitor the quality of the Renault products and customer services carefully. It is very interesting to note that the Renault badge on the Logan and the Megane influences some Iranian customers. Some Iranian customers identify and interpret the Logan and the Megane as two French cars and their impression is that the Logan and the Megane meet the high Western European standards and they think very rich customer services have been provided for them. Thus this feeling may influence some Iranian customers and can be considered as one of the ways to raise the customers’ buying intentions. Having such an impression among some Iranian people reflects to the Iranian culture which thinks that as Western products the Logan and the Megane must have very high quality with the rich customer services. In this case, the customer satisfaction survey is a creditable and good criterion to understand whether this segment of market has the correct impression and whether their feeling is realistic towards the Renault products or not but this study does not concentrate on Iranian ethnocentrism in terms of the Western automobile in Iranian market.

Moreover, the impression of some Iranian customers shows how the Renault badge and logo as visual signs can preserve the Renault identity to influence some Iranian customers and communicate with them. It is important to mention again to part of the semantic and syntactic analysis of Renault logo which refers to maintaining the symbolic identity of a company and corporation by the logo. Therefore, the impression of some Iranian customers comes back to the Renault symbolic identity which is presented by the Renault logo or badge and is positioned by Renault as quality and French creativity worldwide (Renault Trucks)\(^\text{10}\).

Further, Renault has positioned its image and has planned its product strategy on the Iranian market is accordance with customers’ expectations and impression. And, the Renault’s logo or badge is one way for the company to be interpreted and refers to Renault’s image and product strategy on the Iranian market. Table 3 which follows summarizes this.

By studying the pragmatic analysis of sign, the importance of the context where the sign exists comes into consideration. In this regard, the Renault logo analysis shows that the Renault logo is codified to the Logan and the Megane on the Iranian market and on other markets such as in Sweden the Renault logo is codified to other Renault products.

Concluding the pragmatic analysis of the Renault logo and its relationship with the Iranian customers shows that three factors could make the Renault logo meaningful in the Iranian market. In this regard, Glen Mike explained that “[...] a sign being anything that stands for something (its object), to somebody (its interpreter), in some respect (its context)” (Glen Mike 198). Thus the Renault logo and badge are codified and stand for Renault products, and Renault services, also Renault logo and badge are interpreted as the Renault image and the product strategy which are positioned on the Iranian market by Renault.
Table 3: Denotation versus Connotation Extended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signifier</th>
<th>Signified</th>
<th>Denotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renault</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Car Manufacturer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Connotation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the Renault marketing report in March 2010 in Iran:

**Renault Image:** “A worldwide modern class car maker, with reliable product and services, committed to the people, and providing comfortable, safe and fuel efficient products”.

**Renault Product Strategy:** “To extend the life cycle of the currently locally-manufactured products the Logan and the Megane”

In this case, publicity is the most important tool.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity Code in Iran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yamaha, Suzuki, Honda...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3. Semiotics Structure of the Renault Products

After the Renault products have been identified through the Renault logo and badge. Renault’s products like any other signs indicate the signifier and the signified as two fundamental elements.
The signifier dimension of Renault’s products refers to two sedan passenger cars with the Renault badge on them. The signifier indicates the technology, internal and external design. Signifier dimension also refers to the price of the two Renault products in Iran.

The signified aspect of Renault’s product in Iran refers to the both its denotative and connotative meaning of Renault products in Iran. The Denotative and connotative refer to the surface meaning of the Renault products and non-material meaning of Renault’s products respectively (Umiker-Sebeok 45). The connotative meaning, Renault has defined and positioned Renault’ image and plan Renault product strategy in Iran which can fulfil the Iranian customers’ psychological needs. And denotative meanings of each of Renault’s products refer to the Iranian customers’ physical needs. It is the Renault marketing department’s mission in Iran to establish medium term strategy as well as the product planning and positioning of each Renault product in the Iranian market to correspond to customers’ needs. Renault products are analysed within an economic goods and exchange value logical chain which allows marketers more classified information systematically. The semiotic structure of Renault’s products in Iran is depicted in table 4 on page 44.

**4.3.1. Creating of Economic Goods and Exchange Value**

The Renault Iranian partners manufacture the Logan and the Megane with the Renault badge on them; the Logan and the Megane acquire value and are expressed by a certain amount of money; then the Renault products are supposed to meet material and cultural needs and wants, through a psychological and social effect of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Umiker-Sebeok 33). The Renault sales rate and customer satisfaction survey are creditable criteria to measure the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the Iranian customers towards Renault products, but this study does not concentrate on the customer satisfaction survey as well as psychological and social effect of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This part of the analysis only analyses the Renault products within an economic goods and exchange value logical chain from three technical, business and cultural point of views (Umiker-Sebeok 33) in the world of the signified by a system of signs (Zinkhan 119). Renault products’ semiotic analysis sheds light on the way marketers work to have a better picture of how much Renault products correspond to customers’ needs and expectations.
Technical process:

According to Umiker-Sebeok (34), the technical process refers to the operation and material of a technical product. The role of semiotics in the technical process goes into the concept and the technical name of the Renault products in Iran. It is important to note that the role of semiotics is not very obvious here (Umiker-Sebeok 34).

