



People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
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**Female Empowerment and Femininity:
A Semiotic Analysis of Barbie's "Imagine the Possibilities
2015" Advertisement**

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language Sciences

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2020-2021

Abstract

Advertising has become a form of communication and a great source for promoting services and products for any business in the whole market because of its broader impact. Advertising has many hidden signs put together in a creative way to attract the consumers' attention and help them make a purchase decision. Accordingly, semiotics studies and interprets the signs and messages produced by advertisers. The main objective of this study is to reveal denotation, connotation and myth that disclose in the verbal and non-verbal signs of Barbie's "Imagine The Possibilities 2015" advertisement and further define the semiotic codes and the notions they represent such as of female empowerment and femininity. The study adopted the qualitative methodology through the semiotic theory proposed by Barthes. As the selected video followed five little girls acting out five grown-up roles in the real world, the data then were analyzed per scene according to these roles taking into consideration the following elements: scene, colors, language and body language. The analysis of the video yielded several findings; a) We defined the verbal and non-verbal components of the video in terms of their denotative and connotative meanings; b) We revealed the myth and the semiotic codes; and c) We discussed how the notions of female empowerment and femininity were represented in the video through the empowering message that imagination is key and anything is possible; girls should be encouraged to dream big and follow their dreams. Finally, these findings can be used as raw model for future researches.

Keywords: advertising, semiotics, Barthes, empowerment, femininity

Acknowledgements

First of all we would like to thank Allah for enlightening our path, and giving us strength and patience to complete this dissertation.

We welcome the opportunity of achieving this work to acknowledge the efforts of a number of individuals. We would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to our supervisor Mrs. Basma BOUGOFFA for her patience, constructive criticism and insightful comments. We are very thankful for the time she gave us along our journey. Without her sincere supervision, this piece of work would not have been accomplished.

Much gratitude goes to the members of the Board of Examiners, Dr. Salah DAIRA and Dr. Aissa HAMZAOU, for the time they devoted to read our dissertation and provide us with valuable advice and feedback.

Special thanks to Ms. Chaima BRAHAM whose contagious passion for teaching us semiotics was the reason behind our curiosity to discover more in this field. Thank you for the support and guidance you provided us with.

Finally, we wish to extend our genuine thanks to our family members, friends, teachers and everyone who supported us in our journey.

Dedication

First, praise is to the Almighty Allah who granted me the strength to carry out this work.

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My maternal grandmother Hadria who has always been a source of wisdom, security, warmth and kindness. Thank you for all the love and care and cookies.

To my wonderful parents Lyes and Naziha BELMAMADI: who have raised me to be the person I am today, for being with me in every step of the way, Thank you for all your support, love and sacrifices. I do love you both.

To my only dear sister Rasha and my brothers Mohamed and Oussama

My wings and pillars.

To my sweet little angel Issra who adds joy to our family.

To my besties, Roufaida, Fatma, and Mayka,

To my partner and dear friend Nour for standing always by my side.

To Hiba, Aya, Hounaida, and all my friends

Thank you for all the love, support and prayers.

To Survivors.

Sara DJEDOUANI

Dedication

In the name of ALLAH, the most Gracious and most Merciful, all praise to Him alone. I shall pay my deepest gratitude to Graceful ALLAH the Almighty for granting me the power to pursue and to finish the work.

I dedicate this work

To the pillars of my life: my loving and sympathetic parents whose love and support guided my path through success, Mom and Dad, I am so proud for being your daughter.

To my sisters Hanen, Rawdha, Maha, Loula, and to my brothers, Amine and Bilel who supposed and helped me a lot.

To my lovely nephews and nieces; Maysa, Julia, Louai, Chahd, Mohamed, Najmdin, Ines, Yacine, Oussama, Abderrahman, Hamza and Adam.

To my dear fiancé, Mohamed, to whom I owe extreme gratitude for always believing in me and for giving me the best of his continued support and love that empowered me to accomplish this dissertation.

To my sisters-in-law and my mother and father-in-law,

To my best partner, friend and sister, Sara: Thank you for your emotional support and care.

Thank you for being here whenever I needed you. Thank you for being my friend.

To all my best friends, especially: Soujoud, Aya, Hounaida, Basma, Djoumana, Sabah and Asma, for being my source of joy.

Nour Imane BOURENNANI

List of Abbreviations

Ad/Advert: Advertisement.

Ads: Advertisements.

YCBA: You Can Be Anything

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Résumé

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Human's life is filled by signs. Mediated by the signs, the process of life is moved on effectively. People can communicate among others and have better understanding of their environment simultaneously. Therefore, they are *homosemioticus*. They use codes that have been formed by themselves daily. Consider the following example stated by Prior (2014), a parent and two children play a pretend game on a living room rug while folding clothes. The 3-year old suggests the father become a vampire bat to defeat the evil hunters of Cruella de Vil, a Disney cartoon villain who had become a regular protagonist in the family's pretend play. She urges him (as bat) to fly into the backyard—pointing to a spot on the rug where shortly before they had found some mud and vacuumed it up. The father consults the 8-year-old daughter about how to be a vampire bat (Prior, 2014). This example illustrates how thoroughly and necessarily life involves the historically unfolding blend (and it's always a blend) of multiple semiotic resources, including oral language, embodied action and gesture, perception of environments, written texts, films, music, and touch.

In interpreting signs, someone needs the knowledge about how sign could be interpreted as well as what is purposed. In linguistics, it is called as Semiotics. According to Prior (2014), “semiotics is a broad diverse field that involves the study of multiple kinds of signs conveyed via varied channels and media, of socially-organized and evolutionarily-generated sign systems, and of the conditions of signification” (p. 1). Semiotic analysis may be considered a subset of content analysis; it studies how signs and symbols generate meaning (Rose, 2001). In other words, the signs and symbols must be the main consideration in its way to generate meaning. Semiotics was developed mainly by the two pioneers Ferdinand De Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce to become a strong independent tool for

analyzing any form of sign. Saussure (1983) considered semiotics as a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life, while Peirce (1931, p. 58) maintained that it is the “formal doctrine of signs” which was closely related to Logic. For him, “a sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. ... Every thought is a sign” (Pierce, 1931, p. 58).

Semiotics is important because it can help us not to take “reality” for granted as something having a purely objective existence which is independent of human interpretation. Indeed, the application of semiotics is getting larger when Roland Barthes who was a successor of Saussure developed semiotics from linguistics to visual image by focusing on its verbal and non-verbal signs. Barthes (1967) used the denotative and connotative ‘levels of meanings or signification’ to analyze these signs. Denotation is what all people see without relates it to their society, culture or ideology (Bouzida, 2014). According to Barthes (1972), denotation is the first order of signification. It refers to the simple or literal relationship of a sign to the references; signifier and signified. Connotation is the second order of signification. It is a system that comprises signifier, signified and the process which unites the former to the latter (Barthes, 1967). Meanwhile, Fiske (1982) added that connotation is the cultural meaning that illustrates interaction that occurs when sign meets the emotions and culture values of the reader. However, Barthes (1972) added the “myth” that characterizes a society to be laid in the second level of signification. It is also called as popular belief. Thus, when a sign that has connotation meaning that develops into the meaning of denotation, then that denotation meaning would be a myth.

After the publication of the book *Mythologies* by Barthes in 1957, semioticians found themselves interested in advertisements (ads). Advertising, as a linguistic phenomenon, has become entrenched into social discourse and therefore into semiotics by means of its widespread diffusion throughout societies all over the world (Beasley and Danesi, 2002). In

all media, both electronic and print, in newspapers, magazines, information materials of all kinds and texts in a general sense, there is a complex network of written text accompanied by images and other non-linguistic elements, designed as coherent entities (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006). According to Barthes, people are craving for new goods and products because of the different advertising styles and techniques (Beasley and Danesi, 2002). Later in 1964, Barthes conducted the first ever advertisement (ad/advert) analysis which involved the coverage of verbal and non-verbal signs. He showed how advertisers use techniques to direct the audience towards the intended meaning using image and text. Furthermore, he introduced five codes that gave semioticians the ability to understand the nature of the sign and its purpose. The five codes permit the analytics to identify the nature of the sign and extract the real intention behind their use.

In this sense, the current study focuses on the analysis of the semiotic signs conveyed by verbal and non-verbal elements in one of Mattel's Barbie advertisement entitled, "Imagine The Possibilities" (Cunningham, 2015), through the semiotic theory approach proposed by Roland Barthes. Therefore, the process of meaning to the signs contained in this ad was displayed by giving attention to denotative and connotative meanings as well as to myth and semiotic codes. The target ad was launched as the first in a Barbie campaign "You Can Be Anything"(YCBA). It was shown to over 100 million people at the super bowl and had 25.8 million online views (as of April 10, 2019) and helped lift the brand's affinity scores, according to Mattel (2016).

2. Statement of the Problem

Created in the late 1950s by Mattel, Barbie's success stemmed from the simple revelation that young girls wanted to make believe with grown-up figurines, allowing them to embody different lives and professions. Pretty soon, however, the unrealistic body image and standards of beauty that a typical Barbie Doll presents to children created a brand image

problem for Mattel and therefore an acute sales problem. But her latest commercial video ad “Imagine The Possibilities” looked to change all that. It aimed to return the brand to its roots as it harkened back to the toy’s original purpose and reframes Barbie as an icon of professional possibility for girls everywhere. The resulting video is a remarkable product of big idea, superb direction and astonishing acting by a bunch of little girls imagining what they will someday become. Therefore, analyzing the target ad in semiotic terms following the Barthesian model (by revealing its verbal and non-verbal signs, defining their denotative and connotative meanings as well as their myth, and exploring how these meanings are coded) becomes a wish, a necessity, and a need for understanding and explaining how these semiotic sources help to build the ad’s great message of female empowerment and femininity.

3. Research Questions

The current research is undertaken to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the denotative and connotative meanings that disclose in the verbal and non-verbal signs of “Imagine The Possibilities” advertisement?
2. How myth is created in the video?
3. What codes are implied within the context of the video?
4. How the notions of female empowerment and femininity are represented in the video?

4. Aims and Significance of the Study

Based on the research questions above, our research has several aims as follows:

1. To reveal denotation, connotation and myth that disclose in the verbal and non-verbal signs of “Imagine The Possibilities” commercial video.
2. To look upon the relationships of connotative meanings within defined sign systems in order to reveal the semiotic codes and analyze them in relation to the defined myth, underplaying such notions as female empowerment and femininity.

The goal of this research in general is to take insight into the nature of advertising components through Barbie's "Imagine the Possibilities" advert. In particular, it focuses on the verbal and non-verbal ones attempting to reveal underlying chain of meanings and exploring how they are coded. The analysis of the target ad, therefore, will help to understand and explain certain styles and techniques used by advertisers such as to influence consumers' choice of products. Lester (2003), maintains that persuasive aspects of advertising do not only influence people to purchase certain products, but play role in forming opinions, changing behavioral patterns and attitudes, as well as inducing various actions by receivers of visual messages.

5. Research Methodology

The study adopted the qualitative method of research due to its relevance to reveal and examine the verbal and non-verbal signs collected in Barbie's "Imagine the Possibilities" advert and analyze their denotative and connotative meanings. The denotative meanings were analyzed per scene following the Barthesian model as the grand theory of semiotic analysis of the target advert. Then, the connotative meanings of the defined signs were deeply interpreted as well as the myth. Furthermore, the relationships of connotative meanings within defined sign systems were looked upon to reveal semiotic codes. Finally, these codes were analyzed in relation to the defined myth, underplaying such notions of female empowerment and femininity.

6. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized along two chapters. The first chapter consists of two sections reviewing the literature of relevance to modern advertising and semiotics. The first section provides a general overview of the nature and scope of modern day advertising. It opens with defining advertising in general and as being a tool of communication in specific. Then it sheds light on its evolution and history, features, classification and types, functions,

objectives and importance. Finally, it discusses the principles of consumer advertising psychology and the psychological elements to be incorporated in advertising to influence consumer behavior. The second section introduces the field of semiotics beginning with defining the term and its origin followed by explaining the idea of signs, how they function within systems and as tools of communication, and situating signs within codes. Then, it provides an overview of the historical foundations, perspectives, and theories of semiotics with a focus on Barthes' theory as being used as the methodological framework for analysis of Barbie's "Imagine The Possibilities" advert.

The second chapter represents the practical aspect of the present study; it puts the reported literature review into practice. It offers a thorough explanation of the research methodology that is followed, as it provides the results obtained from the analysis with explanation and discussion. It is divided into two sections; the first section is devoted to present an overall description of the research methodology used in this study, and the second one is devoted to the analysis and discussion of the results obtained besides the limitations of the study and the recommendations that can be set out for future researches.

1. Chapter One: An Overview of Modern Day Advertising and Semiotics

Introduction

Advertising has many hidden signs and meanings within brand names, logos, package designs, print advertisements, and television advertisements. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols, what they mean and how they are used and interpreted. Semiotics aims to study and interpret the message being conveyed in (for example) advertisements. Beasley and Danesi (2002) stated that “semioticians focus their attention more on what an advertising feature means and on how it generates its meaning” (p. 24). In other words, semioticians examine the tools that advertisers use to persuade consumers and the denotative meaning of the signs that they use in their advertisements. Everything people do is sending messages about themselves in a variety of codes. They are also on the receiving end of innumerable messages encoded in music, gestures, foods, rituals, books, movies, or advertisements. “The goal of semiotics in advertising is, ultimately, to unmask the arrays of hidden meanings in the underlying level, which form can be called signification systems” (Beasley and Danesi, 2002, p. 20). Semiotics enables people to understand the message that is conveyed through the words and images of advertisements and therefore to know how to render these messages with the signs that are embedded in the culture of the target. Accordingly, an overview of modern day advertising and semiotic theories is presented throughout the current chapter which is divided into two sections.

The first section provides a general overview of the nature and scope of modern day advertising. It opens with defining advertising in general and as being a tool of communication in specific. Then it sheds light on its evolution and history, features, classification and types, functions, objectives and importance. Finally, it discusses the principles of consumer advertising psychology and the psychological elements to be incorporated in advertising to influence consumer behavior.

The second section introduces the field of semiotics beginning with defining the term and its origin followed by explaining the idea of signs, how they function within systems and as tools of communication, and situating signs within codes. Then, it provides an overview of the historical foundations, perspectives, and theories of semiotics with a focus on Barthes' theory as being used as the methodological framework for analysis of one of Barbie doll ads.

1.1 Section One: The Scope and Nature of Advertising

Advertising has become a form of communication and a great source for promoting services and products for any business in the whole market because of its broader impact. The main idea of an advertisement is to get the attention of the consumers, build up the product's strong image in their mind and provide information to help the consumer to make a purchase decision. So, the central focus in today's diverse global marketplace is the consumer. Companies exert a lot of effort to find out the best ingredients that should be in an effective advertising and identifying its influence on the consumer's mind, so effective advertising should be considered as one of the most important tools that strongly affect and can change the consumer's buying behavior. In view of that, this section aims to provide background information and to establish theoretical grounds for the subject of advertising and how it can affect the consumer's buying behavior.

