



Arts

## **SEMIOTIC DISCOURSE OF PLACE: EXAMPLE OF SHOWROOM**

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### **Abstract**

Communication is defined as the flow of information in its simplest form. Utilizing the indicators and referring to another situation with the help of these indicators while providing its flow is a result-oriented study discipline. This discipline is defined with the name of Semiology and it is a field of science based on meaning. Semiotics, shaped by behavior patterns "coded" by a particular society, it is associated with the process of interpretation. The fact that codes come together and form a whole of meaning unity and cause influence on different fields such as literature, advertising, cinema, caricature, painting and architecture. Hence, semiotics, which forms a message to be transmitted to the other party, possesses an extensive field of study. The meaning, interpretation and association of these messages with different factors fall within the scope of this discipline. Especially in order to comprehend that architecture is a communication tool, the physical factors and the approaches of the society producing these approaches should be reviewed together. This highlights the place of interior design in semiotics. In this study, interior design is evaluated within the scope of semiotics and a place reading is performed.

**Keywords:** Semiology; Indicator; System; Code; Design; Place.

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### **1. Introduction**

The psychological and social aspects of architecture have made it mandatory to benefit from interdisciplinary sciences such as environmental and behavioral sciences. It is necessary to give more functionality to various platforms where information exchange between designer and user can be provided. Increasing the responsibility of architects in post-use evaluation studies is important in terms of perceiving the user dimension in the development of design (Gunal, 2006: 64). The details presented by utilizing the indicators before and during the usage phase become more memorable for the user.

In order to read the place from a semiotic point of view, it is required to understand Saussure who laid the foundation of this science for the first time. Although nowadays semiotics continues to be

studied in many discipline, when defining this science, Saussure was associating this concept with the concept of “Structure”. As a system of thought he was associating the “string-system” concept with the concept of “structure”. Saussure was perceiving the language as a system of sign and he was creating a system or string of indicators.

In this study, Semiology as a method focuses on how the Semiology is used in the design of interior. It is possible to consider Semiology as a method by interpreting the visual materials and analyzing the messages to be given indoors.

In the most basic definition of semiotics, the receiver / audience is described as the “reader” and special attention is given to the reader in the communication process; therefore, the reader makes sense of the text through his / her private experiences (Atabek and Atabek, 2007: 68). The information “encoded” to be transmitted to the other party is related to the Semiology; in this context, interpretation of communication studies with regards to the message. As Yücel (2018: 11-12) expresses; “the indicator is the factor which allows us to decide the existence or reality of an object or a phenomenon”, in other words, it is not identified with the object or the phenomenon itself, however it assumes our contribution in determination of existence or reality of an object or a phenomenon”. Semiotics practices have become more significant in the fields of architecture, art and literature. In addition to the fact that sign systems are related to all aspects of visual culture in a society, they also determine what is art and what is design (Barnard, 2010: 174-175). In other words, the meaning that society imposes on an existence through indicators or the reaction to an object constitutes the method of semiotics.

In this study, interpretation of the design through an example of an interior is performed within the scope of Semiology. Place reading is handled through the concepts of “string”, “signifier”, “signified”, “denotation” and “connotation”.

### Communication: System, Signifier and Signified

The indicator is in the heart of the Semiology and it is accepted as “substitute for” a thing or “representing” a thing. To explain this situation; when the word “pen” is taken into consideration as a single item, an image which represents the cluster of pens occur in our minds; however it is not the concept itself that evokes the image of the pen. For instance, the following texts are seen on the left in Figure 1: “this is not an apple” and on the right “this is not a pipe”; because, both pictures are the “indicators” which substitute for a real “apple” or a “pipe” in our minds and these indicators are not the concepts themselves (Erkman Akerson, 2005: 22).



Figure 1: Indicators that evoke apple and pipe in our minds (Erman Akerson, 2005: 21)

As Pierre Guiraud (1994: 39) states, “the indicator is a stimulus - that is, a sensory substance - the arousal image that it awakens is connected to the image of another stimulus in our minds. The function of the indicator is to revive this latter in line with a communication”. There are three basic elements that clarify the basic assumptions of semiotic concepts in semiotic analyzes; these are as follows, “indicator”, “signified” (What the indicator refers to) and “signifier” (Physical presence of the indicator) (Atabek and Atabek, 2007: 68). Barthes (1979: 35), “it is what the user of the indicator understands from it”; rather than accepting the “signified” as an object, it draws attention to the fact that it is emphasized as an instant design. Although “signifier” has similar characteristics to “signified”, it differs at some point; “signifier” is the intermediate and it needs to have a substance (Barthes, 1979: 40).