The L90 and L84 are purely the technical names of the Logan and the Megane respectively. The technical and commercial names refer to the product evolution and technical specification of Renault products in Iran for manufacturers and customers. Renault products are taken as signs and their names indicate the signifier dimension of signs such as the technology, internal and external design. The signifier indicates the denotative meaning of the sign which refers to the customers’ physical needs. As depicted in figures 10 and 11 on pages 39 - 40, the classified information provides a better understanding for both marketers and customers how much the Logan and the Megane can meet customers’ needs and what customers are expected. The Logan and the Megane technical specifications indicate some data that the Iranian customers consider to be important factors for purchasing a car such as fuel consumption, safety options, interior and exterior designs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>2.0L AT</th>
<th>2.0L AT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Megane 1.6L, E2 Vs. E1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engine</td>
<td>1598cc, 16V</td>
<td>1998cc, 16v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Power hp/rpm</td>
<td>115/6000</td>
<td>136/5500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Speed</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gearbox</td>
<td>5speed-manual</td>
<td>4 speed Automatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel Consumption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined (litres/100km)</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Urban (litres/100km)</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban (litres/100km)</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering Wheel</td>
<td>Electric variable</td>
<td>Electric variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking system</td>
<td>ABS+EBV+EBA</td>
<td>ABS+EBD+EBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trunk size</td>
<td>520 lit</td>
<td>520lit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tires</td>
<td>195/65R15</td>
<td>205/55R16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front fog lamp</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart key system</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric power window</td>
<td>Front, rear</td>
<td>Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central locking system</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound system</td>
<td>Radio+CD</td>
<td>Radio+Cassette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Conditioning</td>
<td>Manual</td>
<td>Automatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric heated side mirrors</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airbags</td>
<td>2 front airbags</td>
<td>2 front airbags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior trim</td>
<td>Beige</td>
<td>Dark gray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front roof light</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front roof lights with passenger reading spotlight</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rear roof lights</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doors internal lights</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central storage under front armrests</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>unclosed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cushion and backrest 2/3 - 1/3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height adjustable &quot;Comma&quot; shape rear headrests</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed storage on rear shelf</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rear windows curtain</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip computer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>4498 mm</td>
<td>4498 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Width (incl side mirrors)</td>
<td>2026 mm</td>
<td>2026 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>1460 mm</td>
<td>1460 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelbase</td>
<td>2686 mm</td>
<td>2686 mm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ref: The Renault Commercial Division in Iran

Figure 10: The Megane Technical Specification
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>E0AC</th>
<th>E1CP</th>
<th>E2LP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engine Capacity</td>
<td>1598cc, 16V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Power hp/rpm</td>
<td>105/5750</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euro Standards</td>
<td>Euro III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO2 Emission</td>
<td>142 g/km</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Speed</td>
<td>175</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 100 km</td>
<td>10.2 s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gearbox</td>
<td>5speed-manual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel Consumption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined (litres/100km)</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Urban (litres/100km)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban (litres/100km)</td>
<td>7.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel Tank capacity</td>
<td>50 Liter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stearing Wheel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power assisted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking system</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>ABS + EBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trunk size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>510 lit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tires</td>
<td>185/65R15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alloy Wheels (15 inch)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front fog lamp</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric power window</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Front</td>
<td>Front, Rear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central locking system</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound system</td>
<td>Radio + CD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Front Head rest</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Rear Head rest</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Conditioning</td>
<td>Manual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric heated side mirrors</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airbags</td>
<td>Driver only</td>
<td>2 front airbags</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior trim</td>
<td>Dark Grey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height Adjustable driver seat with Lumbar support</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Colored Bumpers</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door Moldings</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chromed Decoration on front grill</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front roof light</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front roof lights with passenger reading spotlight</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip computer</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>4250 mm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Width (incl side mirrors)</td>
<td>1975 mm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>1525 mm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelbase</td>
<td>2630 mm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ref: The Renault Commercial Division in Iran

**Figure 11: The Logan Technical Specification**
Business process:

The term business process refers to identifying a product by customers, also a product as a goods’ value is expressed through money; it also signifies customers’ individual and collective needs. Therefore, the Renault products as signs can be signified in different aspects in the business process. (Umiker-Sebeok 35)