1.1.1 Definition of Advertising

Advertising has become a form of communication and a great source for promoting services and products for any business in the whole market because of its broader impact. It is classified as a form of marketing information (Stanton, 1984). The actual presentation of the message in a medium is referred to as an 'advertisement': 'advert' or 'ad' for short. The word 'advertising' has its origin from the Latin word 'advertere' which means to "turn the mind around" (Belch and Belch, 2001, p. 4). According to the American Marketing Association

(n.d.), “advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor” (as cited in Ciochetto, 2001, p. 173).

Bovee (1992) defined advertising as “impersonal communication of information about products, services or ideas through the various media, and it is usually persuasive by nature and paid by identified sponsors” (p. 30). That is, advertisement is a type of communication used to reach groups of people through a channel of communication which referred to as a medium. Kotler and Armstrong (2001) provided an alternative definition to advertising as any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services through mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television or radio by an identified sponsor. Sveltana (2014) considered advertising as an element that determines the way of life; it has an impact on our thinking as well as on the attitude towards ourselves and the world around us. Another definition is provided by Cook (2001) “advertisement helped to create a new global culture which ignore national boundaries” (p. 22). It means that, advertisement has no limits.

Burke (1980) suggested three definitions of advertising, following its evolvement over the time. He explained that by the end of 19th century, while industrial revolution has been progressing, advertising was widely considered as “news about products and services” (p. 6). Even though this definition reflects one of the basic functions of advertising, it does not grasp its multifaceted structure. Hence, more suitable definition to advertising was given by J. E. Kennedy in 1904, who wrote that “advertising is salesmanship in print” (Burke, 1980, p. 6). Burke (1980) summarized that one of the most well-known contemporary definitions is that “advertising is a sales message, directed at a mass audience that seeks through persuasion to sell goods, services, or ideas on behalf of the paying sponsor” (p. 7).

Jefkins (1991) also proposed a number of definitions for advertising, like “advertising is the means of making known in order to sell” (p. 13), or “advertising presents

the most persuasive selling message to the right prospects for the product or service at the lowest possible cost” (p. 18). In general terms, advertising, due to its interdisciplinary character and integrative structure, could be viewed from a variety of stand points, all depending on purposes the definition is intended to be implied.

1.1.2 Advertising as a Tool of Communication

Advertisements are associated with language. Dyer (1982) considered advertisements to be “deliberate and consciously articulated messages” (p. 9). According to Dyer (1982), advertisers employ language and assemble a message to the audiences. Delivering a message involves communication, and since a language is a method of communication, those two interact. Communication involves at least two persons, the addresser and the addressee, the code, transmitting the information which is to be delivered, and some kind of channel, through which the message will be transmitted. In advertising, the advertisement is this channel and language is the code (Vestergaard & Schroder, 1985).

Communication, however, is a broad concept and in order to avoid confusion, it is needed to categorize communication used in ads which, in effect, can be both verbal and non-verbal, because the language used in ads can be spoken or written. *Verbal communication* refers to the type of communication in which a message is conveyed verbally via the use of the spoken word and written words (Suparna, n.d.). In contrast, *non-verbal communication* takes place when two or more persons communicate with no oral or written form but rather with gestures, facial expressions, postures, prosodic features, and body language (Suparna, n.d.). It helps the receiver in interpreting the message received and often conveys meaning with more accuracy than verbal communication. Figures 1 and 2 precisely illustrate the use of verbal and non-verbal ads.

Figure 1

Non-verbal communication: Anti-drinking Ad - Don't drink and drive -



Note. From amazingdata.com

Figure 2

Verbal communication: Anti-drinking Ad - Don't drink and drive -



Note. From amazingdata.com

The relationship between advertising and communication lies in the audience, message development, communication methods and customer service:

- **Audience:** Before an individual can advocate or communicate something, he must understand the audience. The audience is the recipient of the message. Companies often develop marketing plans and strategies to find customers who are interested in different products and services. If things are done in the right way, people will buy a certain kind of goods or services. It is a powerful force that changes people thinking (Dyer, 1982).
- **Message Development:** Every company must have a marketing goal and must establish the message that will be communicated to the audience. One of the purposes of commercial advertising is to increase the customer base, improve customer attitudes towards the brand, create customers and increase revenue. All these are the messages that companies intend to convey to the public. After the management put forward the goal, they communicated it to the audience. Communication must involve more people in the business. The main form of business communication with the public is the form of advertising (Kokemuller, 2014).
- **Advertisement, Public Relation and Selling:** Public relations and sales have different communication methods between companies and the public. These are advertising, public relations and sales. Most companies use these types of communication when they want to engage with the public. However, other companies use two methods and therefore skip public relations (Kokemuller, 2014).
- **Customer service:** It is the act of taking care of customers and responding to their needs. This approach allowed the company to retain customers and brought revenue and sales to the company. The company supports communication with customers through different customer service strategies. Customer service involves interaction

and discussion of customer experience and preferences. According to Kokemuller (2014), the business must establish a relationship between the business and the clients to ensure that they will go back.

Communication involves six types of language function and they are as follows: expressive, directive, informational, contextual, poetic and interactional (Vestergaard & Schroder, 1985). The expressive function employs language that focuses on the addresser's feelings and wishes. Forgiveness, apology, praise or approbation are types of language expressive function. Communication based on the directive function influences the addressee's actions, beliefs or emotions. An example of directive speech acts would be persuasion, recommendation or advice. When language focuses on the meaning, it deals with the informational function of a language. To inform, report or describe are informational speech acts. The contextual and poetic functions are both associated with the meaning, with the proviso that poetic function additionally uses poetic devices, such as metaphors or rhymes. The function that is mostly associated with advertising is interactional, because it is used to express, maintain and terminate contact between messenger and the message recipient. Although the addresser and addressee are not in visual contact, they communicate through the channel, which in this case is an advertisement (Vestergaard & Schroder, 1985).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that advertising can employ each of these functions during a process of communication. After all, an advertisement praises, recommends and informs about a product or service, and sometimes even uses metaphors and rhymes. Praising, recommending or informing about the product or service requires language; it is not enough to present an image of the product, which can only call our attention to it. Whereas language in advertisements, whether written or spoken goes beyond calling attention to the product, it creates a positive feeling by introducing complex layered meaning and by fixing specific informational content.

According to Percy & Elliot (2001), “language used in an appropriate way facilitates learning and therefore make communication more effective” (p. 218). Accordingly, advertisers devote much attention to the language used in ads and employ various language forms, properties and techniques. These are the focus of the semiotic perspective to advertising, which adopts semiotics as an analytic system to unpack information transmitted in advertising (Percy & Elliot, 2001).

1.1.3 Evolution and History of Advertising

Various forms of advertising have existed for thousands of years. The Egyptians used papyrus to advertise goods and services (Vikas and Sania, 2014). In ancient Rome and other parts of the ancient world, merchants used signs or pictures on the walls to promote their products. However, the Athenians took advertising to a whole new level by using urban protesters to hang out on the streets to advertise products and services (very similar to our TV and radio advertising).

In the early 17th century, print advertisements were very common and were written by merchants themselves. *La Gazette* was the first French newspaper founded by Theophraste Renaudot in 1631 (Barrès-Baker and Museum, 2006). It published personal advertisements for those seeking and offering jobs, buying and selling goods and service people and various announcements. In the 18th century, illustrations began to appear in advertisements and advertising agencies. Advertisements started to appear in weekly newspapers in England (History of Advertising, 2021). These early print advertisements were used mainly to promote books and newspapers, which became increasingly affordable with advances in the printing press; and medicines, which were increasingly sought after. However, false advertising and so-called ‘quack’ advertisements became a problem, which ushered in the regulation of advertising content (History of Advertising, 2021).

Thomas J. Barratt of London has been called “the father of modern advertising”. Working for the Pears Soap Company, Barratt created an effective advertising campaign for the company products, which involved the use of targeted slogans, images and phrases (Mirzoeff, 2002). As the economy expanded across the world during the 19th century, advertising grew alongside. In the United States, the success of this advertising format eventually led to the growth of mail-order advertising. In June 1836, French newspaper *La Presse* was the first to include paid advertising in its pages, allowing it to lower its price, extend its readership and increase its profitability and the formula was soon copied by all titles. Around 1840, Volney B. Palmer established the roots of the modern day advertising agency in Philadelphia. Around the same time, in France, Charles-Louis Havas extended the services of his news agency, Havas to include advertisement brokerage, making it the first French group to organize. At first, agencies were brokers for advertisement space in newspapers (Stephen, 2007).

At the turn of the 20th century, there were few career choices for women in business, however, advertising was one of the few career. Since women were responsible for most of the purchasing done in their household, advertisers and agencies recognized the value of women’s insight during the creative process. In fact, the first American advertising to use a sexual sell was created by a woman for a soap product. Modern advertising was created with the innovative techniques used in tobacco advertising beginning in the 1920s, most significantly with the campaigns of Edward Bernays, which is often considered as the founder of modern, Madison Avenue advertising. The psychologists Walter D. Scott and John B. Watson contributed applied psychological theory to the field of advertising. Scott declared that man has been called the reasoning animal but he could with greater truthfulness be called the creature of suggestion and that he is reasonable, but he is to a greater extent

suggestible (Benjamin & Baker, 2004). He demonstrated this through his advertising technique of a direct command to the consumer.

In the 21st century, with an intensely competitive consumer market, advertisers increasingly used digital technology to call greater attention to products. In 2009, for example, the world's first video advertisements to be embedded in a print publication appeared in *Entertainment Weekly* magazine. The thin battery-powered screen implanted in the page could store up to 40 minutes of video via chip technology and automatically began to play when the reader opened the page (Advertisement, 2010).

1.1.4 Features of Advertising

There are five main features that advertisement should deal with. The first one is a form of payment, the second one is a non-personal presentation, others are sell or promote ideas, goods and services, sponsor identified, and inform and persuade:

- **Forms of Payment:** The pay form of communication and therefore commercial communication is always advertising. Advertising therefore can be distinguished from advertising that the sponsor does not pay for. Because advertisers have bought some space or time to convey information to potential customers, advertisements appear on the screens of newspapers, magazines, TV or movie theatres (Smriti, n.d.).
- **Non-Personal Presentation.** Announcement is a non-personal presentation. No matter what form of presentation, advertisements are always intended for the general public rather than any person. At the time e-mail advertising may make a personal appeal impression. All sensations are, however, non-personal. No face-to-face contact with customers. This is why it is described as an impersonal marketing technique. This is an impersonal form of displaying products and propagating ideas, and it supports personal sales. By building awareness in the minds of potential customers, it simplifies the task of salespeople (Smriti, n.d.).

- **Sell or Promote Ideas, Goods and Services.** It aims to increase the sales of products and services in the business sector, such as banks and insurance are most often sold through publicity. In order to promote the use of pin code for the fast delivery of letters, for example, Post and Telegraph advertises. The publicity scope is large and aims not only to sell goods, but also services and ideas (Akanksha, 2014).
- **Sponsor Identified.** An identified sponsor is always present in publicity. In other words, the source of opinions and ideas is revealed or recognized by publicity. The advertising or propaganda sponsor can be anonymous, on the other hand (Akanksha, 2014). The identity of the merchant issuing the advertisement must be disclosed. Failure to disclose the name of the sponsor in publicity may lead to distortion, deception and manipulation. Advertisements should disclose the source of their opinions and ideas (Smriti, n.d.).
- **Inform and Persuade.** Advertising usually brings products and services, benefits and utility information to potential consumers. It also convinces consumers to buy products and services of this type (Akanksha, 2014).

1.1.5 Classification and Types of Advertisement

As different social and cultural domains evolve and expand, the classification of advertising becomes more complex, and the number of advertising types increases. However, advertising can be classified based on its initial purpose, target audience, or medium through which an ad is delivered. Eventually, all three dimensions are interconnected and, in the end, determine which category within the classification system a specific advertisement belongs to.

Another way to categorize ads is by their intended response and target. Commercial and noncommercial advertising are the two main types of ads in this respect. Non-commercial advertising is informative and aims at informing or raising awareness about

certain problems. It can include government notices, social campaigns, and public service advertisements. Commercial ads are consumer-oriented and can be further categorized as 'classified' or 'display' advertisements (Lester, 2003, p. 73).

According to Sandage (2001), there are seven main categories of advertising which are:

- Brand advertising - it is usually visual and textual advertising. Such advertising is intended primarily to achieve a higher level of consumer recognition of specific brands (Sandage, 2001).
- Commerce and retail advertising - advertising of this type focuses on the specific production organization or product sales: it can be a service company or a shop. The main task of the commerce and retail advertising is to encourage the inflow of potential buyers by informing them about the place and the main terms of the provision of certain goods or services (Sandage, 2001).
- Political advertising - one of the most prominent and the most influential types of advertising. A positive image of the politician is formed (Sandage, 2001).
- Advertising with a feedback – this type involves an exchange of information with potential customers. Most common way is a direct mail to specific recipients that has the greatest interest for advertisers as a possible buyer (e.g. in the form of catalogs) (Sandage, 2001).
- Corporate advertising - such advertising almost never contains advertising information (in the conventional sense of the word), and serves for the preparation of the public opinion (a certain segment of buyers) to support the point of view of the advertiser (Sandage, 2001).

- Business advertising - professionally-oriented advertising, intended for distribution among groups formed by their belonging to a particular occupation. Such advertising is spreading mainly through specialized publications (Sandage, 2001).
- Public or social advertising - unlike business advertising, it is oriented to the audience, united mainly by people social status - for example, single mothers, childless couples, teenagers, etc. (Sandage, 2001).

1.1.6 Functions of Advertising

According to Colter (2002), there are four universal functions of advertising that performs any advertising campaign:

- **Economical Function:** The nature of the economical function of advertising is first of all to stimulate sales and increase the volume of profits from the sale of a certain product for a certain unit of time. Advertising informs, creates the need for a product or service, and encourages people to purchase. The more people have responded to the ad, the better it is for the economy and the economical well being of society (Kotler, 2002).
- **Social Function:** Advertising information has a significant impact on the formation of the consciousness of each individual. When advertising is addressed to consumers, besides the promotion of a product, it also helps to form ideological values of the society and at the end has an effect on the character of social relations, causes consumer instincts, encouraging people to improve their financial state, and improves the culture of consumption. Comparing different products and services, the consumer, in any case, tends to get really the best (Kotler, 2002).
- **Marketing Function:** Advertising is an important component of marketing. Advertising entirely connected to the tasks of marketing, whose final aim is the full satisfaction of customer needs concerning goods and services (Kotler, 2002).

