

Student name: Josephine Bishop

Student Number: 2103155

Task: Semiotic analysis

Word count: 546

Semiotics, at its most basic definition, is the study of signs. A 'sign', according to Roland Barthes (1972) consists of denotations and connotations. A denotation is solely descriptive; a connotation is subtextual meaning, often arbitrary. These are also known as 'signifiers' – the physical object - and the 'signified' – the meaning (Williamson, 1995). The "functional union of these two terms" (Barthes, 1972) create the 'sign'. I will be using semiosis to analyse an advertisement by Marc Jacobs for the Daisy perfume campaign.

Compared to the sample portfolio I have made my explanation of semiotics fairly short in order to do more analysis of the image.

The foremost recognisable signifier within this advert is the daisy. The word "DAISY" is placed on the right, above the



Fig 1: Daisy Mac Jacobs Trio – Ondria Hardin, Antonia Wesseloh, Sophia Ahrens, and Malaika Firth (2015)

perfume bottles adorned with flowers. The models in the photo are surrounded by daisies, lying on them, wearing them, holding them. Daisies are polysemic, in that they signify femininity but also innocence and purity (The Bill/Shakespeare Project, 2015). It is common for children to discover the true affections of a crush by plucking daisy petals, and traditional for young girls to wear daisy chains around their head (Symbols and Meanings, 2021). Marc Jacobs uses the daisy here to anchor the name of the perfume line, but also affirm the myth of feminine innocence.

The myth of purity is re-established by the advert's colours. The models are dressed in all white, symbolic of bridal dresses - which historically have signified virginal status (Etiquette of Trousseau, 1849). Golden sunlight glows on the models' faces and the grass around them. Gold is an arbitrary signifier; it can signify wealth whilst also having connotations to summer, warmth, and love (Bourn, 2010). The bottles are pastel coloured, baby blue, pink and yellow. These are highly feminine colours, and yet they can also be signifiers of childhood – colours that babies are first dressed in to signify their sex. The entire advertisement consistently encodes a connection between femininity and girlhood. The models are slim, hairless, with clear complexions and round faces; these are strong signifiers of youth. Contrastingly, stated underneath the perfume bottles are the words "the fragrances for women". This suggests the target audience could be young girls who wish to be seen as women, or older women who wish to be seen as younger.



*Figure 2: The One, Dolce and Gabbana.
Scarlett Johansson (2011).*

According to Williamson (1995), companies use differentiations within their advertising to stand out. It is particularly useful in understanding “symbolic annihilation” (Tuchman, 1979), where women are under-represented and portrayed in few social roles. Within other advertisements (such as Dolce & Gabbana’s The One), models are often portrayed as older and more sexualised; heavy makeup, revealing clothes, sexual poses. Within Daisy, the advert has chosen to anchor the sign of innocence and youth. This could be symbolic annihilation in relation to the virgin/whore complex (Parker, E.R, 2019) which separates women into the categories of pure and impure. When the spectator looks at The One, it appeals to the desire for sexuality; when the spectator looks at Daisy, it appeals to the desire for purity. It is important to understand that the “surveyor of woman in herself is male...” (Berger, 1972) meaning that whilst these adverts are aimed at women, it is still dependent on the desire of the male gaze (Griffin, 2017).

Unsure how clear this paragraph is? Trying to emphasise Marc Jacob’s use of purity/innocence within Daisy, is a comparison useful or does it make it more

complicated than it needs to be?

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Figure 1: Daisy Marc Jacobs Trio - Ondria Hardin, Antonia Wesseloh, Sophia Ahrens, and Malaika Firth (2015). Available at: [Marc Jacobs Daisy perfume, floral fragrances for women \(theperfumegirl.com\)](https://theperfumegirl.com/marc-jacobs-daisy-perfume-floral-fragrances-for-women/) [Accessed: 2nd November 2021]

Figure 2: The One, Dolce and Gabbana with Scarlett Johansson. (2011). Available at: [Scarlett Johansson Gets Sultry For Dolce & Gabbana's The One - ButterBoom](https://www.butterboom.com/scarlett-johansson-gets-sultry-for-dolce-gabbana-the-one/) [Accessed: 16th November 2021]