As mentioned earlier, the Renault products are identified through the Renault logo in Iranian publicity. Renault products in a system of signs are analysed and they are signified to the denotative and connotative meaning which refers to the Iranian customers’ needs and expectations. The denotative and connotative meanings of Renault products refer to the customers’ physical and psychological needs respectively. Renault products’ denotative meanings refer to the surface meaning or material meaning of the products which was mentioned in the technical process in details. But Renault products’ connotative meanings indicate the products’ deep and hidden meaning which is tactically applied as a non-material and imagistic meaning by Renault and meets customers’ psychological needs (Umiker-Sebeok 45). Renault defined the connotative meaning of its products, based on the Iranian socio-cultural customer, as well as this reflects the Iranian customer personal ideas and their interpretation of signs. Table 4 on page 44 depicts the denotative and connotative meanings of Renault in Iran.

The Renault products are expressed by currency or amount of money, which refer to the value of Renault products. In other word, Renault products as signs signify the economic dimension of signs in terms of their value. On one hand, the price of the Logan and the Megane refers to the customers who form a specific segment of the market with certain purchasing powers intent to buy car, on the other hand, based on their purchasing powers who intent to buy have different expectations. Thus, this provides a better picture for marketers to know how much market share they can gain and how to define the denotative and connotative meanings for their products in order to meet customers’ needs and expectations.

Cultural process:

The cultural process refers to such dimension of customers’ needs which is associated with the customers’ satisfaction or pleasure such as prestige or power acquired by
buying certain products. The cultural process indicates the customers’ individual and collective needs and the economic dimension of a sign. The important point is to make the link between customers’ needs and the economic dimension of a product in the cultural process. In this case, “Any advertisement creates a semiotic link between economic goods and cultural values” (Umiker-Sebeok 35). Renault has concentrated on such dimension of the Iranian customers’ needs. Renault has made a link between the customers’ individual and collective needs & the economic and exchange value of the Logan and the Megan in Iran. The Renault has reflected such customers’ needs in the advertisement context and presented it on the Renault website in Iran. In this regard, Renault has defined its products in Iran as, the Logan: a safe family car, and the Megane: safety, modern and robust (Welcome to Renault Iran)\textsuperscript{11}. The Renault products are defined in the short advertising phrase on the Renault website to reflect well the customers’ needs according to their purchasing power.

Semiotics and consequently interpretation have an important role in making link between the customers’ needs and their purchasing power in the cultural process. The role of interpretation is made more understandable by analysing the Renault products in the cultural process. Therefore, the Logan and the Megane are signified as exchange value. In this case they become interpretants of cultural values and each cultural value is signified as set of connotations of economical goods.

Therefore, the Logan and the Megan are expressed with a certain amount of money, so they become the interpretant to customers’ purchasing power which form a certain segment of market. Therefore, market segments have different expectations according to their purchasing powers. For example as mentioned earlier in the Renault strategies expectation in 2005, the Logan was launched for the middle class family in terms of income. So such a segment of the market is looking for a car to correspond their basic needs and modernity is not their first priority. The customer, who has more purchasing power and is interested in the Megane, concentrates on modernity as well. Therefore, the cultural process indicates the Logan and the Megane definitions on the Renault website; Renault products’ definition are based on customers’ needs and their

\textsuperscript{11} http://www.renault.co.ir/range.html?type=1
purchasing powers. It is important to note that in the cultural process, two interpretants are used to provide clear concept of the Renault products in Iranian market.

Table 4 which follows depicts how the Renault products are taken as signs and how the semiotic analysis of the Renault products provide the classified semiotics information for marketers to manufacture the concept of a sign which correspond to customers’ expectation and raise customers’ buying intentions.
**Table 4: Semiotics Structure of the Renault Products**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>The Renault products (object) are as sign of Safety, Modern and Robust. In fact, these objects are not only the sign of culture but economic as well.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Signifier</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Product (Culture) | Renault products in Iran  
Megane: Safety, Modern and Robust  
Logan: A safe family car |
| Product (Economic) | 1 Euro = 13450 Rls(29th July 2010)  
Logan  
STD 97,000,000 Rls  
DLX 117,000,000 Rls  
SLX 139,000,000 Rls  
Megane  
E1-1600cc MT 250,000,000 Rls  
E2-1600cc MT 260,000,000 Rls  
E2-2000cc AT 300,000,000 Rls |
| **Signified** | 1- The Renault products as sign have a value which is express through a certain amount of money.  
2- The Logan and the Megane are signified by the Renault brand.  
3 – The Logan and the Megane are as sign of individual and collective needs which make and create economic images of a product in a society |