- **Communicating Function:** Advertising is also one of the specific forms of communication. It is designed to perform an appropriate communicating function, linking together advertisers and consumer audience by the means of information channels (Kotler, 2002).

1.1.7 Objectives and Importance of Advertising

The main objective of advertising, the earliest and, probably the most primary one is to inform people about certain products for sales. Burke (1980) maintained that the earliest forms of advertising had solely served this basic purpose to inform, while persuasion was noticeably lacking. Modern advertising, on the other hand, has progressed far beyond the goal of merely informing. Burke (1980) speculated on three major aspects involved in contemporary advertising objectives and practice in this regard:

- a. “Advertising is a sales message” (pp. 6-7), implying that it must make the most of the opportunity to persuade consumers of the benefits of a particular product/service.
- b. “Directed at a mass audience” (pp. 6-7), referring to advertising as a medium capable of reaching a large number of consumers through one-way communication.
- c. “Goods, services, or idea”, speaking about the product that advertising is attempting to sell. It is especially claimed that advertising can promote both a physical product and an idea or concept at the same time (pp. 6-7).

Kotler and Armstrong (2004) categorized objectives of advertising into three groups: to inform, to persuade, and to remind. The first objective is to inform beholder about the product/service. The second is to persuade audience to purchase a specific item/service, or shift preferences towards advertised item/ service. Advertising must be interesting, original, characteristic and persuasive. Advertising is the backbone of modern national and international marketing. Modern advertising informs, guides, educates as well as protects buyers, so that they can buy intelligently.

1.1.8 The Psychology of Advertising

Basically, advertising psychology is a combination of many different interests and variables that aim to predict the psychological trends of consumerism. Advertising is no longer limited to magazines, newspapers, radio, television, and even the Internet. In fact, everything that surrounds us, the way products are displayed in department stores, the color, and size of potato chips, the price of clothes, the subtle words spoken on the radio, in other words, anything that makes a product attractive and attracts our attention is an effective way to promote the product (Exploring Your Mind, 2018).

Psychology holds answers to questions that have preoccupied marketing departments for decades, particularly surrounding how to influence people and how people respond to attempts to influence their behaviors. “Persuasion is no longer just an art; it’s an out-and-out science”, said Robert Cialdini (1984), professor emeritus of psychology and marketing at Arizona State University, at the 125th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association. “Indeed, a vast body of scientific evidence now exists on how, when and why people say yes to influence attempts”, he added (Cialdini, 1984).

1.1.8.1 Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior refers to the study of what causes individuals and organizations to purchase certain products and support certain brands. This area of study focuses primarily on behavior, motivations and psychology, which are influenced by the following three factors, according to Brandwatch (as cited in Business News Daily, 2020):

- **Psychological factors.** The way a person responds to an ad campaign depends largely on their own perceptions, attitudes and general view of life.
- **Personal factors.** Demographics such as age, culture, profession, age and background play major roles in forming consumers’ interests and opinions.

- **Social factors.** A person's social groups affect how they shop. Their income, education level and social class influence their buying behaviors.

1.1.8.2 Principles of Psychology to Influence Consumer Behavior

Psychology plays a large role in the overall design and success of an advertising campaign. Ads can be targeted to specific demographic or psychographic groups enhancing brand recall and awareness and overall brand affinity. Understanding the human mind and knowing how to use basic psychological principles is key to successful advertising and branding. Cialdini (1984) synthesized years of research on social influence into six universal principles for understanding attempts to influence human behavior. Both businesses and consumers can use these principles to better understand the inner workings of purchasing behaviors and to determine which strategies are most likely to succeed. These principles are:

1. **Reciprocity.** Humans often feel the need to return a favor or reciprocate kind gestures. For consumers, this might mean offering a free sample or a generous discount, for example (Cialdini, 1984).
2. **Commitment.** Once someone is engaged with something, they are more likely to stick with it. In business, this means cultivating brand loyalty; once someone is working with a product or using a service, they are more likely to commit to paying for it again (Cialdini, 1984).
3. **Pack mentality.** If more people do something, others are likely to do it as well. When brands can demonstrate their popularity or satisfaction across a wide customer base, other consumers are more likely to buy in as well (Cialdini, 1984).
4. **Authority.** People are more likely to listen to an expert than anyone off the street. So, while pack mentality is important, having a relevant expert speak to the effectiveness

of a brand's product or service is essential to converting new consumers (Cialdini, 1984).

5. **Liking.** People who are similar to the target consumer are more likely to persuade the consumer to buy. People from similar demographics – whether in terms of ethnicity, socioeconomic class, religious inclination or even shared interests – are far more effective at persuading consumers than those they perceive as vastly different (Cialdini, 1984).
6. **Scarcity.** People tend to want what they perceive they cannot have. Making a product or service seem exclusive or as if it will go out of stock if they don't act quickly often makes it more enticing to the consumer and increases the likelihood that they will buy in (Cialdini, 1984).

1.1.8.3 Psychological Elements to be Incorporated in Advertising to Influence Consumer Behavior

A basic advertisement involves a lot of strategy and thought, as well as more planning than one may assume. From the color scheme and visuals to the actual words used, each component of an ad is designed to appeal to the consumer in a unique way. Every aspect is specifically designed by incorporating basic psychological elements to generate a desired reaction or response, ultimately driving desired consumer behaviors. There are many potential psychological elements to incorporate. Waite (2017) suggested the following:

- **Reactions.** One of the reasons marketing campaigns are effective is they cause consumers to react to them. The more people react to your marketing campaigns, the more they will talk about them. And the more they discuss your brand and products, the more likely people are to buy them (Waite, 2017).
- **Imagery and word associations.** Using imagery and word associations is a great way to attract attention to your brand. For instance, if you are looking to target young

people, you may use popular phrases and memes as a part of your campaign. This causes your audience to start to associate your product with things they already see as hip and trendy (Waite, 2017).

- **Nostalgia, fear and other emotions.** Another major way marketing affects consumer behavior is by evoking emotions such as nostalgia and fear. For instance, if a product is tied to certain brands, thoughts, images or music from your childhood, this may influence you to buy a product as a way to recapture your youth. On the other hand, if a marketing campaign causes you to become scared or fearful, you may be influenced to buy the product as a way to relieve anxiety and protect yourself (Waite, 2017).

However, there are others elements to make sure the advertisement is not being overlooked as suggested by Glint Advertising (2017). This entails using for example, persuasion and authority, memories, and proper colors and fonts as follows:

- **Persuasion and Authority.** One of the best ways to persuade someone to action is to gain their trust or provide irrefutable logic. Advertising also uses these two basic principles to drive consumer purchase behavior. One of the most common ways advertising uses persuasion is through celebrity endorsement. Many consumers have a big (albeit often irrational) affinity for celebrities and give them implicit trust. Consumers feel they know these celebrities and believe if a product or service is good enough for the celebrity, then it is good enough for them. Celebrities can provide instant credibility for a product or service, often beyond what a “traditional” advertising program can provide (Glint Advertising, 2017).
- **Memories.** Psychologists tell us memories change each time they are recalled, and the original story is altered just a little, thus becoming a new reality. Memories are thought to be a strong source of information, which they are, but just not always reflecting the true reality for which the memory is attached. Either way, memories are

all we have of the past if we don't have a recording of actual events. Advertising can leverage this biological gap to create affinity and intent. Every time a consumer recalls an ad it is an opportunity for a brand or product to create a new, happy or positive memory. By engaging in ongoing communications and advertising, companies can capitalize on recency to create and reinforce positive brand and product memories, potentially even crowding out past transgressions (Glint Advertising, 2017).

- **Color.** Colors illicit strong, and sometimes conflicting, emotions. Some evoke passion, mystery, and coldness while others convey happiness, trust or peace. Every color has a different purpose within an advertisement to control the emotion and perception of the ad, and thus the effectiveness in driving a specific reaction or action (Glint Advertising, 2017). Here are some examples of how each color can change the mood of an ad as suggested by Glint Advertising (2017):
 1. Red: passion, energy, strength, love, power, determination, intensity, anger, excitement.
 2. Blue: depth, stability, wisdom, trust, confidence, calming.
 3. Blue: depth, stability, wisdom, trust, confidence, calming.
 4. Yellow: energy, happy, warming, attention, aggravation, joy.
 5. Purple: wisdom, wealth, royalty, power, luxury, magic, powerful, calming, strength.
 6. Pink: fun, girly, upbeat, sweetness, delicate, romance, peace.
 7. Green: growth, health, harmony, safety, nature, calm, refreshed.
 8. Orange: enthusiasm, heat, success, creativity, warmth, excitement.
 9. White: purity, light, clean, sterile, innocent, spacious, cold, unfriendly.

10. Black: power, mystery, elegance, evil, mourning, death, confident, calm, stable, mysterious.

- **Font.** Much like color, fonts also appeal to us differently on a psychological level. For example, *serif* fonts such as *Times New Roman* and *Baskerville* indicate tradition and stability, while Modern fonts like *Century Gothic* and *Futura* are seen as strong and innovative (Glint Advertising, 2017).

Like other elements, music and body language can cause people to buy as follows:

- **Music.** It is an important factor in ad creation, advertisers use rhythmic melodies to catch the ears of listeners into enjoying and remembering their advertisement. Studies have shown that the part of the brain responsible for processing music is the same part of emotion and memory, which led advertisers to make highly creative melodies to affect people's emotional reactions toward the product. For example, guitar sounds are caring and calm, while minor scales evoke a feeling of sadness and melancholy. Another idea to mention is the harmony between the music and the narrative; the stronger the notes go with the commentary the more memorable it becomes (Gilliland, 2018).
- **Body Language.** In advertising, body language can communicate complex meanings to consumers that go beyond the obvious, straightforward meaning of the perceived advertisement. The initial perception of a product or service is strongly related to the non-verbal elements that the consumer receives from images in advertising, and this initial perception forming before the actual experience would affect interactions and decisions of the consumer. There are many ways in which people communicate through such as facial expressions, gestures, eye movements, eye contact, situation, body position, verbal tone, inflection, silence, speed and volume (Abukhadijeh et al., 2016).

To sum up, advertising plays, as has been mentioned earlier in this section, a multidimensional role within contemporary society and culture. On the surface, the function of advertising is to create and reinforce a demand for various services and goods that supposedly would complement one's life. However, beyond the obvious, today's advertising has a great effect on producing and establishing the dominant norms, morals, values, lifestyles and social power relationships through a system of signs and codes within its textual and pictorial content. In this respect, semiotic analyses, selected as dominant methodological approach of the current research, will assist in examining signification systems within advertising, to reveal prevailing meanings and codes within social and cultural realms of today. However, before conducting actual analyses, it is essential to introduce semiotics, together with related set of terms and concepts, which are the core concerns of the following subsequent section.

1.2 Section Two: Introduction to Semiotics

For several years now, the field of semiotics has been gaining momentum, due to the growth of multimedia and communication science. It is the field of study that is concerned with signs and/or signification (the process of creating meaning). However, semiotics is not a single theory. There are, in fact, several semiotic theories and for the purpose of the current study, the review will focus more on Barthes' theory of semiotics as the grand theory in doing the analysis of the target advert. Therefore, the following section reveals and explains key concepts and figures in formation and development of the field; as well as basic principles of Barthes' theory of semiotics.

1.2.1 Definition of Semiotics

In general terms, semiotics implies the study of how the meanings are created, conveyed and communicated by verbal and non-verbal means within cultural and social domains. Noteworthy, various sources use either 'semiotic' or 'semiology' as a term to define

the field, which are synonymous and refer basically to the same discipline. Perhaps, the distinctive feature of them is that semiology is generally used in Europe (introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure). In contrast, the term semiotics is well-known in America (introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce). Thus, in order to avoid confusion and preserve consistency, this research applies the term semiotics throughout its entire content.

According to Prior (2014), semiotics is a broad diverse field that involves the study of multiple kinds of signs conveyed via varied channels and media, of socially-organized and evolutionarily-generated sign systems, and of the conditions of signification or semiosis (i.e., the processes of making meaning from signs). It can be traced to ancient Greek formulations of *semeion*, as symptom or sign, in medical and philosophical traditions, leading etymologically to current notions of semantics as well as semiotics (Prior, 2014). The standard medieval definition for the sign became *aliquid stat pro aliquo* (something that stands for something) (Prior, 2014). In modern history, semiotics has been taken up in philosophy, literary and cultural studies, language and literacy studies, psychology, and even biology. The present shape of the field has been forged in the competing theoretical traditions of Saussure's (1983) dyadic and Peirce's (1998) triadic accounts of signs.

Elaborating on the subject of semiotics, Eco (1976) had an interesting approach to defining what a comprehensive programme for a general semiotics would be. He suggested that this can be understood through a 'theory of the lie'. As he explained:

Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. A sign is everything that can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not necessarily have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands for it. Thus semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie. If something cannot be used to

tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used to the truth: it cannot in fact be used ‘to tell’ at all. (Eco, 1976, p. 7)

In other words, Eco (1976) has added an insight worth considering. If signs can be used to tell the truth, they can also be used to lie.

At this point, it is essential to introduce the idea of signs, how they function within systems and as tools of communication, and situate signs within codes.

1.2.1.1 Signs and Sign Systems

Signs are central to semiotics, and can be seen as a fundamental ‘building component’ within semiotic theory. Although the term sign has been already elaborated throughout this section, it is important to take insight into its definition and the ways it functions within signifying system. Sign can be defined in a variety of ways. Eco (1976) defined sign as “everything that, on the grounds of a previously established social convention, can be taken as something standing for something else” (p. 16), while Lester (2003) viewed that “any physical representation...is a sign if it has meaning beyond the object itself” (p. 52). Chandler (n.d.) maintained that a sign is “a recognizable combination of signifier with a particular signified” (p. 16). Thus, sign is rather an active entity, which is functioning in order to generate and convey meanings.

En effect, signs and sign systems are looked in three ways:

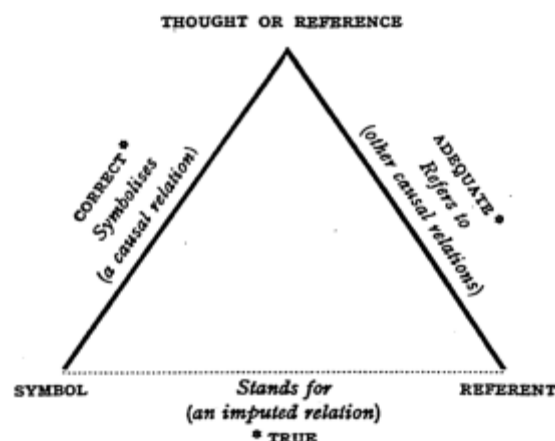
- **Semantics** – this is the ‘how’ of semiotics, and is concerned with this relationship between a signified and signifier – the sign and what it stands in for.
- **Syntactics** – this refers to structural relations. One structural relation in language is grammar, but syntactics in semiotics refers to the formal relationship between signs that lets them build into sign systems.
- **Pragmatics** – pragmatics, according to Morris (Morris, 1938), is the relationship of sign to the person reading or understanding that sign.