The harmonious interoperability of the indicators that enable us to communicate is realized through “strings”. For example, traffic lights with a formal arrangement are as follows; “stop”, “wait” and “pass”; mainly carry three messages; therefore, the relations established between each light is having it gain a meaning (creation of a string) in a manner that they form a whole (Erkman Akerson, 2005: 26-27).

String is the relationship of a unit selected from a paradigm with other units; in other words, a word is formed according to a paradigmatic selection made from the letters of the alphabet, or the sentence consists of the strings of words (Fiske, 2014: 146). Therefore, on the basis of “the string occurs in the form of a chain” expression of Barthes (1979:58), we may show table, carpet, sofa and similar objects selected from the said paradigm to design the room as an example.

### **Interpretation: Denotation and Connotation**

The first level of interpretation describes the relationship between the “signifier” and “signified”; at the same time, this level is defined as “denotation” by Barthes (Fiske, 2014: 181-182). As a result of the combination of concept and communication, the first image that evokes in our minds is expressed as the denotation of the indicator. “Connotation” is creating the second meaning of the indicators and basically it refers to a situation. He explains the “Connotation” as the interaction which occurs when the indicator meets the emotions of individuals or their cultural values (Fiske, 2014: 181-182).

The indicator is the connection established between a concept and a form (Erkman Akerson, 2005: 40). The formation of a concept occurs over time by the coding of assets or objects by society. Fiske (2014: 122) explains this situation as follows: “Introducing the codes developed to meet requirements of the society or culture the ways applied to existing communication channels in order to transmit these codes”. Therefore, while codes are used in the field of Semiology, they play an important role in the process of meaning and interpretation of the concept of culture.

### **Reading Interior in the Semiotic Context**

This section presents the analysis of selected interior examples. Place chosen as the subject of the research, it was created by the designer as a physical place which is bounded by walls, floors, ceilings and meets the needs of the user, with functional, symbolic and cultural features. At the same time, there should be a place that is observed, experienced by the user, perceived by the user's personality, motivation and culture and shapes the behavior of the user. How the place becomes meaningful or how the place is read is handled through the means of Semiology method. In this

context, the sample showroom will be evaluated in terms of the workplace indicators and it will be evaluated in line with the graph in Figure 3.

