

# Decoding a media message essay

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Some elements are polymeric meaning it can have more than one meaning and thus care should be taken when they are used so that the intended meaning comes out. Anchorage which is using the minimal elements, namely slogans, brand names or images to reiterate one message so that it will be remembered by the audience. Television commercials rely mainly on these elements when trying to convince their customers to buy their products.

“ They use images that are attractive to their target market putting emphasis on their demographic differences. Some use popular songs or top models to capture customers’ attention” (Chandler, 2004). Attracting attention to the meanings of colors and how they apply to different people or relate to different themes in different locations in the world is how the media obtains their objective. So sophisticated is the process that many firms have decided to spend millions in order to come up with television commercials that are more like Hollywood movies, giving the idea that the particular product is a whole experience in the episode given. Even more sophisticated is sponsorship at events such as NBA games, the world cup and political campaigns. This report is analyzing the advertising semiotics employed by the Coca Cola company; that has been a leading multi-national corporation for decades. Since its launch during the 1920s, this multi-national corporation has actively engaged in television commercials in order to promote its products.

In these commercials, semiotics is given a lot of importance. Some of them are comical while others are just entertaining. The intellectuality and message coding is keenly applied. The intended meaning is anchored in such a way that the target segment is left imagining how it would be like

consuming the product. “ The firm applies binary opposition so well that in the end, the meaning they intended reaches the customers in the best way possible”. With the use of such tactical elements, the firm has been able to increase their market share not just in the U. S. But also in other markets abroad.

The impact of Coca-Cola on the whole world is difficult to quantify. However, it is evident that “ Coca-Cola embodies the spirit and essence of American culture unequalled by any other American product. The product transcends language, culture, race, gender, and age boundaries” (Laze,

Org, 2014). Most importantly, however, is that the advertisements reflect American values and ways of living and carry these values over to other countries. They do not change their campaigns to blend with the local culture in a country; rather they incorporate elements of that culture. However, the advertisements stay the same throughout the world; it is always clear that Coca-Cola is advertised and not any other soft drink. The identity of the brand is so strong and established that it cannot be confused with other products. The local element never distracts or overshadows the product; it only enhances the product and strengthens the message to the consumer to buy the product. The only concession is that the text is translated in countries where English is not a dominant force such as China, the former Soviet Union and Turkey. In other countries, a combination of English and a local language is used.

The introduction of a brand that is very American leads to changes in the eating habits of the consumers. The impact is usually the greatest on the

young market; children are much more susceptible to changes and new products than older people. Coca-Cola has been in South Africa for many years.

The product represents a culture and this has an effect on the eating habits of people. Coca-Cola is associated with hamburgers and chips. This alternative choice of diet replaces local and indigenous foods and eating habits and thus influences society by imposing a foreign culture on to the local foods culture. This leads to a loss of originality and identity.

In a country such as South Africa the possibility of discarding local cultures in favor of foreign cultures is so much bigger. Snaky (1989: 26) claims that underdeveloped countries' consumers are more susceptible to advertising because they are "more easily affected by promotion than their developed country counterparts, and their brand preferences or total spending patterns may be permanently affected by promotion". (alga. Org, 2014) Semiotic Analysis: Coca-Cola Summer Commercial 2011, Open Happiness Coca-Cola Summer Commercial 2011, dubbed 'Open Happiness' has been a hit and is aired not just in the American markets, but also in Europe and Asian. It starts with a young couple lying in the sand in a beach, obviously bored and seemingly lost in their own thoughts. Suddenly, a group of individuals, same age but a lot more cheerful runs past them and jumps into the calm blue water. This movement startles the two and they look at the direction this group has taken.

This group then swims towards a large Coca-Cola, bottle floating on a large fabric made of cork and painted pink (Coca-Cola, 2011). The couple joins

them. With the help of these 'new friends', the couple find themselves floating in this gigantic bottle that is apparently empty. They are happy as shown by their broad smiles. They are throwing out of the bottle into the calm water. They then join their friends seated on the fabric. They take a bottle each, of cold Coca-Cola and enjoy the drink as they are cheered.

The episode ends with a beautiful bottle of coca cola painted red, and next to it is a text, 'open happiness', also in red. A beautiful song about a brand new day accompanies the episode with happiness everywhere. The colors are limited to red, black and white, the ones associated with this drink.

