

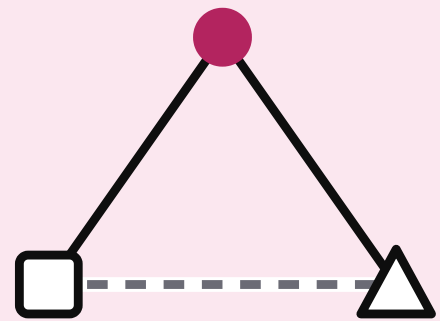
Field

Semiotics

Studies signs and how they produce meaning: how an image, a word, or an object comes to mean something to someone.

In Spanish
Semiótica

Origin
Saussure (1916) and Peirce; applied to images by Barthes (1964)



What it studies

How meaning is created. It gives design tools to analyze what an image, a brand, or an object communicates.

Principles

Signifier and signified

The form of the sign and the idea it evokes.

Denotation and connotation

What is seen and what it suggests.

It depends on who is looking

Meaning changes with culture and context.

Applications in design

✓ Use it like this

Ask what your design suggests, in addition to what it shows.

✗ Avoid

Assuming a symbol means the same thing in every culture.

👁 Don't fall for it

Test icons and images with the real audience: you already know what you meant to say.

Connections

Used in

■ Brand design

■ Packaging design

■ Graphic design

■ Brand identity design

Authors and works

1916	Ferdinand de Saussure	Described the sign as the union of a signifier and a signified.
1964	Roland Barthes	Analyzed an advertisement to show how an image suggests more than it shows.
2006	Klaus Krippendorff	Proposed designing from what objects mean to people.

Sources

Original sources

- Saussure, F. de (1916). Cours de linguistique générale (C. Bally & A. Sechehaye, Eds.). Payot.
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- Barthes, R. (1964). Rhétorique de l'image. Communications, 4, 40–51. [View source \(https://doi.org/10.3406/comm.1964.1027\)](https://doi.org/10.3406/comm.1964.1027)
- Krippendorff, K. (2006). The semantic turn: A new foundation for design. CRC Press.

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