The last useful concept from basic semiotics that is worth mentioning is the idea of syntactic indeterminacy (Messaris, 1994). Syntactics is the formal relationship between signs and sign systems. But sign systems are constantly changing and evolving, with the arbitrariness of the relationship between signifier and signified creating a kind of ‘wriggle room’ for meaning to change and evolve within context. This flexibility in meaning creates space where a sign that means one thing to me might mean something slightly or significantly different to you.

Different interpretations of advertisements are developed, or any set of signs, based on our own experience, interpretation and frame of reference. One way to think about the interplay of these factors when looking at signs is to use the well-known semiotic triangle of Ogden and Richards (1923, p. 14) as presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Triangle of Meaning (Ogden and Richards, 1923)



As Figure 3 represents, the triangle shows different aspects of semiosis: sign-vehicle-as-mediator focuses on the connection between a real-life object and its meaning. A referent-as-mediator approach focuses on the different kinds of possible representations and emphasizes congruence between characteristics for the design and referent. An interpretant-as-mediator approach focuses on shared knowledge between the designer and visitor.

However, there are a number of different versions of this triangle with different labels used at each of the points of the triangle (though they might be a different points, they are the same in relation to each other). But generally speaking, there are three main points to the triangle. The first point is the *reference*, the second is the *sign* (or sometimes the expression), and the third is the *concept*. Some versions also put in the centre of the triangle the actor or agent who makes these connections through experience. Hence, this leads to think about semiotics as part of the process of communication.

1.2.1.2 Semiotics and Communication Processes

Semiotics comes out into process of communication. It means that every communication process can be considered as message that is sent and received through various different signs. Therefore, every single expression including music, fashion, art, literature, even advertising can be analyzed as a sign system. Considering the point of view that semiotics has relation with communication process, the application field of semiotics is actually unlimited. Semiotics fields are dealing with the communicative activities which are natural and spontaneous in social system.

In the study of communication, semiotics is an important science, because signs are the main basis of all communication. With signs humans can do any communication with each other (Sobur, 2009). In its development, the study of semiotics developed into two main classifications, namely ‘communication semiotics’ and ‘signification semiotics’.

Communication semiotics emphasizes the theory of sign production, one of which assumes the existence of six factors in communication (sender, receiver, message, channel and reference). Whereas signification semiotics puts emphasis on sign theory and its understanding in a particular context (Sobur, 2009). This is where the emergence of various branches of semiotic studies such as Animal Semiotics (zoomsemiotics), Medical Semiotics (medical semiotics) reaching 19 fields of study (Sobur, 2009).

At this point, it is worth thinking about the two fundamental views of communication, the transmission and the ritual view, and considering how ideas of the sign play out in each (Mediatexthack, n.d.). The transmission view, which was about the functional exchange of information from sender to receiver across space, can utilize signs as a vessel for the exchange of such information (Mediatexthack, n.d.). The signs that surround us are all signifiers, and thus can be seen to at least be attempting to communicate or convey information. In a ritual view of communication, which is about the idea of culture being developed over time, ideas are seen to be circulating a culture, and again through the use of signs to facilitate the exchange of meaning (Mediatexthack, n.d.). What a sign 'means' is often determined and refined by culture, even for indexical signs. What meanings are dominant, what symbols correlate to what ideas, is constructed by culture. In addition, signs are not presented in isolation, but rather, form groups and systems, which are organized in accordance with certain set of rules. In semiotic terms, these groupings of the signs are referred to as 'codes'.

1.2.1.3 Codes

Codes are so important to the understanding of semiotics that, if a sign does not appear to conform to a code, there is doubt that it is even a sign at all. All codes are systems, but not all systems are codes. These codes are used by both encoders and decoders of signs to help ensure that the message intended is approximate to the message received. The concept of 'semiotic code' implies two notions that are the grouping of signs and the rules of their organization. As follows, in order to convey meaning, signs are grouped in accordance with appropriate placement within system, which accentuate the interrelation between the signs, rather than relationships of signifier and signified. The rules of organization of the signs, on the other hand, points out the means by which people can utilize signs to convey and exchange meanings (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993).

In this respect, Chandler (2004) stated that “codes organize signs into meaningful systems which correlate signifiers and signifieds. Codes transcend single texts, linking them together in an interpretative framework” (p. 35). Indeed, in order to generate a text, signs are selected and joined into system in accordance with suitable familiar codes. Thus, during the reading of the text, signs are interpreted in relation to the codes, which appear to be the most appropriate to situation. Generally, there is a variety of classification systems of the codes, but, keeping in mind theoretical framework of this research, code groups, defined by Chandler appear to be most suiting. Thus, Chandler (2020) divided codes into three major groups as follows:

- **Social Codes:**
 - verbal language (e.g. phonological, syntactical)
 - bodily codes (e.g. bodily contact, proximity)
 - commodity codes (e.g. fashions)
 - behavioral codes (e.g. rituals)
- **Textual Codes (Representational):**
 - scientific codes
 - aesthetic codes
 - genre, rhetorical and stylistic codes
 - mass media codes
- **Interpretative Codes:**
 - perceptual codes
 - ideological codes

It is also important to comprehend that all codes possess a set of shared characteristics. These characteristics are cited by Leeds-Hurwitz (1993) as follows:

- Codes have a number of units arranged in paradigms from which one is chosen.
- These units are combined syntagmatically into a message or text.
- Codes convey meaning derived from the agreement among and shared cultural experiences of their users.
- Codes are transmittable by their appropriate media of communication.
- Codes can be a way of classifying, organizing, and understanding material as well as of transmitting or communicating it.
- Codes are, by their very nature, full of gaps and inconsistencies and subject to constant change.

To conclude, understanding the key aspects of codes are crucial in semiotic analyses, as within semiotics the code presents a framework for comprehending usage and functioning of signs. In terms of semiotic analyses of advertising texts and the role of codes, it must be emphasized that, as Chandler (2020) put it, “all representations are systems of signs: they signify rather than ‘represent’, and they do so with primary reference to codes rather than to ‘reality’ ” (p. 26).

1.2.2 Historical Foundations and Perspectives of Semiotics

Although semiotics, which is basically the field concerned with the study of signs and signs systems, is regarded as relatively new field, its core notions and concepts are rooted in the time of antiquity. Indeed, ancient philosophers, like Plato and Augustine, had a profound interest in signs, and how they produce and communicate meanings. As early as 397 C.E., Augustine, a Roman linguist and philosopher, suggested studying signs, pointing at the fact that majority of globally recognized entities could provide communication by many nonverbal means (Şen, 2014). Moreover, Augustine saw signs as “link between nature and culture” (Lester, 2003, p. 53).

Nevertheless, while various theories on nature and communicative properties of signs have been appearing throughout the history since ancient times, semiotics in its contemporary form emerged around the end of 19th- beginning of 20th century, with the works of the Swiss linguist Saussure (1857–1913) and American philosopher Peirce (1839–1914) (Şen, 2014).

In particular, Saussure suggested the need for semiology, “a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life” (Saussure, 1983, p. 15). Conceiving semiology as a field that would “investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them” (Saussure, 1983, p. 15), he saw linguistics as a part of semiology, which would in turn be part of psychology. Although he alluded to studying rites and customs as signs, he attended primarily to the nature of the linguistic sign.

Saussure’s book *A Course in General Linguistics*, first published posthumously in 1915, suggests the possibility of semiotic analysis. It deals with many of the concepts that can be applied to signs (Berger, 2004). Saussure offered a dyadic account of signification as the relation of *signifier* (sign) to *signified* (referent). Saussure also distinguished *parole*, or actual individual utterances, from *langue*, the underlying system of conventions that makes such utterances understandable; it is this underlying *langue* that most interests semioticians. Saussure’s model proved to be generative for a number of approaches to structuralist and text semiotics (e.g., Barthes, 1967) because its attention to the circulation of signs within systems was well attuned to the materials and goals of that work, to the project of making visible the webs of significations in static texts (or performances rendered static) (Prior, 2014).

Peirce’s seminal work in the field was anchored in pragmatism and logic. He defined a sign as “something which stands to somebody for something” (Peirce, 1960, p. 135), and one of his major contributions to semiotics was the categorization of signs into three main types: (1) an icon, which resembles its referent (such as a road sign for falling rocks); (2)

an index, which is associated with its referent (as smoke is a sign of fire); and (3) a symbol, which is related to its referent only by convention (as with words or traffic signals) (Pierce, 1998). Peirce (1998) also demonstrated that a sign can never have a definite meaning, for the meaning must be continuously qualified.

Consequently, the works of Saussure and Peirce has served as a source of inspiration for many other Twentieth-century semioticians, including U. Eco, R. Barthes, A. Berger, C. Morris, and T. Sebeok, and therefore for establishing several semiotic theories (Şen, 2014). Actually, for the purpose of this study, however, the review will focus more on Barthes' theory of semiotics as the grand theory in doing the analysis of the target ad in the current research.

1.2.3 Barthes' Theory of Semiotics

Roland Gérard Barthes or commonly known as Roland Barthes was born in 1915 in Cherbourg. He is a French literary theorist, linguist, and semiotician. His work pioneered ideas about the system of signification. He is also as a follower of Saussure's semiological program and a leading structuralist (Roland Barthes: Biography and facts, 1999). Barthes' academic career fell into three phases. During the first phase, he concentrated on demystifying the stereotypes of bourgeois culture (as he put it). For example, in *Writing degree Zero* (1953), Barthes examined the link between writing and biography: he studied the historical conditions of literary language and the difficulty of a modern practice of writing (Seiler, n.d.).

During the second phase, the semiotics phase dating from 1956, he took over Saussure's concept of the sign, together with the concept of language as a sign system, producing work which can be regarded as an appendix to *Mythologies* (1957). During this period, Barthes produced such works as *Elements of Semiology* (1964), and *The Fashion*

System (1967), adapting Saussure's model to the study of cultural phenomena other than language (Seiler, n.d.).

The third phase began with the publication of *S/Z* (1970), marking a shift from Saussurean semiology to a theory of "the text", which he defined as a field of the signifier and of the symbolic. The distinction between "the writable" and "the readable", between what can be written/rewritten today, i.e., actively produced by the reader, and what can no longer be written but only read. Barthes extended this idea in *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973) via the body as text and language as an object of desire. He offered a "textual" reading of himself in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1975). In his last book, *Camera Lucida* (1980), he reflected on the levels of meaning of the photograph. Barthes died in 1980, having been knocked over by a laundry van (Seiler, n.d.).

Generally, Barthes was particularly interested in reading and interpreting daily life and popular culture by means of semiotics, while analyzing and decoding signs within a variety of areas (e.g. photography, advertising, fashion, etc.). Barthes developed concepts that present a profound contribution to the field of modern semiotics. In particular, one of his major contributions is the notion on the three orders of signification, termed 'connotative' (or connotation), 'denotative' (or denotation), and 'mythical' (or myth).

1.2.3.1 The Orders of Signification

Syahri (2011) (as cited in Nadira, 2018) explains Barthes' idea known as "order of signification" as the study of meanings or symbols in a language or sign. Order signification is divided into denotation, connotation and other aspects of the sign that is myth. Denotation is the first order of signification. This part consists of signifier and signified. It means that denotation is defined as what we see as literally in other words means dictionary meaning. Meanwhile, connotation is the second order of signification that contains the change meaning

of the words associatively. Associative meaning is the meaning that has relationship with situation outside the language.

Fiske (1982) described and explained Barthes' orders of signification as presented in Figure 4 and referred to the first order of signification known as denotation as relation between signifier and signified in a sign towards external reality. Connotation is a term used by Barthes to show the second order of signification. This describes the interaction that occurs when a sign meets the feelings or emotions of the reader as well as the values of his culture. Connotation has subjective or least intersubjective meaning (Fiske, 1982). Subjective is based on the feelings or sense of people, while the intersubjective is produced in social interaction. In other words, denotation is what the sign represents of an object, whereas the connotation is how to describe it. At the third order of signification relating to content, the sign works through myth. Myth in this term will be obtained after interpreting denotation become connotation meaning because all the result is an advanced interpretation of denotation and connotation that is adapted with condition and culture in society.

Figure 4

Barthes' Orders of Signification (Fiske, 1982)



As suggested by Nadira (2018), the example, lush bamboo tree caused connotation of “sacred and spooky” because it regarded as dwelling of the spirits. This “sacred and spooky” connotation then become as common assumption attached to bamboo tree symbol, so that sacred bamboo tree is no longer a connotation but turned into a denotation of second

order of sign. In this level, “sacred and spooky bamboo tree” is regarded as a myth finally (Nadira, 2018).

Hjelmslev (1961) explained the concept that meaning appears when there is relation between signified and signifier. As described above, unity of a signifier with an idea or signified is sign. In other words, signifier is a meaningful “sound” or meaningful “scribble”. Thus, signifier is material aspect of the language; it is what is said or heard and what is written or read. Meanwhile, signified is mental thoughts or image of concept. Barthes adopted from Hjelmslev (1961) the notion that there are different orders of signification. The first order of signification is denotation: at this level there is a sign consisting of a signifier and a signified. Furthermore, connotation is a second-order of signification which uses the denotation sign (signifier and signified) as its signifier.

1.2.3.1.1 Denotative Order. According to Barthes (1967), denotation is the first order of signification. It refers to the simple or literal relationship of a sign to the references; signifier and signified. Denotation is the step of the sign which explains the relation between signifier and signified producing the explicit meaning (Barthes, 1967). Denotation meaning is also a common meaning which is accepted and approved in society. “Denotation tends to be described as the definitional, ‘literal’, ‘obvious’ or ‘common sense’ meaning of a sign” (Sobur, 2009, p. 263), In the case of linguistic signs, the denotation meaning is what the dictionary attempts to provide. Panofsky (1970), the art historian, proposed the denotation as a representational visual image that is what all viewers from any culture and at any time would recognize the image as depicting.

From the explanation above, the meaning of denotation can be defined as the initial meaning of a sign, text, and so on. In this phase, it explains the relation between signifier and signified in a sign as well as between sign and object they represent in external reality. External reality means everything that can be caught by sensory perception. Denotation refers

to common-sense thing, the meaning of a sign. Denotation is also known as dictionary meaning of a word or terminology of object.

1.2.3.1.2 Connotative Order. Barthes (1967) defined connotation as the second order of signification that comprises signifiers, signified. In the framework of Barthes (1967), the connotation is “a sign which derives from the signifier of a denotative sign (so denotation leads to a chain of connotation)” (p. 91). Barthes gave the priority to connotation and he noted that it is not easy to separate the signifier from and signified. Meanwhile, Fiske (1982) added that connotation is the cultural meaning that becomes attached to a term. Connotation illustrates interaction that occurs when sign meets the emotions and culture values of the reader. Connotation has subjective meaning or at least intersubjective. This happens when interpretant is affected by many objects or signs.

