

Task 2: Semiotic Analysis

Semiotics is the 'study of signs, symbols and their use/interpretation' (OED 2021). According to Roland Barthes, semiotics has a denotation which is what we literally see and a connotation, the deeper meaning (**Barthes mythologies signified- I need to reference this properly**). In advertisements it is often the connotations that connect with people and 'persuade us to help purchase' (Ways of Seeing, Berger, 1972), often portrayed in a positive light. In the book Decoding Advertisements by Judith Williamson, this links to the idea of ideology. As stated by Williamson, "We feed a need to belong, to have a social 'place' it can be hard to find. Instead, we may be given an imaginary one." (Williamson, 1978, P.22). Therefore, adverts often create a false narrative which we can unfold. An example of this can be seen by looking at a Jack Daniels advertisement from 2014 (see Fig.1).



Fig. 1, *Backyard*, 2014, Jack Daniels

In the words of Roland Barthes, the denotation of this Jack Daniels advert is a bottle of Jack Daniels's Honey on a table outside with a cluster of small people on one half of the bottle. At first glance, the people look like a swarm of bees. There is also a garden in the background which is blurred. The linguistic sign in the bottom right corner says, 'draws a crowd'.

Looking at this more deeply, there are many connotations that can be drawn upon this image. Firstly, honey has connotations of sweet, sticky, and golden and the

people look like they are almost stuck to the bottle. The golden colour of honey is also illustrated by the colours used in the bottle and background which are warm tones. This creates feelings of warmth, luxury, and comfort. The sunset in the background also creates warmth and is reminiscent of summer nights and relaxation.

Furthermore, the people on the table look like they are running towards the bottle. This can signify urgency and hurry, like they are desperate and do not miss out. Looking closer at the people on the bottle, there are people having a BBQ, lying on sun loungers and there is also a washing line, trees, and birds. This has connotations of a summer party and good times which is often what alcohol is associated with. Furthermore, the blurred background is empty which suggests that everyone from the real world (the garden behind) has been drawn into this world on the bottle. This suggests that Jack Daniels is consuming and appealing to people, which may not be positive advertising as too much alcohol can have negative consequences. This is also portrayed by the glass next to the bottle which looks very refreshing and appealing to drink.

Therefore, the underlying myth of this advertisement may be that the signifier (**Ferdinand de Saussure**), alcohol, is a positive thing and it can bring people together to have a party or good times even though we all know that alcohol is not always positive and can be signified to have damaging outcomes such as violence. Knowledge of semiotics can allow us to think about signs more deeply and question their meaning.

Bibliography (I need to write this a-z)

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List of figures

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