



The language of advertising

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The paper is an attempt to show how semiotic study can be used to understand aspects of communication in food product advertising design. I will bring up some of the most common concepts and ideas in semiotics and see how they can be understood in such a context. I will also use some theories to analyze some underlying values and concepts like the complex interplay between sign systems, connotation and denotation, meaning and form. To apply semiotics in food product adverts has provide me with a set of invaluable tools for analyzing issues like identity, metaphors and representations. This approach studies how meanings are made in a set of two adverts and is not only being concerned with communication but also with the construction and maintenance of reality. By studying and applying semiotics to advertising we can become more aware of reality as a construction of the roles played by ourselves in representing or constructing it. Semiotics can assist us to understand that information or meaning is not “contained” in the world around us, books, products and items. Meaning is not “transmitted” to us – we actively create and represent it according to a complex interplay of codes of which we are normally not aware. Semiotics therefore studies not only “signs” in every day speech such as symbols, paintings or pictures, traffic signs or mathematic symbols, but everything which “stands for” something else. The two adverts to be analyzed do not physically represent the products themselves; they provide an important iconic representation of both the product advertised and what the product should stand for. Thus, the analysis of these adverts strongly focuses upon the advertisements’ photographic imagery, and the ways in which this imagery generates the appropriate signified concepts (or emotional overtones) which promote the image of the product. Therefore, the paper analyzes individually the two adverts in terms of their status as signs, metaphors and representations, whose associative meanings not only give a favorable impression of the product, but are also compatible with and complementary to the context in which they are situated; thus illustrating Umberto Eco’s claim that the medium and message may be “charged with cultural signification”. [2]