Based on the explanation above the meaning of denotation can be defined as second order signification to get the clear sign which identifies the hidden meaning. Berger (1994) (as cited in Nadira, 2018) compared connotation to denotation as shown in Table 1:

Table 1

The Comparison of Connotation and Denotation (Berger, 1994)

Connotation	Denotation
Figurative	Literature
Signified	Signifier
Inferred / conclusion	Evident
Suggest meaning / giving impression about meaning	Describes / explanation
Realm of myth	Realm of existence

1.2.3.1.3 Mythical Order. Sign in the third order implies various cultural concepts, which reflect a specific perspective on the world (Chandler, n.d). Myths, in semiotic sense, are aiding in recognizing, organizing and conceptualizing various cultural experiences. Barthes (1993) added that “myth is also called as popular belief” (p. 115). Barthes (1993) was rather specialized one of the term of myth refers to a chain of concepts widely accepted throughout a culture, by which its members conceptualize or understand a particular topic or part of their social experience. The role of myth, as Barthes (1993) explained, is to expose the signs to show what appears to be determined by history. Thus, regarding Barthes’s notion of myth, it plays a dominant role in the processes of naturalizing the cultural constructs, until they begun to appear normal, natural, and commonplace. Besides, myths can conceal ideological functioning of signs and sign systems, as well as codes.

1.2.3.2 The Barthesian Codes

Barthes theorised that there cannot be just one single meaning to an author’s intentions, from the viewpoint of a reader and since there cannot be one single, unchanging definition to the author’s intentions, there has to be some other methods to identify such definitive, solid meanings provided by the author to drive or direct the thought processes of the reader in the perspective he desires. Thus, the meaning of a piece of literature was completely left to the faculties of the reader and they required a certain method of textual analysis to gauge the leaning/ meaning/ general theme, feeling or aura of the passage and this he does, through an analysis of a short story by Balzac called *Sarrasine* in *S/Z* (1970) as claimed by Vivec (2019). This urge to categorize language stemmed out of his own tendencies of being a Structural Linguist. Therefore, he came up with five codes for determining the various kinds of significance/ semantics. Zaib and Mashori (2014) explained the five codes as follows:

- **The Proairetic Code:** Also known as the narrative code. It refers to those elements of a narrative which create tension in its plot. These suspensive elements play dual role in a text. At first, they proclaim that something is going to happen and secondly, they make the reader attentive and respondent to resolve the tension. Here, the reader tries to get an advance knowledge about the actions by asking some of the questions as ‘What will be the reaction of a certain action?’ (Zaib and Mashori, 2014).
- **The Hermeneutic Code:** Also known as the code of “enigma”. It refers to all the enigmatic, puzzling and mysterious elements of a text that make the reader curious to unveil their mystery. Here, the reader tends to disclose certain secrets by asking several questions of his knowledge as ‘what is happening and why is that happening? What is the obstacle?’ (Zaib and Mashori, 2014).

Barthes used some of the unique terms for these elements as “snare”, “equivocations”, “partial answers” and “jammings”. The term snare implies “deliberate evasion of truth”, the word equivocation refers to the “mixture of truth and snare” and the term jammings stands for “acknowledgement of insolubility”. These terms allegorize as the subordinate codes/ subordinate elements of the hermeneutic code and they designate different situations and actions of the narrative (Zaib and Mashori, 2014).
- **The Semantic Code:** Also known as the connotative code. It refers to those elements of a text which can better be understood by implying their suggestive and connotative meanings. According to Barthes, all narratives have some definite “characters, places and objects” that connotatively help the reader to understand the theme of the text (Zaib and Mashori, 2014).
- **The Symbolic Code:** Also known as the antithetical code. It resembles to the semantic code and hence it creates a difficulty for the readers to make a clear distinction between semantic and symbolic codes. The code refers to the antithetical

and contrasted elements of the text by which the reader (being a post-structuralist) tries to organize the reality. Through this code the reader focuses on the binary polarities (Zaib and Mashori, 2014).

- **The Cultural Code:** Also known as the referential code. It pertains to those elements which share a common knowledge of the world. Here, the reader focuses on the physical, physiological, medical, psychological, literary and historical properties of characters of the story to identify a common knowledge (Zaib and Mashori, 2014).

1.2.4 Semiotics in Advertising

The definitions, given earlier in this chapter suggest that semiotics is a study of signs and sign systems, while through the method of semiotics any textual materials can be examined in terms of underlying meanings. In a broader sense, text can be referred to anything that can be read and understood in terms of meanings (e.g., sounds, words, pictures). In this respect, advertising also can be seen as a text, combining verbal and non-verbal information in form of signs, which constitute signifying systems. Thus, in order to decode implied messages and reach to the core of the meanings within these complex structures, one needs to utilize a specific approach. Semiotics, in this sense, serves as a method of reading and interpreting texts of advertisements, as it examines relations of the signs within signifying systems, and reveals codes and myths, comprised within a message. Studying advertising text from semiotic standpoint was first proposed by Barthes (1964), who maintained later that:

In advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional; the signifieds of the advertising message are formed a priori by certain attributes of the product and these signifieds have to transmit as clearly as possible. If the image contains signs, we can be sure that in advertising these signs are full, formed with a

view to the optimum reading: the advertising image is frank, or at least emphatic. (Barthes, 1997, p. 33)

Notably, every text, including advertising, is generated through the signs systems, where the signs are arranged in connection to various codes, which mirror particular cultural and social values, practices, or beliefs. In brief, it can be said that advertisements embody certain mythical concepts and meanings, which is provoking a chain of association between an image and its audience, shaping and adding significance to the daily experiences, and encouraging certain views of various social and cultural aspects. This statement, together with all mentioned above, clearly points at relevance of semiotics as a method for analyzing advertisements in terms of underlying codes and meanings.

Thus, it concludes the first chapter that reviews the related literature and transits this work to the next chapter, which will focus on selected methodological approach and advertisement analyses.

Conclusion

This chapter consists of two sections reviewing the literature related to advertising and semiotics. The first section provides a general overview of the nature and scope of modern day advertising. It opens with defining advertising in general and as being a tool of communication in specific. Then it sheds light on its evolution and history, features, classification and types, functions, objectives and importance. Finally, it discusses the principles of consumer advertising psychology and the psychological elements to be incorporated in advertising to influence consumer behavior. The second section introduces the field of semiotics beginning with defining the term and its origin followed by explaining the idea of signs, how they function within systems and as tools of communication, and situating signs within codes. Then, it provides an overview of the historical foundations, perspectives, and theories of semiotics with a focus on Barthes' theory as being used as the

methodological framework for analysis of one of Barbie doll ads. The coming chapter represents the practical side of this study.

2. Chapter Two: Research Methodology and Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter represents the practical aspect of the present study; it puts the reported literature review into practice. It offers a thorough explanation of the research methodology that is followed, as it provides the results obtained from the analysis with explanation and discussion. It is divided into two sections; the first section is devoted to present an overall description of the research methodology used in this study, and the second one is devoted to the analysis and discussion of the results obtained besides the limitations of the study and the recommendations that can be set out for future researches.

2.1 Section One: Research Methodology

This section describes the research methodology that is followed to analyze the selected ad in semiotic terms. First, it presents the method and design of the research that are followed by identification of the method, and speculation on relevance of selected methodological approach. Secondly, basic information about the unit of analysis or the selected ad is provided. Thirdly, a thorough description of the ad background and components is offered. Finally, the data collection and analysis procedures that were applied are set out.

2.1.1 Study Design

A decision must be taken on what design should be followed, based on the research questions raised (Walliman, 2011) and in accordance with the aim and objectives of the study. Therefore, we adopted the qualitative method of research due to its relevance to reveal and examine the signs collected in Barbie's "Imagine the Possibilities" ad in a descriptive manner and analyze their connotative and denotative meanings as well as the myth based on Barthes' theory of semiotics. Hancock, et al. (2009) pointed out that qualitative research is related to "the interpretation of social phenomena by development" (p. 1). As has been

revealed through literature review, a majority of today's video advertisements combines verbal and non-verbal elements, assembled into intricate system of signs. Analyzing these signs' meanings (in terms of denotation, connotation and myth) is a core concern of our semiotic analysis.

2.1.2 Unit of Analysis

It was decided purposefully that the current study focuses on the analyses of Mattel's Barbie advert entitled "*Imagine the Possibilities*". This ad was launched as the first in a Barbie campaign, "You Can Be Anything", designed to encourage parents to reappraise the role Barbie can play in a child's life. The online film, "Imagine the Possibilities", was created by BBDO San Francisco, in conjunction with BBDO New York as a promotion for Barbie Dolls on October 8th 2015, and the campaign continued through 2016 (BBDO New York, 2015). The ad was originally published on Mattel's YouTube channel (Rose).

The ad was about open play, returning the brand to its roots and celebrating young girls' journeys of self-discovery, imagination and storytelling (West, 2015). It was shown up in Barbie's top ten most-watched videos of all time (#10), and claimed the highest 30-day average views, and also won YouTube ad of the year 2015. The Facebook version of the ad also made an appearance at #10 in the most-engaged list. The ad clocked 25.8 million online views (as of April 10, 2019) and helped lift the brand's affinity scores, according to Mattel (2016). Having garnered over 50 million views later, the piece has become a part of the cultural zeitgeist and was honored at the star-studded Webby Awards ceremony on Monday, May 16, 2016 at Cipriani Wall Street in New York City (Mattel, 2016). The "Imagine The Possibilities" becomes also a source for the creation of numerous articles from sources like Forbes, The Washington Post, and The New York Times.

2.1.3 Description of the “Imagine The Possibilities” Video

2.1.3.1 Background

Since Barbie’s debut at the American International Toy Fair in New York in 1959, the doll has always been the one toy young girls around the world have played with the most. The Barbie doll was created by Ruth Handler, the co-founder of the American toy company ‘Mattel’, based on her experience with her daughter Barbara and the realities of growing up as a girl in the 1950s (Rahmat and Tambunan, 2019). The inspiration for Barbie came when Ruth were watching her daughter Barbra playing with Paper dolls and her friends are imagining roles as college students, cheerleaders and adult with different careers. However, over the years, Barbie has been perceived with negativity because of assumptions that the doll falsely represents an ideal female. Girls come in all shapes, colors, and sizes and cannot thus be encouraged by the unrealistic body proportions and unreasonable beauty standards represented by this doll. In response to the growing criticism, Mattel began a new campaign titled “You Can Be Anything” in 2015. Unlike previous campaigns, this version used the YouTube platform to deliver the message of empowerment and encouragement to young girls and “Imagine the Possibilities” ad was launched the first in this campaign. In this ad, Mattel positions itself as an advocate for girls’ empowerment, only a year after being criticized for publishing a sexist book titled *Barbie: I Can Be a Computer Engineer* (Lorenz, 2014). It seems plausible to suggest that this failed marketing attempt, and not a truly benevolent investment in girls’ futures, was a catalyst for the “Imagine the Possibilities” advert (Burns, 2015).

2.1.3.2 Scene

The nearly two minutes video (1 min and 55 s) was shot in documentary style using hidden cameras (up to six in each location) to create cinema verite glimpses of five little girls (between 6 to 9 years old) in five locations or settings: college hall, veterinary clinic, airport,

play ground, airport, and museum (The Stable, 2015). *The video was made by the participation of more than 50 male and female characters in addition to the five little girls and in presence of two pets; a dog and a cat. The video also doesn't contain any graphics and the lighting was natural most of the time. All the scenes took place in daytime.*

The ad opens on a wide shot of a collegiate lecture hall overlaid with a pink filter as the screen reads in white cartoon text, *“What happens when girls are free to imagine they can be anything?”*. The font is big enough to draw us into the center but not too big that it takes away from the mystery of what is going on in the background. Combination of the two causes a sense of intrigue within the viewer. As the traditional Barbie pink fades away, the short video continues to show, either in natural out-door or in in-door ambient (general) lighting, five little girls in real life scenarios taking on the roles of adult professionals including a college professor, veterinarian, soccer coach, businesswoman on a business trip, and museum tour guide. *The careers were chosen by each of the young actresses, and they were filmed unscripted playing out their dreams in front of unsuspecting adults.* The video switches from one role to another in few seconds then jumps back to each role to complete each girl's story.

When coming back to the original young girl in the lecture hall, as she begins to ask a question of her students, the scene cuts to the same young girl sitting on the floor of her bedroom with her Barbie dolls imagining herself as a professor. The screen fades to the original Barbie pink as the young professor's voice is still heard in the background, and reads in white, *“When a girl plays with Barbie, she imagines everything she can become”*. Then, soon after, the second text appears *“You can be Anything”*, and then, accompanying it, at the bottom of the screen the word *“Barbie”* with underneath *“2015 Mattel”*.

2.1.3.3 Colors

The use of colors is a vital aspect of art direction advertisements. Colors are also a meaningful constant for sighted people and it is a powerful psychological tool (Matikas,

2009). What is remarkable about the colors used in the video is that pink is the predominant color, as being Barbie's signature color and also the primary color choice for girls (young or older). It is utilized first at the beginning of the video when it overlays a group college age students filling into a classroom within the text "*What happens when girls are free to imagine they can be anything?*" Then it appears lightly in some of the clothing of the girls or in the Barbie dolls' clothes. Pink is noted clearly at the end of the video when the screen fades into this color and the last texts appear in white. Finally, the ad completely fades to pink. However, nearly all other colors are present in the video, such as, black, white, red, and green in the coach scene; orange, black and white in the vet scene with the cat owner; and the like. Generally speaking, the colors used in the video look bright, cheerful, natural, comforting, cool and professional.

2.1.3.4 Music

Music usually adds the sensory dimension of advertising and branding and provides an emotional or mood setting which can evoke a variety of feelings. *The "Imagine the Possibilities"* spot is accompanied with a background music with no voice-over. The music was created by De Wolfe Music, Andrew Know Music Productions (The Stable, 2015). The music is one of the recent piano productions of the composer and jazz pianist Andy Quin (De Wolfe Music, n.d.). It is lighthearted and bouncy, adding a second cute element to the story being told besides the sense of humor that was created when the girls performed their roles in a comedic manner and even when the adult audiences chuckled when they heard the girls speak about or perform their jobs adding a very strategic element and entertainment value to the spot as well. From what was clearly heard, the music goes into two chunks to add an element of surprise or to create a climactic effect. As the video begins with real sounds (natural noises) heard in the lecture hall within the professor scene, the music starts 20 s after the beginning of the video and continues to play in the background till coming back to the

girl playing out the professor role in the lecture hall and begins to ask a question of her students, here then the music stops to play at 1 min and 28 s with the scene in the girl's bedroom with her Barbie dolls and returns again to play at 1 min and 32 s in the closing scene till the end of the video. Indeed, cutting down the music humanizes the video and makes it real.