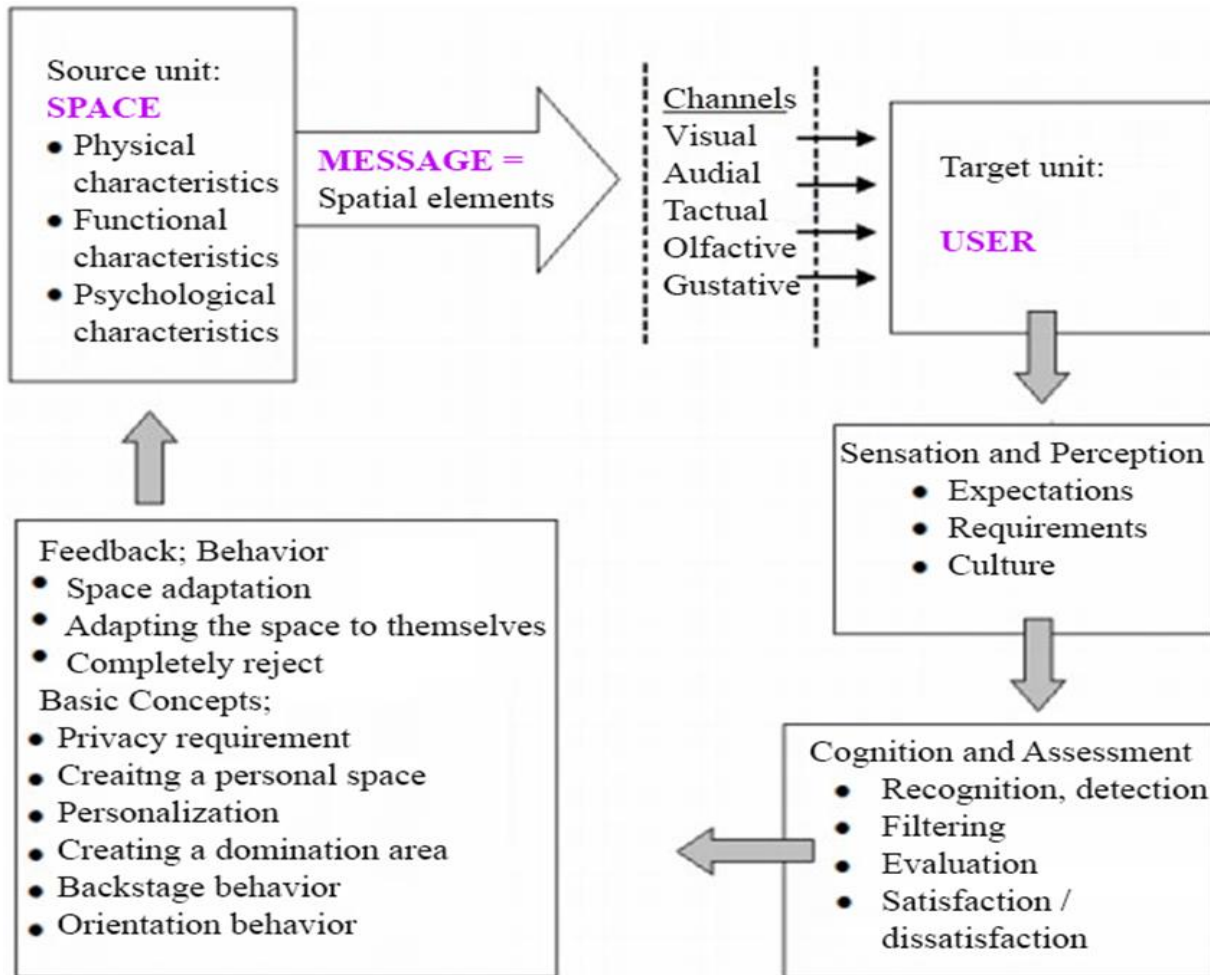


Figure 3: Graph of the evaluation of place in terms of indications (Gunal, 2006: 56).

When we look at Figure 4, the first transmission plane consists of an entrance - reception area which we recognize with our life experiences. This area is designed in an open way, intertwined with the other sections of the place. For this first reading, it is necessary to know the store analysis and to recognize the concept of reception. The store-reception unit which is an non-codified visual message-remains on the “denotation” level and identified as a customer-employee relationship. The main plane that makes the interior gain a “connotation”; therefore, it is possible to interpret the message that is intended to be delivered in the indoors by separating the “indicator” as “signifier” and “signified”. The “indicator” of this place can be interpreted as “illuminated billboards on the left wall in the entrance”. Since an attempt was made to correlate the entrance section and general fiction of the store, it refers to the “signifier”, “general of the showroom and future planning of the company”. However, in order to decode the code regarding the past, we are required to get to know about operational development of the said company since its establishment phase until today. In other words, it is possible to interpret the visual message by having prior knowledge. In this context, the “connotation” phase of this exhibited is designed in terms of purpose of the place and future.