**Signifier**

Technology: **Automobile**

Brand Name: **Renault**

**Signified**

**Denotative Meaning** (Technological and functional meaning)

**Renault Passenger Car (Sedan)**

**Logan**

Spacious, Affordable price, comfortable and Generous dimensions offer out standing interior space

**Megane**

Imposing appearance, unmistakable robustness and generous proportions

(Adapted from Umiker-Sebeok 46)

Object: Corresponding to consumer’s physical needs

---

"Worldwide modern class car maker, reliable (product and services), close to people, with comfortable, safe and fuel efficient product”

**The Renault Product Strategy**

“To extend the life cycle of the current locally manufactured products”
4.4. **Semiotic Analysis of Market**

The semiotic analysis of the market goes into the world of meaning which is sent and received between consumers and marketers through signs in a cultural framework and time (Glen Mick 196). Thus, a product is taken as sign and the semiotic analysis of product provides classified information systematically for marketers to have a better understanding of whether the product can correspond to customers’ physical and psychological needs or not. However, the semiotic analysis of products is not sufficient; the marketers need to explore and discover customers’ expectations in the market. Therefore, the semiotic analysis of the market provides classified information systematically about customers’ expectations and needs.

![Figure 12: Semiotic Analysis of Market](image)

As it is illustrated in figure 12, the semiotic analysis of market starts with the interpretation process and ends with the production process.

4.4.1. **Interpretation Process**

The semiotic analysis of the market starts with the interpretation process. The interpretation as one of the culture specifics has a fundamental role in the semiotic and marketing analysis. Because the market is analysed through signs in a cultural
framework and time (Glen Mick 196) and the signs are meaningful when they are interpreted (Chandler 147). In the interpreting of signs process, the role of culture is inevitable. Culture is taken as a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds and interacts with us all the time (Schein 1). Therefore culture influences us and the community which is formed by us. Consequently culture influences “[...] signs as part of social life” (Chandler 3) and how we interpret signs. That is why, as mentioned earlier, the interpretation is culture specific and the community must be agreed on the process of interpreting signs. In order to have a better understanding, the concept of culture is defined.

The whole point of a semiotic approach to culture is, as I have said, to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them (Geertz 24)

Therefore, the role of interpretation as culture specific in the semiotic analysis of market comes into consideration. And this thesis analyses the semiotic approaches to analysing the Iranian automobile market in a world of signs and interpreting the signs. The meaning of the signs aids marketers to know the Iranian customers’ expectations and the customers’ expectations and buying intentions are influenced by culture. In other words “culture is the most fundamental determinant of a person’s wants and behaviour” (Kotler 161). According to Hall, it is one of the functions of culture that influence the Iranian customers to pay attention to some issues or ignore others. What the Iranian customers pay attention to or ignore indicates and forms the Iranian customers’ expectations and buying intentions.

One of the functions of culture is to provide a highly selective screen between man and the outside world. In its many forms, culture therefore designates what we pay attention to and what we ignore. (Hall 85)

The role of culture in the interpreting of signs in the Iranian automobile market requires wide consideration because the Iranian automobile market is very price oriented and price is very important factor which influence the interpreting of signs. Figure 13 on page 48 shows that 65% of Iranian customers’ buying intentions are based on inexpensive cars and the purchasing power is very poor on the Iranian automobile market. The customers’ expectations and buying intentions fundamentally depend on price. Therefore, each segment of the market has specific expectations according to
purchasing power. In order to have the clear picture of the Iranian automobile market, the Iranian customers’ needs and expectations and this interpretation can create better understanding of the Iranian customers’ expectations and needs for marketers.

4.4.2. Observation of Signs

The interpretation process starts with observation of signs. Observation of signs indicates, exploring and discovering the “marked sign”. As mentioned earlier, the marked signs indicate important and hidden meaning in various areas of the customers’ daily, real life and subculture (Umiker-Sebeok 49). Marketers observe and explore for marked signs in the Iranian automobile market. Then, the marked signs are interpreted on the basis of the Iranian cultural framework. It is important to note that each culture has smaller subcultures. Kotler explains that:

Each culture consists of smaller subcultures that provide more specific identification and socialization for their members. Subcultures include nationalities, religions, racial groups, and geographic regions. Many subcultures makeup important market segments, and marketers often design products and marketing programs tailored to their needs. (161)

In this regard, the Renault Co. surveyed Iran. Renault chose seven important cities in terms of size, population and economic activities; Mashhad with 2.5 million, Isfahan with 1.6 million, Tabriz with 1.4 million, Shiraz with 1.3 million, Rasht with 2 million and Ahvaz with 1.5 million inhabitants. Renault surveyed 2,672,008 households with more than $500 income.