2.1.3.5 Language

The language used in the video is in the active mood, it is performed by the five little girls, who are imagined their future careers, playing professional roles. The girls role play homemade aesthetic and relatable dialogues, as they use sophisticated and complex words, which words usually only heard out of an older person's mouth, but despite that, the language did not cease to have a childish tone that gave the viewer enjoyment. Also, the ad language includes humor that attracts the viewers' attention throughout the whole video and makes them so excited to see what is coming next, such as when the young girl dressed as a veterinarian says "have you ever seen him fly?" It also uses a rhetorical question at the beginning of the video "What happens when girls are free to imagine they can be anything?", and exaggeration by saying for instance "I had the most *fantastic* day in the office".

2.1.3.6 Transcript

The video is totally dominated with a childish voice belonging to the five little girls as they pretend to be an expert in different real-world occupations: a professor, veterinarian, soccer coach, businesswoman, and museum tour guide. The video was transcribed according to these occupations and not on the way it was uttered within the cut scenes as follows:

- **The Professor in the Lecture Hall**

"Hello! My name is Gweneth and I'll be your professor today and I'll be talking about the brain".

“The dog’s brain can’t think as much as the human brain because there is no High School for the dog”.

“We can think and do lots of stuff with our brain. Now, does anybody know how big the brain is?”

- **The Professor in her Bedroom**

“Anybody?”

“Sofia!”

“It is medium”.

“Medium, very good!”

- **The Veterinarian**

The dog owner: “Hi!”

The vet: “Hello, I’m your veterinarian today”.

The dog owner: “You’re kidding!”

The vet: “No, I’m doctor Brooklyn. See!”

The dog owner: “Okay doctor”.

The vet: “Oh, here let me see”.

The vet: “Have you ever seen him fly?”

The cat owner: “I’ve ever seen him what!”

The vet: “Fly!”

The cat owner: “No!”

The vet: “My cat can fly”.

The cat owner: “Okay”.

- **The Soccer Coach**

“Good morning every one, I’m your new coach. My name’s Mady. Nice to meet you”.

“Knees up like a unicorn! Higher, higher!”

- **The Businesswoman**

“I had the most fantastic day in the office, you’ll never believe what happened, I got that new business I wanted”.

“I’ve been to New York, Transylvania, Pennsylvania”.

- **The Museum Tour Guide**

“This is Peter, the triceratops. Peter is one years old, the T-Rex Sally is one thousand two million two hundred and fifty-two years old”.

2.1.4 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

In accordance with the methodological framework of this research, five major steps of analysis were followed. First, we selected the video commercial purposefully as the object of the research. Second, after watching the video carefully and repeatedly, we defined verbal (including spoken and written texts) and non-verbal (including gestures, facial expressions, body language, colors and music) components within sign system in terms of their denotative meanings. These denotative meanings were analyzed per scene following the Barthesian model as the grand theory of semiotic analysis. Then, the connotative meanings of the defined signs were deeply interpreted. However, the connotative meanings could not always be described in every scene because of their arbitrary nature. Furthermore, the relationships of connotative meanings within defined sign systems were looked upon to reveal both the myth that and the semiotic codes as well. Finally, these codes were analyzed in relation to the defined myth, underplaying such notions as female empowerment and femininity. The analysis took into consideration the following elements: setting of the scene, colors, language and body language of the video under study.

The data were analyzed to decipher their denotative and connotative meanings as well as to identify its myth. As the selected video clip followed five little girls as they acted out five grown-up roles in the real world, the data then were observed per scene divided into

five major scenes according to these roles in addition to the opening and closing scenes. However, these roles went into separate chunks or scenes and for ease of analyzing the collected data, we had to go through the different scenes that refer all together to each role or story separately.

All in all, it might be useful to make a brief outline of main points and processes, covered above, which were utilized throughout the analyzing process. Thus, first it must be re-emphasized that the present study applied qualitative methodology, which used the Barthesian model of semiotics as the major methodological approach. Then, the target advertisement was selected as the object of the study where its verbal and non-verbal elements were revealed and their denotative and then connotative meanings as well as their myth were defined per scene. Finally, the analyses tried to build upon the different semiotic codes and analyze them in relation to the defined myth, underplaying such notions as female empowerment and femininity.

2.2 Section Two: Data Analysis and Discussion

The current section presents the core part of this research, as it focuses on the semiotic analysis of the selected advert "*Imagine the Possibilities*" following Ronald Barthes' theory, by highlighting the first order of signification (denotation) that is shown by extracting signifiers and signifieds of both verbal and non-verbal signs that contain in every scene of the video, and revealing the second order of signification (connotation) that was intended by Mattel advertisers. Furthermore, the analysis reveals the myth that was created through the defined connotative meanings and deduces the semiotic codes that were implied in the video context as well. Finally, it interprets how these codes in relation to the defined myths underplay such notions of female empowerment and femininity. In view of that, analyzing the target ad goes through four parts. The section then after discusses and interprets the findings of the study in light of the research questions and related literature and concludes

by mentioning the limitations of the study and the recommendations that can be set out for future researches.

2.2.1 Data Analysis

2.2.1.1 The Semiotic Analysis of the Video in Terms of Denotation and Connotation

The video under study captures five little girls as they acted out five grown-up roles in five different locations. The ad zippily cuts between these budding professionals and moves from one girl to another to finish each one's story, showing both their attempts at aping adults and the bemused reactions of spectators around them. This was done may be for the sake to arouse suspense among the viewers and make them wait and wonder what comes next. The data therefore were observed per scenes as we preferred to analyze all the scenes that refer to each role performed by one girl separately. Hence, the analysis goes mainly through five major scenes in addition to the closing scene by mentioning their durations and some pictures that illustrate them as follows:

2.2.1.1.1 The Professor Scenes. The opening scene of the video [00:00:00-00:00:05] shows a wide shot of a collegiate lecture hall overlaid with a pink filter as the screen reads in white cartoon text: "What happens when girls are free to imagine they can be anything?" A simple question posed by Mattel to its viewers and let them discover the answer throughout the video (see Figure 5). As a verbal sign of the advertisement, it connotes that young girls should be able to dream and aspire to be anything you set your mind to. Barbie also is trying to send out a message that females have no limits and should not be judged on who they are or what they do because 'they are free to imagine they can be anything'. This is an important message that is displayed as society has often stereotyped women as though they should be the ones who play netball, stay home with their children whilst the fathers work and should never have a job which requires them. Noteworthy, the question here is directed to parents to encourage them to reappraise the role Barbie can play in a child's life. On the contrary, as a

non-verbal sign, the pink color of the ad connotes femininity; it is the primary color choice for girls (young or older). It is also the predominant color used in the whole Barbie campaign “*You Can Be Anything*”. It is also identical with female empowerment.

Figure 5

The Opening Scene in “Imagine The Possibilities” Ad



Note. From Youtube.com

The second scene [00:00:05-00:00:21] begins as the traditional Barbie pink with the question fades away gradually. Then we see the lecture hall fill up with attentive college students, notepads and pens at the ready. Suddenly, an adorable little girl who’s maybe between five and eight years old marches and stands to the front and center of the hall (Figure 6). She sports a black bob-haircut and a fashionable and stylish dress that cuts off at the knees. Her waist is hugged by a makeshift belt, made of brown rope. It is held together nicely by a knot and a string. In her hand is a remote for the projector. Resting on a table behind her is a plastic-looking human brain. In fact, all around her: both on the right and left side of the room, and including the chalkboard behind her, are images of the human brain (Figure 6). Heads turn, and unsuspecting students look appropriately confused, surprised and baffled. The girl confidently and authoritatively introduces herself: “*Hello! My name is Gwyneth, and*

I'll be your professor today. And I will be talking about the brain”, which causes them all to break out into some pretty wide grins and looks of enjoyable disbelief as evidenced by the close-up shots that we see of them (Figure 8). Here then the shot flashes to a veterinarian’s scene.

Figure 6

The Professor Scenes in “Imagine The Possibilities” Ad



Note. From Youtube.com

Eventually, the little girl as a non-verbal sign of the ad stands for all girls playing with Barbie Dolls. Her pretty appearance and being dressed in very fashionable cloths connote that girls and women in general are always a symbol of beauty. Fashion in general is about showing identity, while it is the first thing people look at, to interpret who you are. It

shows what choices you make, what type of person you are, and it gives a glimpse into someone's personality. It also represents the way you live, your moral, your creativity and your intelligence.

A young professor is a good starting point to tease out larger inconsistencies around the overall idea that little girls can be anything they want to be, via their imagination or the kind of fanciful products that they are able to purchase. Mattel tried to show that even the hard and complicated tasks are not impossible to be achieved. A little professor who is teaching a biology class, dealing with the brain lesson connotes that knowledge and success increase the value of beauty instead of just focusing on the appearance, and most importantly, we know that for years women are supposed to work on selective and limited jobs for the sole fact that many jobs were a considered men's job. Mattel tried to break the gender stereotypes that shaped our lives.

Furthermore, the most attention catching is the girl's confidence, authority and the use of body language. The little girl was talking with her hands and making so funny and cute facial expressions, this connotes a strong personality and leadership potential. The use of your hands in a speech indicates your level of expertise and passion to the audience. Also showing that you are intelligent, caring and a person who deserves to be listened to. Mattel, in effect, tries to show that an iconic fashion doll could teach girls that their worth lies beyond their appearance. Of course Barbie can be fashionable and pretty—but for the sake of young girls, she should be more than her looks because girls need to know they can be more.

Moreover, the adults as a non-verbal sign of the ad were not actors, but were real adults acting as real adults would to these precocious little girls. Not only did this creative decision add to the entertainment value of the spot, it added a very important strategic element as well. On one hand, by seeing other adults understanding and playfully accepting the attempts of these girls to role play as a professor, the role playing is normalized. The

adults are surprised, sure. But they are accepting. On the other hand, the audience reactions connote pleasure and cheerfulness maybe because of their nostalgia or it may be about seeing their child through the little girl and being happy that they will also have a positive experience by playing with the doll.

As a verbal sign of the ad, the statements announced by the young professor in a very childish tone to introduce herself and her lecture topic connote that she confident; charming; knowledgeable about her subject, and her adult outfit makes her and the rest of the commercial appear adorable and lighthearted. She seems to use sophisticated and complex words, which words usually only heard out of an older person's mouth, but despite that, the language did not cease to have a childish touch or tone that gave the viewer enjoyment.

Back to a new scene of the professor [00:00:51-00:00:58], the adults in the room keep their eyes fixated –interestedly waiting for her lecture to begin. Gweneth who with a funny hand gesture as it is something obvious reveals her punchline: *“The dog’s brain can’t think as much as the human brain because there is no High School for the dog”*. The whole room burst into laughter (Figure 7). The reaction from her class is priceless. As a verbal sign of the ad, her successful statement or joke connotes that she performed her role with the patience of a seasoned comedian, pauses for dramatic effect. In addition, we notice that even though the little girl is pretending an adult professional role but there is always a sense of humor in her speech and it is obviously spontaneous; this represents the innocence soul that children have and keep the childish touch on their speech and the resulting effect makes the ad to appear in a funny and engaging way.

Figure 7

The Professor Scene in “Imagine The Possibilities” Ad



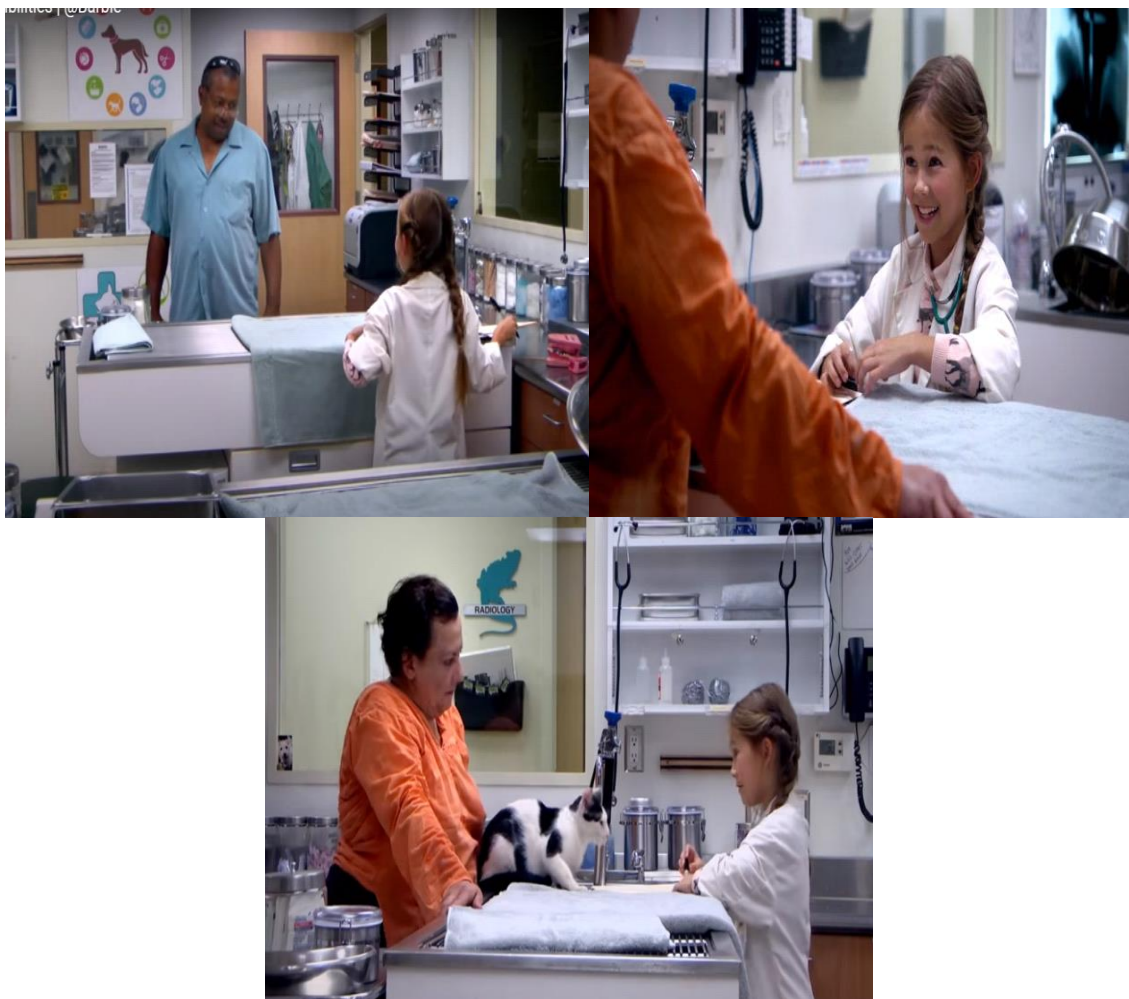
Note. From Youtube.com

2.2.1.1.2 The Veterinarian Scenes. Similar stunts to the professor role take place at a veterinary surgery in two separate scenes; the first one with the dog owner [00:00:21-00:00:30], and the second with the cat owner [00:00:45-00:00:51]. In both, we meet another young girl around the same age of Gwyneth, Doctor Brooklyn, a veterinarian (see Figure 8). The vet role goes into two separate scenes. Brooklyn is dressed in a white lab coat with a cat shirt underneath. The coat looks little bit bigger than her. She has her hair braided into pigtails and a stethoscope around her neck. While she is standing behind the procedure table and checking the medical record, a man with entered the clinic saying: “Hi”. The young girl responds by saying: “Hello, I’m your veterinarian today”. The man was surprised: “You’re kidding”, he said with a smile on his face. Brooklyn confidently proves her credentials to her patient by showing off her handmade name tag. “Doctor” is scrawled in marker on card stock affixed to her lab coat. With a confident smile she answered “No, I’m doctor Brooklyn. See!” The scene cuts to the patient holding his white dog to the exam table, “Ooaa !! Here let me see”, the girl said excitedly (see Figure 8). Backing again to Dr. Brooklyn veterinary, in another scene in the vet clinic, where a board hanging on the wall appears with “Radiology”

written on it, we see the girl questioning a cat owner, “*Have you ever seen him fly?*”, and the woman responds: “I’ve ever seen him what!”. “Fly!”, the girl repeated and the woman said: “No!”. The girl claimed: “*My cat can fly*”. The woman smiles in a way to show her acceptance and belief saying: “*Okay*” (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

