

Choose an image or
short sequence



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Choose an image or short sequence from the public domain and analyse how it conveys meaning. Apply semiotic codes and place the image/s in their chosen contexts describing how the production of meaning is facilitated. For this essay I have decided to choose an advertisement from a magazine, in order to analyse how it conveys meaning. I am going to apply semiotic codes to the ad so as to deconstruct the image in its chosen context and to describe how the production of meaning is facilitated. Within the essay I will explain the use of semiotics and about the nature of advertising, also the relationship between semiotics and advertising. Semiotics is the study of signs, conveyed within the social production of meaning by sign systems and how certain things come to have importance. It was developed through the work of the linguists Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce and Roland Barthes, semiology argues that verbal language is a type of 'code' that is one of many systems of signs. Other 'codes' include clothing, gestures and facial expressions, these different aspects can also be studied as a type of language. Signs can be used to describe the way meanings are produced in society; they have their denoted meaning, which is the signifier, and its connoted meaning, which is the signified. The signifier is the sign's actual physical and literal form. The signified is the concept or various interpretations associated with the sign. These concepts and ideas are shaped through our understandings of these signs within society where the meanings are constructed. So dependent on the society, various signs have certain meanings but in other societies they might have different associations and have less significance. Roland Barthes, the French linguist who established semiotic analysis with his book 'Mythologies' (1957) deconstructed many modern myths from steak and chips to advertisements

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through the use of semiology. By breaking down these elements within society he discovered how certain myths become socially acceptable and are constructed to be the truth about certain things. The analysis of myths was to "remove the impression of naturalness by showing how the myth is constructed" and to show that it advocates one way of thinking i. e. an 'ideology', while getting rid of alternative ways of thinking. Advertising is one area that promotes certain ideologies and has been under semiotic analysis a great deal. Ads attempt to sell products to consumers by different companies. Each company tries to promote a better product through the use of advertising. Most companies try to sell an ideology along with their product; advertising allows them to present a glamorous lifestyle, which is attainable when purchasing the product. The signs and symbols used in adverts have associations that connote certain meanings within society when analysed. A certain example would be perfume ads, which usually contain a beautiful female model. The model connotes myths concerning youth and feminine beauty; this is carried within the meaning of the perfume. So the ad is saying that this particular brand of perfume is associated with youth and beauty and if you purchase it you will be associated with youth and beauty. Semiotic analysis can be used in relation to advertising, by deconstructing them, myths within our society can be revealed and tell us about ourselves. Ads carry their own ideologies which is signified through the products there are trying to sell and by buying the product is to 'buy into' the myth and the ideology. These products become symbols with a particular social value. "They signify something about their consumers, the people who buy them and use them." The advertisement I have chosen to analyse is for 'Nintendo', more specifically for the Gameboy

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(see separate page). It consists of one photographic, colour image with the Nintendo logo below on a white strip. The photograph is an extreme close-up of a small child probably a boy playing on the Gameboy with a toothbrush in his mouth. The child is drooling from his mouth with a line of drool hanging on the Gameboy and a long line hanging off the child's chin. The bottom left side of the child's face fills the top right corner of the frame with the toothbrush hanging out from his mouth. His hands with the Gameboy fill up the rest of the frame. Our main source of identification is with the young boy playing on the Gameboy, who represents a traditional cultural stereotype about boys playing with toys, which is reinforcing myths about masculinity. The fact that the boy has a toothbrush in his mouth and is drooling connotes that males are always busy playing and are obsessed with toys/gadgets and don't have the time to stop and do a simple task as brushing their teeth. The extreme close-up anchors the meaning of the myth because it makes it more explicit by singling out what is going on. The positioning of the child with the object within the frame is significant because we only see certain parts of the child yet we see most of the toothbrush and practically all of the Gameboy. We only see what we need to see of the child, only the important features such as hands and the lower part of the head. The objects carry more meaning because they are what fill the hands and mouth of the child. The child is only in the ad to emphasise the Gameboy and the toothbrush. Although the Gameboy is slightly unsharp and in the background while the toothbrush is sharper and in the foreground, the ad suggests that the toothbrush is more important. The fact that the child's left hand is in focus is important because it suggests that it should be holding the toothbrush but instead it is holding and playing with the Gameboy. This ad is connoting that

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young children are obsessed with playing Gameboy and it is more important to them than looking after themselves, stressed by the fact that the boy is drooling and the toothbrush is still in his mouth. The child has probably forgot that the toothbrush is there and he is probably so captivated with the game that nothing else matters. The close-up of the photograph makes the situation more intimate and serious but which also shows a superiority of the product over the child. The ad reinforces the myth about children not caring about their health and having strong teeth and that playing with their toys/games is more important. The advertisement came from the magazine 'Dazed and Confused' which is a youth culture, fashion publication aimed at a 18-35 target audience. It promotes the latest fashions and trends through its use of advertisements and articles. This ad would be mainly aimed at young men who are probably students and are trendy and fashionable but still take pleasure in playing with children's toys/games. The ad suggests that these young men can relive their childhood and be a young child again, having fun and not caring about their health. If they buy a Gameboy they will be obsessed with playing it all the time and not have to care about important things such as brushing their teeth. The ideology behind the ad is not a very positive concept because it is promoting that young men are obsessive and sloppy who don't really care about more important things in life, such as their health. The publication of the ad in 'Dazed and Confused' seems to suggest that its male readers are childlike. There also appears to be an ambiguity in the ad towards its consumers because it doesn't seem to show them in a very promising light but that 'Nintendo' is a way of life and using one of its products is more important than brushing your teeth. The fact that the child is drooling makes the ad quite unappealing and quite worrying in

terms of its obsessive nature. In conclusion this ad for 'Nintendo' Gameboy published in 'Dazed and Confused' magazine appears to reinforce myths about children more interested in playing with their toys/games than their teeth while also saying the same thing about young men. The ad renders the child as inferior in relation to the objects, which is anchored by the extreme close-up of just the child's hands and lower part of his head. This in turn gives more emphasis on the objects. The ad also renders young men as children who are obsessed with playing games and more interested in technology than health. It conveys an ideology within our society that children are so obsessed with games that they forget about brushing their teeth that they resort to drooling.