

There are a number of semiotic analyses of advertising, such as Marshall McLuhan's *The Mechanical Bride* (though he doesn't mention semiotics or use semiotic concepts, his analysis is semiotic in nature) and Judith Williamson's *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*. DICTONARY OF ADVERTISING AND MARKETING CONCEPTS attitudes, candidates, goals or states of mind" (p. 3). Since Packard wrote his book, in 1957, the advertising industry has developed many new ways of understanding our thought processes and new methods of attempting to shape our behavior.

**S Semiotics** Semiotics is defined as the science of signs, which means it focuses upon the role of signs in society and, in particular, how people find meaning in various aspects of life. If advertisers are to communicate with their target audiences effectively, they must know how these target audiences think and the way they interpret signs and symbols. One problem is that we know that people don't always interpret advertisements the way the people who create the ads expect them to. A number of years ago I met the president of an advertising agency in Britain who told me that people in his agency were very interested in semiotics, just as many semioticians are very interested in advertising.

Ferdinand de Saussure and C. S. Peirce are the founding fathers of the science of semiotics, which deals with signs (the term "semeion" means sign) and how people find meaning in them. He divided signs into two components, a signifier (or "sound-image") and a signified (or "concept"), and pointed out that the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary; these points were of crucial importance for the development of semiotics. He offered another idea of consequence—namely that concepts have no meaning in themselves. The meaning of concepts depends on the way they are different from their opposites. DICTONARY OF ADVERTISING AND MARKETING CONCEPTS As he explained (p. 118): Concepts are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristic is in being what the others are not.... Signs function, then, not through their intrinsic value but through their relative position. Later, he added, "Everything that has been said to this point boils down to this: in languages there are only differences" (p. 120). (Quoted in J. J. Zeman, "Pierce's Theory of Signs," in T. A. DICTONARY OF ADVERTISING AND MARKETING CONCEPTS IS Sebeok, Ed., *A Perfusion of Signs*, 1977, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 36) The following chart offers examples of each kind of sign in Peirce's theory: Icons Indexes Symbols Signify by: Resemblance Cause and effect Convention Example: Photograph Fire and smoke Cross, Flags Process: Can see Can figure out Must learn We can see that there are differences between Saussure's science of signs and Peirce's, although both deal with signs and both theories have been very influential. Peirce also said a sign "is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity," which means that meaning is always created by individuals (quoted in Zeman, p. 27). A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable: it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it semiology (from Greek semeion "sign"). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them. Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance. This statement opens the study of all kinds of communication to us, for not only can we study symbolic rites and military signals, we can also study soap operas, situation comedies, and advertisements and commercials—and almost anything else—as "sign