The Veterinarian Scenes in “Imagine The Possibilities” Ad



Note. From Youtube.com

As a non-verbal sign of the ad, the young girl playing the role of a vet connotes the normalization of women holding such occupations which were originally considered to be male dominated careers. The little girl seems confident through her outfit and body language. She knows how to deal with patients without any hesitation, especially when questioned

about her credentials. But that moment that makes the viewers feel good; it is great because it illustrates the strength of girls and their imaginations. It's not Barbie the toy, and certainly not Barbie the brand, but the girls in the commercial that cause their delight. Through the two scenes, you can almost believe that Brooklyn is really a veterinarian, and this is what Mattel aims for, to show parents how their daughters are able to achieve anything they want, and how is playing with Barbie affects their creativity and broaden their imagination. At first, the pet owners, as a non-verbal sign of the ad, seem surprised, unsuspected, and skeptical about letting Brooklyn examine their pets, but they warm up to the idea pretty quickly. They trusted the young vet and gave her their pets for examination.

The dialogues between the young vet and the pet owners stand as a verbal sign of the advert. Collectively, all of the scenario presented with the dialogue connote that the message of unlimited possibilities is conveyed. The girl uses sophisticated and complex words similar to older people, but despite that, the language did not cease to have a childish voice that gave the viewer enjoyment. Also, the dialogue includes humor that attracts the viewers' attention and adds entertainment value to the video.

2.2.1.1.3 The Soccer Coach Scenes. In another clip of the video [00:00:30-00:00:36] suggesting a new scenario of a young girl, Maddie, who takes on the role of a coach for an adult male football team (see Figure 9). She is also around the same age as both as the young professor and the vet. She appears in a pony-tailed hair-style on both sides of her face wearing a red and black soccer kit with some white lines and carrying a yellow whistle around her neck. *“Good morning, everyone. My name's Maddie. I'm your new coach. Nice to meet you”*, she greets and introduces herself to a group of full-grown and bemused male soccer athletes. The players were all standing across from her, in an empty stadium looking at her with amazement and admiration and sending some pleasant smiles. Then, in a new screen shot [01:11-01:18] as shown in Figure 9, Maddie who stands at least one foot shorter than the

shortest of the team, but that doesn't stop her from blowing her whistle and urging them to pull their "knees up, like a unicorn!". "Higher, higher!", she continues instructing them and the players stifle their smiles as they listen and obey. They looked excited to be trained by such a sweet young girl.

Figure 9

The Soccer Coach Scenes in "Imagine The Possibilities" Ad



Note. From Youtube.com

As a non-verbal sign of the ad, the young soccer coach connotes that young girls playing with Barbie Dolls can do anything they want—if only they just “Imagine the Possibilities”. Being a soccer coach and a girl at the same time is something we don't see every day. Mattel wanted to send this message that girls have no limits and we have to support them to dream big. The players' reactions of gladly following the girl's orders, as non-verbal signs of the ad too, indicate that adults have to accept her position despite her young age and her lack of professionalism. The statements and commands stated by the young soccer coach form verbal signs of the video and connote that she is confident and full of energy, although, she still uses childish comments which add a sense of humor to the commercial.

2.2.1.1.4 The Businesswoman Scenes. Next in a row [00:00:36-00:00:45], we see a skirt suit clad girl with a short curly brown hair walking in the airport departure lounge dragging her bag behind her, the young girl took a seat and started chatting loudly on her smartphone, she was so excited as she talked about her day in the office saying she had “*the most fantastic day in the office*”, which make the people around her laughing, we also overhear her tell the caller, “*you’ll never believe what happened, I got that new business I wanted*”. What denotes that she is a globe-trotting boss who is running businesses (see Figure 10). The girl’s self-confidence is palpable. In another screen shot [00:01:18-00:01:23] as seen in Figure 10, she added while counting on her fingers “*I’ve been to New York, Transylvania, Pennsylvania*”. As a non-verbal sign of the ad, this girl’s role connotes and indicates the possibility that girls can be independent, run business and travel alone as well as a good and modern leader. The girl’s way of speaking shows how far her imagination took her; her Barbie doll is a vehicle for her imagination, while it is an incredibly simple concept that kids imitating and behaving like adults is obviously nothing new. Mattel focuses on giving an answer to the question it asked at the beginning of her amazing video and spreading the empowering message that imagination is key and anything is possible; girls should be encouraged to follow their dreams and ignore any constraints that society tries to place on them.

As the aforementioned scenes, the language of the young businesswoman is motivating but still uses childish comments which add a sense of humor to the commercial. This can be interpreted by the fact that Mattel drew on the language of ‘girl power’ as if to bestow on her products a sense of dynamism, modernity, and innovation that allows them to market products to “younger and younger” consumers. The ad also shows the use of hand movements and costumes to portray a specific effect. The girl’s costume are both casual and

non-stereotypical to show that she is everyday people and her body language makes the people in the ad happy and enjoying the moment.

Figure 10

The Businesswoman Scenes in “Imagine The Possibilities” Ad



Note. From Youtube.com

2.2.1.1.5 The Tour Guide Scene. In one scene [00:00:59-00:01:11] suggesting a one complete story of a (not-so-knowledgeable) museum tour guide, a little black girl with a curly hair wearing a pastel green shirt and a white short, carrying a cross body bag. “Ture Gide” is scrawled in marker on card stock affixed to her shirt. In a museum, the young museum tour guide stands in front of dinosaurs’ excavations with a group of visitors (Figure

11). She gives jovial names to dinosaur bones and incorrectly identifies a triceratops as “*This is Peter, the triceratops. Peter is one years old*”, and “*The T-Rex Sally is one thousand, two million, two hundred, and fifty-two years old*”. That is not even a real number, but it was chock full and genuinely sweet moment. The museum-goers around her are filming and taking photos and following her with much of interest and joy (Figure 11). On a connotative level, the black skin tone connotes that Mattel encourages all girls to pursue any career that they want, regardless of their race, and shows that white people are not more superior to the black ones. However, the girl’s lady and classy style is always emphasizing the confidence, self-esteem and femininity. The unsuspecting adults in the scene are happy to indulge the kid overlooking all her blatant unprofessionalism.

Figure 11

The Museum Tour Guide Scene in “Imagine The Possibilities” Ad



Note. From Youtube.com

2.2.1.1.6 The Closing Scenes. As the lighthearted music continues to play in the background, we come back to the original young girl in the lecture hall [00:01:24-00:01:28]. As she begins to ask a question her students a question about the brain saying: *“We can do lots of stuff with our brain. Now, does anybody know how much big the brain is?”* and the audience burst into laughter, the scene cuts to a different image of Gweneth [00:01:28-00:01:37] , this time, she is sitting on the floor of her bedroom with her Barbie dolls laid out in the same format as the lecture hall in makeshift cardboard seats. It is until this moment by the end of the advert that we actually see Barbie dolls. The girl is playing with her Barbie dolls imagining herself as a professor and revealing that what we had witnessed was all part of her imagination and that the audiences were only made by her imagination and creativeness. Fading to pink [00:01:37-00:01:41], as Gweneth’s voice is still heard in the background, a white textual content appears and the message is then spelled out for us: *“When a girl plays with Barbie, she imagines everything she can become”*. Figure 12 shows some closing scenes of the video.

The little girl who is just pretending at the end of the day forms a non-verbal sign of the ad that connotes every girl playing with her Barbie doll. This ending of the commercial flawlessly ties together and explains how the imagination of the little girls grows while playing with Barbies. As a verbal sign, the tag line *“When a girl plays with Barbie, she imagines everything she can become”* is the answer of the question that was posed by Mattel at the early beginning of the video, while the ad took us in an adorable experience with little girls and allowed us to live the funny moments so we couldn’t help the smile. It is a poignant and charming message to be sure, and a huge step in the right direction for Barbie. We finally get that playing starts up the imagination in children, which has been proven to have many benefits. While children play with toys, any dream can be acted out. So, this advertisement

essentially says, why not give them big dreams? Mattel encourages girl to dream big and follow their dreams. By not making Barbie the focus, the message is less about hair, makeup, and fashion, but more about creativity, self-expression, improvisation, and emotional intelligence. Noteworthy, Mattel, through this idea, aimed to regain Barbie's reputation and to break the stereotype of thinking about Barbie in terms of unrealistic beauty standards. Therefore, Mattel makes a shift from body-image to self-image.

Figure 12

The Closing Scenes in "Imagine The Possibilities" Ad



Note. From Youtube.com

Finally, the commercial completely fades to pink [00:01:41-00:01:55], and the ad slogan appears: “*You Can Be Anything*”, which is displayed largely with capital letters and

two different fonts. “*YOU CAN BE*” is written in pink as the same color of the background and superimposed within a white. It is featured in a simple bold font that attracts all age groups. As a verbal sign, it represents the strength and stiffness, that you can do it and you have all the capacities to do it. And directly underneath comes the word “ANYTHING” in white with a different font as if it is drawn or handwritten which connotes that anything you want is on your hand, you can do whatever you want and it is underlined by a vertical square bracket as a connotation of you are protected and safe whatever you choose to go for there is always who encourage and support you to reach your dreams. Then, soon after, the Barbie logo appears underneath in white cursive font, which is apparently hand-drawn, and then, accompanying it, at the bottom of the screen in a very small font, “*2015 Mattel*”, the company name and the year of launching the advertisement which are included to give the viewers more information about the advert. Generally speaking, white color is used to show and emphasize pink and make the combination clean (neat). White as connotation meaning represents purity, innocence, wholeness, and completion, while pink is the primary color choice for girls (young or older) and signifies femininity, fun, sweetness, delicate, romance, and peace. Figure 13 shows the logo of the advert.

Figure 13

The Logo of “Imagine The Possibilities” Ad



Note. From Youtube.com

2.2.1.2 The Semiotic Analysis of the Video in Terms of Myth

Based on the semiotic analysis of the video under study, the connoted meanings extracted from the video showed how Mattel did not openly promote their products but instead used a metaphor strategy (storytelling advertisement) to inform parents of young girls that playing with dolls (Barbie) can help them develop their creativity by sending the message “*You can be anything*”. This lesson comes from children’s insights when playing with dolls; they frequently pretend to be one of a variety of adult characters and act in adult ways (teacher, doctor, businesswoman, and the like).

Barbie has long been associated with the conventional image of a frivolous, airy, pink-dressed Californian blonde, which promotes beauty criteria and an unreal feminine ideal. It establishes ‘goals’ that must be reached (both physically and materially). Instead of focusing on intelligence and personality, the popular doll focuses on outward attractiveness and superficiality. Mattel has received a wave of criticism that has given a negative connotation, with stereotyping and gender biases at the top of the list. So, it wisely chose to

address this by canceling the image of women as being housewives by emphasizing the endless possibilities available to girls as they begin to plan their futures.

The “Imagine The Possibilities” commercial features several young actresses who play their dream jobs for a day, including professor, veterinarian, soccer coach, businesswoman, and museum tour guide before coming together on a screen of a child creating and imagining scenes in her bedroom with her Barbies, and that is how Mattel empowers the girls that watch the video for the sake to persuade them to buy Barbies and to encourage creative free-thinking.

We see how the concept of Barbie has changed from a stereotypical doll that represents unrealistic beauty standards to a myth that people see as the tool through which a girl can be everything she wants. By imagining all the possibilities but actually, girls or children in general don’t need a doll to imagine their future through. Such imaginations are useless and irrelevant – namely, because Gwyneth’s (but, really, all women’s) potential are already pre-defined for them. However, Mattel in this advertisement turned the scales and made Barbie look like an icon of feminism, thus regaining its reputation after facing a lot of criticism and attacks and that is the point behind the advertisement which was so successful and motivating.

2.2.1.3 The Semiotic Analysis of the Video in Terms of Codes

- **The hermeneutic/enigma code:** It refers to plot elements that are not explained in the story. They exist as puzzles to be solved by the viewer. “Imagine The Possibilities” is an advertisement video that conveys Roland Barthes first and most important narrative code, the question at the beginning of the advertisement “What happens when girls are free to imagine they can be anything?” which was posed to the audience to leave a sense of ambiguity and to leave them hooked. However, there is still an ongoing enigma in the little girls’ speech. We are kept through an audience

hook until the end of the video until we find out that all the events were on the little girls' minds only. This makes the video more enjoyable as we are trying to find clues to what will happen next.

- In addition to the hermeneutic code, **the Proairetic code** is also used in the ad to create suspense by using the actions of the little girls throughout the video. Barthes explained that the two codes work together to construct tension in the film entices the audience to continue their interest till the end. For example, in this ad, the proairetic code is used repeatedly throughout the video. We see this code being used as the variety of events that occur allow the viewer to complete them. Like when the professor asked the student “does anybody know how big the brain is?”, or when the coach whistled to announce the start of training, or when the vet was about to check the dog by saying “here let me see”, also, when the businesswoman was waiting for her plane trip. All of these are action codes allow the audience to “fill in the blanks” of what is coming next based on these actions.
- **The Semantics code:** The whole video contains a connotative meaning behind what is present, for example, the pink color in the opening and closing scenes connotes femininity and at the same time a message of female empowerment and femininity.
- **The symbolic code:** The use of symbolism in this narrative is through the colors, customs, setting, acting and body language, for example the girls' outfits fit perfectly to their occupations.
- **The cultural code:** Barbie advertisement “Imagine The Possibilities” is built mainly on the cultural code, as the ad emphasizes the new and improved Barbie after it has gone through over many years to reach to the point that it is at currently. Barbie in this ad is no longer the traditional doll that indicates the unrealistic beauty standards,

but it is becoming a feminist icon encourage young girls to be inspirational and ambitious.