According to the Renault survey, due to the growth of urban sprawl, and expensive unsafe air travel, road transport, both urban and intercity is preferred and the demand for personal mobility is increasing. But, unfortunately Iran is a high risk country in terms of traffic accidents as 20,000 people lost their lives in 2009 (It is not clear whether air traffic death is included or not); this can be due to the poor traffic culture and habits of Iranians and the poor safety standards of cars and roads.

12 Iran is a large country, with 1.648 million square km; it is the 18th largest country in terms of area. Iran has a population 73,244,000. According to the Renault survey, the Iranian market has strong economic potential due to the young Iranian population, growing consumer market and Iran has the third largest oil reserves in the world.
According to the Renault survey, the Iranian automobile market is very price oriented; figure 13 shows that 65% of market transaction is interested in new and used cars costing about 8000 Euros (fewer than 10 million toman)\textsuperscript{13}. And, people are looking for reasonably priced cars and price is a very important element in customers’ buying intentions.

![Car Purchasing Budget in 2010](image)

**Figure 13: Car Purchasing Budget in 2010**

The Iranian customers’ needs and expectations are different according to their purchasing power. Table 5 illustrates Iranian customers’ needs and expectations in 2008 according to the price of the car.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Car Price</th>
<th>The Customers’ Needs or Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11000 $</td>
<td>Cost, Reassurance, Comfort and Practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11000 $-16000 $</td>
<td>Reassurance, Cost, Comfort and Emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16000$</td>
<td>Emotional, Comfort, Safety and Reassurance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{13} Rilas is the Iran currency and 10 million tomans is equal to 100 million RLs.
It is very clear that people with different purchasing power have different expectations and needs and the customers’ needs priorities are different. It is interesting to note that each of the elements of the customers’ needs and expectations is interpreted differently, for example, according to the customers’ purchasing power, “cost” is interpreted differently. Thus, price is a very important marked signed in the customers’ daily, real life and subculture.

In the Iranian market, cars are divided into two categories generally: Complete Build up Unit (CBU) and Complete Knock Down\(^{14}\) (CKD) cars. Customers have different expectations of CKD and CBU cars. It is important to mention that CBU cars are more expensive than CKD. Consequently, the customers with different purchasing power are interested in different groups of cars and have different expectations.

Iranian customer expectation of CBU cars is that the vehicle is well designed, has a powerful engine with low fuel consumption, safety features, interior space, updated platforms, and a variety of options, advanced interior ergonomics and the latest technologies

Iranian customer expectation of CKD cars is to have the technology but not necessarily the latest. Some few and the basic technologies can meet customers’ needs and expectations as well as some safety features such (ABS, not EBD/EBV), Rear parking sensor, trip computer such as navigation and low fuel consumption.

Another important issue for Iranian customers is the fuel consumption. In recent years, the fuel consumption issue has become important for following reasons for the Iranian customers.

Firstly, Iran’s government withdrew its petrol subsidy and introduced fuel rations in June 2007. Due to the petrol rationing policy petrol-ration smart cards have been issued for car owners and petrol stations are equipped to accept them. Every private vehicle is allowed a limited subsidised petrol ration as Private cars are allowed 3.5 litres of subsidised petrol per day, state-owned vehicles 10 litres, and public transport vehicles a higher quota. If drivers need more petrol than their ratio, they have to pay a higher

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\(^{14}\) CKD: May consist of a complete kit needed to assemble a product
price\textsuperscript{15} (Q&A: Petrol Rationing in Iran)\textsuperscript{16}. This policy changed and became more severe in 2011.

Secondly, due to Iran nuclear activity, “the UN Security Council adopted a resolution proposed by the U.S. to impose new international sanctions against Iran June 9. Then additional unilateral sanctions against Iran were declared by the U.S. administration. Foreign Ministers of the EU countries approved a package of unilateral anti-Iranian measures, including the decision to reduce exports of petrol.” (Experts: Iran's Statements on Increase in Petrol Production Have Propagandistic Character)\textsuperscript{17}. And international economic sanctions against Iran are increasing\textsuperscript{18}. Thus, fuel consumption and accordingly its price is very important issue as it has negative effect on Iranians, particularly families with a middle class income.

As was mentioned, marketers explore to discover marked signs in the Iranian automobile market. The Iranian automobile market is analysed briefly in order to find some marked signs in the Iranian customers’ daily, real life and subculture. For example, the short analysis of the Iranian automobile market shows that traffic accident is an important marked sign and consequently, the importance of automobile safety comes into consideration or due to imposing new international sanctions by the UN, the petrol becomes important issue for Iranians, so UN sanction can be taken as another marked sign in the Iranians daily and real life. The marked signs must be interpreted. The marked signs’ meaning refer to which factors are paid attention to by the Iranian customers or which factors is ignored. It is important to note that table 5 on page 48

\textsuperscript{15} The subsidised prices, at US10 cents per litre (1000 Rials), are cheap by regional standards. The free market price is expected to go up to US 50-70 cents.