This commercial generates the idea that Coca-Cola is fun, which was the intended meaning. The couple went to the beautiful beach, definitely to have fun, but ended up getting bored. This is changed when they are reminded that happiness was just a bottle of Coca-Cola away.

They buy the idea and the result is marvelous. This commercial also brings out the idea that this drink is better enjoyed with a group of friends and therefore best for parties because of many individuals sharing the happiness in the commercial. The individuals holding their hands together, cheering up one another brings out the idea that happiness is to be shared amongst friends. The words used in the songs, "open up some happiness"- also emphasize the idea that happiness is within an individual, all that s/he needs to do is to open it up with a bottle of Coke.

The color red has a coded message as it is used on many societies as a symbol of love. Its constant usage connotes that this drink brings out love,

while the color white comes with the peace and calmness necessary for this love to flourish. Binary opposition is applied by the use of the color black. While in real sense it symbolizes evil power, in this case it brings out the power of love that can be brought out by a bottle of coke. This commercial has used many signifier. As discussed above, there are three main colors; red, which signifies love and happiness, white for purity and peace and black that is used in a binary opposition manner to signify the power of love.

The huge Coca-Cola bottle is a sign of lots of happiness brought to individuals after taking coke. The calm blue sea signifies the peace generated after taking this drink while coconut trees symbolize the idea that this drink also suits holidaymakers. The people used are happy and are satisfied with what this drink can provide a meaning that is denotative driven, while the color red connotes the love that comes with this happiness. The song, as beautiful as it is, symbolizes the beauty brought by happiness, happiness that is readily available from a bottle of coke. The text 'open happiness' put emphasis on the whole idea of happiness brought about by Coca-cola.

Individuals holding their hands together have iconic meaning: Coca-cola is a drink that can be used in a party. The beautiful mountain is used arbitrarily, while the calm blue waters have a coded meaning: coca cola is a sea of happiness. The use of rock song is polymeric. It brings the idea that the drink is suitable for the youths; and that it is cool. The idea anchored by the entire semiotics is that Coca-Cola is a whole experience that is meant to be enjoyed. There is always a common ideology among many communities that

in parties, happiness is brought by presence of alcoholic drinks. For one to be high in spirit, then he/she should take beer or wine.

This ideology is strongly opposed by the artifacts. As this commercial begins, we meet two individuals whose initial plan was to be happy, away from the hassles and realities of the world. This saw the individuals come to a beautiful beach. However, they are unable to achieve this happiness, and for this, they lie next to each other, oblivious of each other.

However this changes immediately they are introduced to a bottle each, of cold Coca- Cola. Because it is a summer, with the individuals on the beach, this cold drink brings the refreshment necessary for the creation of happiness. What's more, this is a group, and therefore it gives this idea that coca cola can come in handy in parties and the happiness needed be created by it. This artifact has the merry makers flying high above the large coca cola bottle, smiling and cheering each other up. With this, it is clear that one does not need a liquor to be high.

A bottle of coke will do the trick. The title of the " Red Hot Summer" campaign uses the red color as a play on the Meany's logo. Coca-Cola is a carbonized cold drink used to quench thirst. In this campaign the focus is on the refreshing qualities of the product.

This is set within a context of hot summer holidays at the seaside. Although not the ideal vacation for many people, the associations created with this campaign are vivid and clear, namely that Coca-Cola provides fun and refreshment for your holiday enjoyment. This is done by giving away

merchandise that fit into the image of someone going to have a holiday at the seaside. What's more, a lot of peace and harmony accompanies the peppiness created by this drink; in it, there is love and encouragement from the friends, there is the support that matters when it comes to merry-making. These important aspects of love may not be available in other drinks that purport to offer happiness. Finally, this commercial fights the ideology that such fizzy drinks as coca cola are detrimental to health. We are introduced to a group of very healthy individuals who, from their enthusiasm to this drink, it is obvious that they have been using it for some time.

This is a confirmation that we can use coca cola and have no worries at all about our health. With its adage, 'open happiness', many now believe that going the coca cola way is the best so far to generate happiness. It settles many worries created by this notion and this will increase the number of the users of the product. Conclusion Television commercials have become so sophisticated and so innovative that many firms have been forced to spend millions on it. The semiotics has been given importance, as inadequately presented television commercial tends to highlight the inadvertent meaning, leading to reduced sales. Colors, images, text, music, dialogue and many other signifier are always employed when doing this work so that the final product aired out to consumers is not only convincing but also very entertaining.