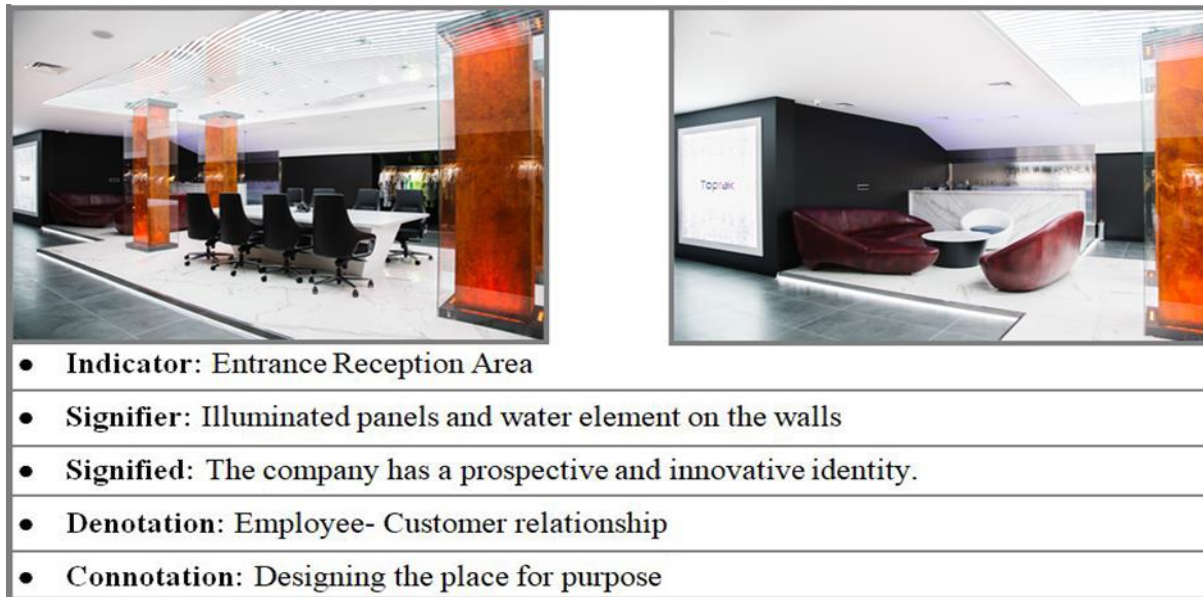


Figure 4: Entrance Section interpretation process

It is possible to accept the showroom we are familiar with thanks to our prior information as a non-codified image plane in figure 5; in this context, the “denotation” of the place is defined as “transparent sales policy” and “having an open relationship with the “customer”. As in the previous example, everything is clear and understandable without limitation in place. The materials used in the place are completely up-to-date. It is aimed to highlight the accessories and the products sold by using white ground. In addition, water elements used throughout the place support the sense of transparency and give the place a fresh air. This flow is supported by the lighting system located on the ceiling. In addition, lighting systems that are used for directing on the floorings encode that the company creates a bright direction for the future.

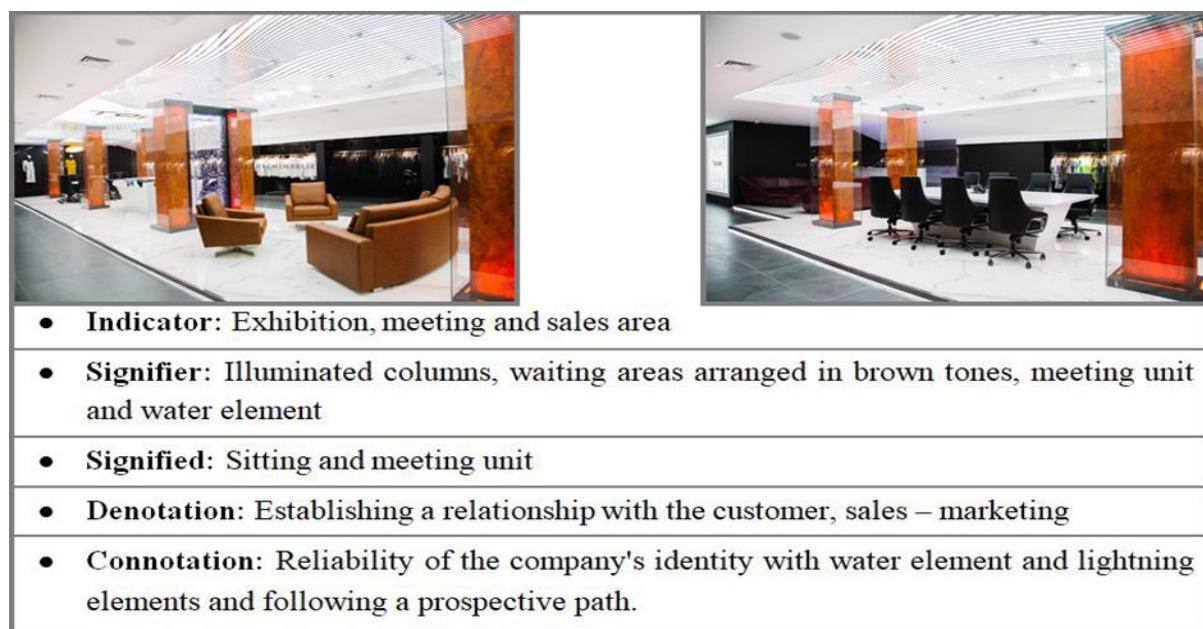


Figure 5: Store exhibition, meeting and sales area visual

In order to read the place in semiotic way, it is necessary to touch on the concept of “string” which is composed of sequence and “string”. In the visual transmission of Figure 6, the architectural element defining the “sequence” is “arch”. The cluster comprised of different architectural elements such as the “arch” and “wall” emerges the “string” and these elements defining the “entrance” by including in the “system”.

When we continue to read the picture, it is seen that the walls characterize “string”, the “gray wall” and “white marble” are combined and characterize “sequence”. Based on these data, it constitutes the “system” in which two different architectural elements such as “gray wall” and “white marble” interact. In this context, the “denotation” layer in the message of the white marble is the “carrier”, however the “connotation” layer is “transition from old period to modern life”.