\textsuperscript{16} http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6244574.stm

\textsuperscript{17} http://en.trend.az/capital/pengineering/1729485.html

\textsuperscript{18} “At present, Iran uses about 65 million liters of petrol daily. Taking into account that more than 44 million liters of petrol is produced at local enterprises a day, Iran has to import about 21 million liters of fuel daily from abroad (mostly from European countries). Though Iran is the world's fifth largest exporter of crude oil, it still has to import up to 40 percent petrol. This product tops the list of major imported goods into the country.” (Experts: Iran's Statements on Increase in Petrol Production Have Propagandistic Character).

http://en.trend.az/capital/pengineering/1729485.html
shows how price has a powerful influence the Iranian customers’ expectations and buying intentions.

**4.4.3 Interpretation of Meaning**

Umiker-Sebeok mentioned that the hidden meanings of marked signs must be extracted. According to the Renault survey, the hidden meanings of marked signs are durability, reassurance, safety, comfort, cost, and emotional. Renault takes the hidden meanings of marked signs as main factors which indicate Iranian customers’ buying intentions. The second step on interpretation of meaning process is interpreting hidden meanings and producing new meaning (Umiker-Sebeok 8). Interpreting hidden meanings and producing new meanings reflect Iranian daily life and aid marketers to prioritize the main factors of Iranian car buying intentions and have a better picture of Iranian customers’ expectations and needs. It is important to note that this is one of the functions of culture to provide a highly selective screen between the Iranian customers and their daily and real life, as they pay attention to those factors (Hall 85). It is necessary to stress again that the Iranian automobile market is very price oriented and price itself is the strongest marked sign that can influence the interpretation process.

**Iranian interpretation of durability:** According to the Iranian customers, durability connotes quality, reliability, reassurance, spares parts easy availability and a car that is easy to repair and maintain. According to the Renault survey, durability is interpreted generally and regardless of the customers’ purchasing power.

**Iranian interpretation of reassurance:** According to the price of car, Iranian customers have different definitions of reassurance. Iranian customers’ expectations of reassurance from a car which cost less than $11000 is availability spare parts but customers whose car purchasing power is about $11000 -$16000 are able to find spare parts of a higher price and reassurance synonyms bring reliability for customers with strong purchasing power.

**Iranian interpretation of safety:** Customers’ definition of safety is automobiles equipped with airbags and ABS. According to the Iranian customers robustness is in the safety category.
Iranian interpretation of comfort: According to Iranian customers; comfort means comfortable seats, roominess, air conditioning (A/C), car ergonomy and in a car which cost about $16000 exterior design is added.

Iranian interpretation of cost: For customers with purchasing power under $11000, cost indicates the price of car and car with low fuel consumption but for customers with a purchasing power of about $11000 - $16000, fuel consumption is not big issue.

Iranian interpretation of emotional: It seems that the emotional marked sign is not interpreted for the customers with the poor purchasing power. Because the customers with poor purchasing power do not consider the emotional aspect. The emotional marked sign is interpreted by customers with a purchasing power about $11000- $16000. The emotional marked sign is interpreted as exterior design. The customers with the strong purchasing power consider the exterior design of a car when they intent to buy a new car.

4.4.4 Store of Signs

In the semiotic analysis of Iranian automobile market, the marked signs were discovered and hidden meanings of the marked signs extracted and interpreted. Then the main car purchasing factors for the Iranian customers are prioritized. According to the number of car owners’ purchasing power and their expectations, Renault has taken the prioritized marked signs as the six main car purchasing factors for Iranian customers. Figure 14 which follows show this clearly.

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19 According to the Renault survey, the target was surveying to 2,672,008 household with more than 500$ household income.
Ref: The Renault Commercial Division in Iran

**Figure 14: Six Main Car Purchasing Factors for Iranian Customers**

In the semiotic analysis of a market, discovering the marked signs and interpreting them, provides classified information which is stored for manufactures. Then, as figure 12 on page 45 illustrates, the production process starts.

### 4.4.5 Production Process

The term production process indicates the production of meaning and sign. The production process shows how marketers and manufacturers exploit semiotic analysis of product and market to manufacture meanings or launch signs; based on customers’ expectations. In fact, marketers and manufacturers exploit the classified information of the semiotic analysis of product and market to explore and then produce meaning and signs or modify the current product according to customers’ expectations. Consequently to have a better image of customers’ expectations and manufacture a product that corresponds to the customers’ needs can raise the customers’ buying intentions.

**Production of Meaning**

Marketers and manufacturers exploit semiotic analysis of product and market to do product planning in order to create or modify economic goods and manufacture products. The semiotic analysis of a product clarifies how a product corresponds to the customers’ physical and psychological needs and expectations. The semiotic analysis of market clarifies what customers pay attention to and what customers’ needs and
expectations are. By exploiting the semiotic analysis of the Renault products in Iran and the Iranian automobile market. The Renault Co. has defined the Renault image, the Renault strategy and the Renault product strategy.

**Renault image:** According to the Renault marketing report in March 2010 in Iran, the Renault image in Iran is defined as “Worldwide modern class car maker, reliable product and services, close to people, with comfortable, safe and fuel efficient product”

**Renault strategy:** According to the Renault marketing report and Commercial Director in Iran, the Renault strategy is to secure the Logan and the Megane business and develop the Renault image of modernity by offering adequate solutions for people and goods transportation before starting the Renault function in Asian market. The brand identity development can be accelerated by offering modern, attractive, and imported vehicles and strengthen the emotional bonding with the customers for a long term stay in Iranian market.

**Renault product strategy:** According to the Renault Commercial Director in Iran the Renault products strategy is to fulfill the customer expectations, and extend the life cycle of the current Renault locally manufactured products such as the Logan and the Megane. This can be done by producing new concepts and offering solutions for transporting goods and passenger on the Logan and launching new products on the Logan or L90 series platform.

**Production of Sign**

It is important to note again that according to Jean Baudrillard, a product is taken as a sign. So the production of the sign in the semiotic analysis of market refers to the production of a product. In this study, the production of the sign indicates the Renault products in Iran. Renault exploits its image, strategy and product strategy in Iran in order to explore and manufacture its products accordance with the Iranian customers’ needs and expectations. Already, Renault launches the Logan and the Megane through its two Iranian partners. The technical specifications of the Logan and the Megane are shown in figures 10 and 11 on pages 39- 40. Also, Renault exploits the Renault strategy
and the Renault product strategy to launch new future products according to the customers’ needs and also exploits market potential in order to stay in Iran long term.
Chapter 5
Discussion and Conclusions

The focus of this dissertation is Jean Baudrillard’s idea (1968) that “An object (Fr. objet) must become a ‘sign’ in order to be consumed” (Umiker-Sebeok 46). Baudrillard’s idea creates elements of ambiguity which refer to how considering a product as a sign is associated with raising customers’ buying intentions and consequently product consumption. In order to clear the elements of ambiguity, four research questions are raised. In order to discuss the research questions, the Renault function and products in Iran are analysed.

1- How is a product taken as a sign in the marketing context?

2- How does a semiotic analysis of product and market provide a better understanding of customers’ expectations?

3- How do manufacturers exploit the semiotic analysis of a product and market to manufacture a sign based on customers’ expectations?

4- What is the role of interpretation as culture specific in the semiotic analysis of product and market?

Knowing “How is a product taken as a sign in the marketing context?” is not a complicated question. In order to answer this question, I mentioned three ideas of Chandler, Zinkhan and Glen Mike to follow and support Baudrillard’s idea. According to Chandler (2) everything could be taken as a sign. Therefore, products can be considered as signs and are analysed in the world of the signified by a system of signs (Zinkhan 119) and market is considered as the world of meanings which are sent and received between consumers and marketers through signs in a cultural framework and time (Glen Mick 196). Thus, semiotics or study of signs involves in semiotics analysis of the product and market. In this case there is overlap or connection between semiotics and marketing. Figure 15 which follows shows this connection clearly.
Connection between semiotics and marketing shows there is a link between products and signs, on the one hand, and products and market, on the other hand. Thus, taking a product as sign in marketing context is inevitable.

By taking a product as a sign in a marketing context, applying the study of signs or semiotics as a tool in marketing comes into consideration and another question is raised; “How does a semiotic analysis of product and market provide better understanding of customers’ expectations?” In order to explore and discover the answer of this question, I first studied how the Renault products in Iran are distinguished among other brands. My approach was the semiotic analysis of the Renault badge on its products. Nowadays, the majority of cars have a very similar body design. Therefore, the Renault badge on its products is one of the ways to be coded to its products and consequently, Renault...
products can be distinguished by Iranian viewers or customers. The Renault products are taken as signs in order to be analysed semiotics in different aspects such as “signifier”, “signified”, “connotative” and “denotative” meanings and in three technical, business and cultural point of views. The semiotic analysis of Renault products provides classified information systematically to define and refer to how Renault products may correspond to the Iranian customers’ expectations and needs. But, this information is not sufficient to have a clear picture of the Iranian customers’ needs. The semiotic analysis of Iranian market provides supplementing information to build up a better understanding of what the Iranian customers’ needs and expectations are. In this case, marketers explore to discover marked signs which indicate important hidden meanings and reflect daily life and subculture of Iranians. Thus, the classified information of the semiotic analysis of Renault products which refer to how Renault products in Iran may correspond to the Iranian customers’ needs, on one hand, and the classified information of semiotic analysis of Iranian automobile market which refer to what the Iranian customers want, on the other hand, depicts the Iranian customers’ expectations and needs.