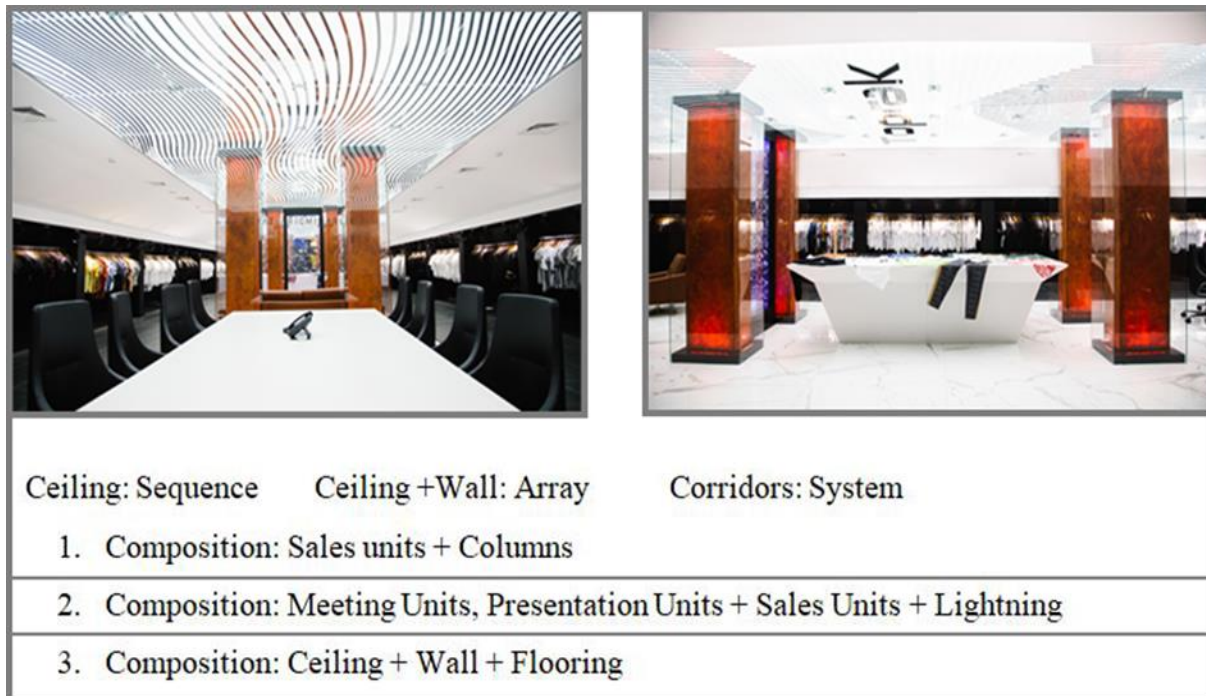


Figure 6: Store overview

It is an undeniable fact that there is a close relationship between color, form, shape and objects, as well as emotional effects on individuals. Colors, which are an intellectual and emotional impressive factor, create positive or negative emotions on people. Indeed, while aesthetic criteria play a very important role in the arrangement of colors in contrast or harmonic compositions, it is important that various color arrangements, that space and its surroundings, being more peaceful, more boring, more exciting, more relaxing or wider, deeper, more spacious create and effect on the user psychology (Zeybek, 2011: 5).

In the process of evaluating the relationship between space and communication through the aforementioned visual materials, situations that we are not aware of or do not focus on lead us to question and make sense of the beings again. From this perspective, it is possible to accept semiotics as a field of study that includes various levels of interpretation such as cultural, linguistic and social factors.

## 2. Conclusion

In this study, semiotics aiming to produce meaning has been associated with the discipline of architecture. Place reading by explaining the design through indicative practices is discussed in a different way. Since each object, entity or situation has “codes” in the semiotic method, the selected examples have been advanced through “denotation” and “connotation” analysis. On the other hand, the architectural elements that make up the place are evaluated with the concepts “array” and “system” and their effects on design process were examined within the framework of message plain.

To make semiotic analysis understandable, the indicator concepts which are defined as “indicator”, “signified” and “signifier” were mentioned. It is described through examples of “signifier” which defines the concrete form of a concept and “signified” interior examples referring to a situation. The selected interior example is the showroom - sales area of Toprak Textile company designed and implemented by Beyazlar Interior Architecture company. Interior application, color consultancy were carried out by Dr. Instructor Arzu Erçetin. From the design phase to the application phase, the company identity, spatial features, user profile, visual, comfort, usability and user profile - the link between the user and the brand, form, tissue, color and communicative sense are brought to the foreground.

In this direction, in order to show that design is used as a communication tool, architectural elements are examined through their “codes”. This situation highlights the significance of place and communication in terms of Semiology.

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