Classified information about the semiotic analysis of the Renault product and the Iranian market can be used as rich information for manufacturers and marketers. In this regard, another question is raised: “How do manufacturers exploit the semiotic analysis of product and market to manufacture a sign based on customers’ expectations?” In this thesis, I have studied how Renault exploits the semiotic analysis of products and market to do product planning and manufacture a product which corresponds to the Iranian customers’ needs and expectations. Renault has exploited the Iranian customer’s needs and expectations in order to define and plan its image, strategy and product strategy on the Iranian market. They also use this to explore to launch a new product or modify its current products with new denotative and connotative meaning to fulfil the customers’ needs and consequently to raise the Iranian customer’s buying intentions.

By studying the signs or semiotic analysis of the Renault products and the Iranian automobile market, the role of interpretation comes into consideration. The role of interpretation is the main link to join all links together in order to make a chain. Therefore, another question is raised; “What is the role of interpretation as culture
specific in the semiotic analysis of product and market?” In order to discuss the role of interpretation, I quote Ferdinand de Saussure’s suggestion that “nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign” (Chandler 13). Saussure highlights the importance of interpretation in study of signs or semiotics. In the semiotic analysis of the Renault products and the Iranian automobile market, the importance of interpretation as culture specific is very obvious. In the pragmatic analysis of the Renault logo, which refers to Renault logo relationship with the Iranian customers, Renault logo is codified and stands for Renault products and Renault services in Iran. But the interpretation as the main link was missed to join other links. To explain more, Renault has positioned its image and planned its product strategy and all are interpreted through Renault logo as a sign which stands for Renault products and services in Iran. The role of interpretation in semiotic analysis of Renault products and the Iranian automobile market is very fundamental. Interpretation goes into interpreting the denotative and connotative meaning of Renault products; this can allow marketers to know how Renault products may correspond to the physical and psychological needs of the Iranian customers.

The role of interpretation can be more clear if we analyse the Renault products in the cultural process. In the cultural process of semiotic analysis of Renault products, interpretation is applied to connect economic aspect of Renault products to Iranian customers’ needs and expectations. Also, in the Iranian automobile market analysis, the hidden meanings of the marked signs are interpreted. Interpretation is based on Iranian daily life and sub-cultures to reflect what the Iranian customers want and allow marketers to prioritize the Iranian customers’ car purchasing factors. It is important to note that the role of culture in interpretation is inevitable. Because, on one hand, the Iranian automobile market is analysed through marked signs in a cultural framework and time (Glen Mick 196), the marked signs become meaningful when they are interpreted (Chandler 147) and, on the another hand, culture is taken as a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds and interacts with customers all the time (Schein 1). And this is one of the functions of culture which provides a highly selective screen between customers and the outside world. In its many forms, culture therefore designates what customers pay attention to and what they ignore (Hall 85). In other words “culture is the most fundamental determinant of a person’s wants and behaviour” (Kotler 161). Therefore culture influences customers when they choose, select or prefer something
and the customers’ choices and preferences were reflected when the marked signs were interpreted.

5.1. Suggestions for Future Study

Studying “culture [as] the most fundamental determinant of a customer’s wants, behaviour” (Kotler 161) and buying intentions in different areas of market, can be interesting. One of those areas is to discover the cultural satisfaction a customer gets by buying certain product or receiving certain services. Such a study indicates and reveals customers’ hidden motivations which drive and influence their buying intentions sense 20.

Studying the role of culture as a dynamic phenomenon which surrounds and interacts with human being all the time (Schein 1) can be another interesting area for future study. The study would concentrate on cross cultural conflicts which arise in project teams and among member of a team with different nationality, since the team members come from different corporation like Renault and its Iranian partners. This study could concentrate on how such conflicts can be handled and bring mutual successful collaboration.

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20 For instance, on one hand, about 65% of Iranian customers have poor car purchasing power, on another hand, SUV cars are popular among Iranian and it is symbol of prestige in Iranian community but very few segment of market can afford to buy. In this case, according to the culture of the segment market, marketers can make product planning to manufacture a new concept of semi-SUV cars with new denotative and connotative meaning which signify lower price. This can fulfil more customers’ psychological needs and bring marketers more market share and dominate market.
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