2.2.1.4 The Notions of Female Empowerment and Femininity in the Video

From the analysis we find that “Imagine the Possibilities” ad on Barbie’s YouTube channel depicts the idea that Barbie is not limited to the unrealistic body proportions and unreasonable beauty standards for which the doll and its marketers have been severely criticized. Based on the semiotic analysis of the selected video and the defined myths, it is evidenced that the ad empowers little girls by giving them the chance to imagine whatever they can become in the future as it projects girls play a multitude of career roles such as a college professor, veterinarian, soccer coach, businesswoman, or museum tour guide, without ignoring the use of pink color and the feminine details that Mattel included in the advertisement which connote femininity as suggested by the girls’ beauty, elegance and feminine gestures, but without making it overshadow the empowerment, which is the main message that Mattel wants to deliver to the viewers.

Ending the video with the four powerful words: “You Can Be Anything” spreads the message that imagination is key and anything is possible. The video is really about the benefits of imaginative play: of using your creativity, dreaming about your future, and all that truly excellent stuff that has been shown to have positive developmental effects for kids. But it conflates kids’ imaginations with Barbie herself, suggesting there’s something about the doll that unlocks girls’ creative potential. Collectively, all of the scenarios presented in the ad along with the dialogue, the message of unlimited possibilities is conveyed. Whatever the scenario, though, the message is the same: “*You can be anything*”. It is very important for young girls to always believe in their dreams, no matter how far away they seem. Rather than pointing out the negatives, emphasizing the positives and providing encouragement, will only motivate this generation and generations to come to pursue their dreams.

In what follows, the obtained results from the semiotic analysis of “Imagine The Possibilities” advert are discussed separately in relation to the research questions and the related literature.

2.2.2 Discussion

The overall objective of this study was to examine how the notions of female empowerment and femininity were represented in Barbie’s “Imagine The Possibilities 2015” advertisement through semiotic analysis and decoding. The study aimed in particular to reveal denotative and connotative meanings that disclose in the verbal and non-verbal signs of the selected ad and further to define the myth and the different semiotic codes.

The process of the research was conducted through several major stages. First of all, an area of inquiry was defined, and relevant literature was reviewed to create a strong theoretical framework. Secondly, semiotics was defined as a method of analysis, resulting in the completion of the methodology chapter, which outlined the major steps of analyses. At the same time, data was collected and analyzed preliminary. Finally, semiotic analyses of the selected advertisement were conducted to reveal whether or not it answers given research questions, and fulfils established aims and objectives.

The findings of this study are discussed in light of the findings, related literature and previous studies considering the research questions. Based on the conducted semiotic analysis, we were able to answer all of our research questions proposed at the very beginning. With regard to the first research question, the results displayed the significance of the verbal and nonverbal signs. Each analyzed scene had two orders of signification, denotation and connotation. For example, the verbal and nonverbal signs at the opening scene had a denotative meaning that represents the first order of signification. As we mentioned at the first chapter that is known as relation between signifier and signified in a sign towards external reality (Fiske, 1982), which is simply what we can notice from it as average people

watching the ad, which is a simple question written on a pink background led us to an answer. With regard to the connotative meaning which is the second order of signification, it describes the interaction that occurs when a sign meets the feelings or emotions of the reader as well as the values of his culture (Fiske, 1982). In other words, it is what we were able to infer and relate to in order to decode the hidden intended meanings behind each utterance or sign and also to conclude how myths are created depending on cultural context and personal associations. In effect, the first order of signification of the question at the beginning would be as an investigation to the viewers, also the pink color would represent Barbie typical color and it is girly as it is known.

Concerning the second order of signification, advertisers prepare the viewers and make them expect what is to come next and create suspense, in order to attract them and keep them watching till the end to find out the answer, while the pink color connotes femininity that cannot be excluded for girls and that no matter how high they reach and work in men's occupations. There is always a feminine touch that distinguishes them. The significance of every sign including settings, clothes, gestures and body language, speech, colors and race are deduced in the analysis of the video using Barthes' denotation and connotation. Mattel tries to convey one and only message via every single detail in the ad, there was nothing random. However, in this ad you don't have to dig too much in order to understand the message behind. Most of the connotation meanings are easy to get especially that the main target audience are not little girls but parents, "Moms will be another big focus for the Barbie brand as it moves into the second half of the year", said Evelyn Mazzocco, Mattel senior vice president and global brand general manager (Nguyen et al., 2016). He added, "We're going to have some meaningful conversations with moms ... Moms have wanted us to listen. We're listening now. And we'll continue to do that" (Nguyen et al., 2016). This supports what have already mentioned.

In light of the second research question, the results demonstrated that Mattel transformed Barbie from a typical doll to a feminist icon. Advertisers chose to go with a new experience and adopt the storytelling technique for this advert. Storytelling is used for building a brand and creating valuable relationships with customers through developed stories. This method does not annoy customers, but rather help them easily remember the brand, as well as create a long relationship between them and the company, and that is how the myth was created throughout the video.

Since we know that the connoted meaning is a realm of myth, every hidden meaning of a sign leads to the conclusion that myth is being created. We can see this in occupations' choice which was usually genuine on men and how Mattel broke the stereotype and represented Barbie as a tool that girls use to reach their dreams. In other words, advertisers aimed to cancel the image of women as being caregivers by showing another image which is in contradiction with the actual role of women, here where again the myth was created; there is a contradiction between the reality and the image they want to market. Barthes (1993) claimed that "myth is also called as popular belief" (p. 115). Hence, parents would believe that the way to encourage their daughters to be successful is through buying them a Barbie doll, which results in consuming the myth, not the product. In this vein, Matt Miller, Executive Creative Director, BBDO San Francisco, noted: "So we set out to show everyone how girls really play and demonstrate that, when girls play with Barbie, they actually play out the possibilities their futures hold" (The Stable, 2015). As a result, we concluded that Mattel is not only saying that girls are matter, but also that play matters, most specifically that you as a little girl can be anything but only through buying their doll and play with it.

In the video, advertisers made a compelling and creative story by letting children and parents know that playing with Barbie dolls can help children develop their imagination along with a meaningful message, "*You Can Be Anything*". Now that Barbie has a powerful

and meaningful message to it, it draws favorable attention and buzz for their brand. This campaign especially impresses the parents of children by making them think again about buying Barbie dolls for their children, because they want their children to experience this memorable and wonderful moment in their lives.

The third research question of the present study investigates the used of Barthesian codes within the audio-visual context of the advertisement. Mattel used in this ad Barthes' five codes and this shows that the video is rich in signs that are present to illustrate the idea and understand the content through them. The use of semantic and symbolic codes is mostly the same and they are both necessary for creating the video and giving hints to the hidden meanings, moving to the hermeneutic and Proairetic codes, the two ways of creating suspense, the first caused by unanswered questions while the second by the anticipation of an action's resolution. Those two codes were used throughout the whole video and catch the viewer's attention. Finally, the cultural code which was used clearly in the video, and this is normal because Barbie, since 1959 has held the status of cultural icon in America and then around the world.

The fourth research question of how the notions of female empowerment and femininity were represented in the selected advertisement, was answered indirectly within the whole analysis. The advertisement constantly represents the image of a successful and professional version of the doll. The variety of careers that were played by the young girls promotes imagination of a different sort in little girls and encourages them to think like future career women rather than as housewives. The video also shows women in traditionally male-dominated occupations including professors, veterinarians, and coaches...etc. Barbie's careers thus go beyond the stereotypes of conventional feminine domestic occupations like housewives, nurses, and teachers.

Hence, the results confirm that the campaign intends to posit Barbie as the reason why the girl in the video and those watching the video can imagine being anything they wanted. Mattel has won over the hearts of many customers and making an incredible comeback. The message to empower young girls to follow their career dreams, goals and aspirations captures a lot of attention for Barbie, and it is benefiting for the company as well as young girls nowadays. Just as Barbie's creator, Ruth Handler said in her 1994 autobiography: "My whole philosophy of Barbie was that, through the doll, the little girl could be anything she wanted to be. Barbie always represented the fact that a woman has choices" (Venard, 2019). The message that is delivered is that Barbie is always a means of female empowerment and this is what Mattel wanted to prove throughout the advert. The push for this campaign's main objective along with the changes in their dolls is the initiative to empower young girls toward their career goals. This campaign resolves many pessimistic backlashes Barbie received in past years that caused an acute sales problem the last few years for Mattel.

Although the main goal of the ad is to improve the image of Barbie after receiving many criticisms, it did not marginalize the concept of femininity, which is clear and evident in the ad, not only through the pink color in the opening and closing scenes, but in many details where we see the beauty, elegance and feminine gestures of the girls. According to Koller (2008), pink was strongly associated with femininity, and it became the primary color choice for female infants and children. Pink represents the 'female-stereotypes color' (Koller, 2008). So, the first connotation of pink in this advertisement is as a code for femininity which actually contradicts Ruth Handler's dream and the campaign's mission to empower women. The typical Barbie pink used in this advertisement aims to embrace the traditional sense of femininity as something soft, gentle, and delicate while simultaneously conveying the sense of empowerment and the pursuit of goals without limits. The campaign misses the mark in

this way. Barbie seems to provide contradictory messages that girls can own their empowerment but they must still maintain their conventionally approved feminine features.

Overall, Barbie is the most popular doll in the world, and almost every adolescent and teenager is familiar with her. As per estimates, over a billion Barbie dolls have been sold in over 150 countries (Mattel, 2016). As a result, the doll has an impact on many children, either directly or indirectly. So, Mattel thought, why not use her as a feminist tool to show what a woman should be. So, a girl's perception of herself and her ability might be influenced by the doll, and this was achieved through YCBA campaign.

2.2.3 Limitations

The current study faced some difficulties and obstacles that may have affected its result and validity; the most important ones are:

1. Lack of prior research on the topic and the availability of related studies.
2. Semiotics as a field is poorly studied in English resources.
3. The issue of not having dissertation manuals for qualitative researches.
4. Self-reported data which may contain several potential sources of bias.

2.2.4 Recommendations

1. It is recommended that our Algerian advertisers should exert a lot of effort to find out the best ingredients that should be in an effective advertising and get out of their traditional promoting techniques just as Mattel did.
2. "Imagine The Possibilities" is one of the YCBA campaign videos so further studies are recommended to analyze other videos that all aim to the same idea.
3. It was suggested that further research should be conducted using the same advertisement as object but following another semiotics theory (such as Saussure's or Pierce's theory).

4. Further studies can be conducted also viewing this ad from a different angle such as gender stereotype, race, ethnicity, and even social classes.

Conclusion

All in all, the chapter in hand presented and discussed the findings of this study. Data were collected from the advertisement video, and then they were described, analyzed, and interpreted. Semiotic analysis of the ad was followed with a thorough discussion in light of the research questions and the related literature. In this connection, the findings showed a vivid picture of how Mattel empowered girls to reach their dreams and be whatever they wanted, and how playing with Barbie doll broadened girls' imagination and made them more creative. With regard to the objectives of this study and after an objective analysis of the data collected, it becomes obvious that the findings encounter the study's objectives and answer the research questions. This chapter also provided recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

General Conclusion

Advertising has become a form of communication and a great source for promoting services and products for any business in the whole market because of its broader impact. The main idea of an advertisement is to get the attention of the consumers, build up the product's strong image in their mind and provide information to help the consumer to make a purchase decision. Advertising has many hidden signs and meanings. Accordingly, Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols, what they mean and how they are used and interpreted. Semiotics aims to study and interpret the message being conveyed in (for example) advertisements. In this view, this study aims to reveal denotation, connotation and myth that disclose in the verbal and non-verbal signs of Barbie's "Imagine The Possibilities 2015" advertisement and further to look upon the relationships of connotative meanings within defined sign systems in order to reveal the semiotic codes and analyze them in relation to the defined myth, underplaying such notions of female empowerment and femininity.

In order to achieve these aims, we adopted the qualitative methodology through the semiotic theory proposed by Ronald Barthes. As the selected video followed five little girls as they acted out five grown-up roles in the real world, the data then were analyzed per scene according to these roles taking into consideration the following elements: scene, colors, language and body language.

The current dissertation is organized along two chapters beginning with a General Introduction. A theoretical chapter is devoted to review the literature of relevance to modern advertising and semiotics. Thus, it consists of two sections. The first section provides a general overview of the nature and scope of modern day advertising. The second section introduces the field of semiotics with a focus on Barthes' theory.

The practical chapter represents the field work of this research; it puts the reported literature review into practice. It offers a thorough explanation of the research methodology

that is followed, as it provides the results obtained from the analysis with explanation and discussion. It is divided into two sections; the first section is devoted to present an overall description of the research methodology used in this study, and the second one is devoted to the analysis and discussion of the results obtained besides the limitations of the study and the recommendations that can be set out for future researches. Finally, the dissertation ends with a General Conclusion which makes an overall account of the research and summarizes the main research findings.

The semiotic analysis of the video yielded several findings; a) We defined the verbal and non-verbal components of the video in terms of their denotative and connotative meanings; b) We revealed the myth and the different semiotic codes; and c) We discussed how the notions of female empowerment and femininity were represented in the video through the empowering message that imagination is key and anything is possible; girls should be encouraged to dream big and follow their dreams.

And based on the aforementioned findings, it was recommended that our Algerian advertisers should exert a lot of effort to find out the best ingredients that should be in an effective advertising and get out of their traditional promoting techniques just as Mattel did. Finally, it was suggested that further research should be conducted using the same advertisement as object but following another semiotics theory (such as Saussure's or Pierce's theory). Further studies can be conducted also viewing this ad from a different angle such as gender stereotype, race, ethnicity, and even social classes.

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Résumé

La publicité est devenue une forme de communication et une excellente source de promotion des services et des produits pour toute entreprise sur l'ensemble du marché en raison de son impact plus large. Dans la publicité, de nombreux signes cachés sont assemblés de façon créative pour attirer l'attention des consommateurs et les aider à prendre une décision d'achat. En conséquence, la sémiologie étudie et interprète les signes et les messages produits par les annonceurs. L'objectif principal de cette étude est de révéler la dénotation, la connotation et le mythe qui révèlent les signes verbaux et non verbaux de la publicité de Barbie intitulée « Imagine The Possibilities 2015 » et de définir davantage les codes sémiotiques et les notions qu'ils représentent, telles que l'autonomisation des femmes et la féminité. L'étude a adopté la méthodologie qualitative à travers la théorie sémiotique proposée par Barthes. Comme la vidéo sélectionnée suivait cinq petites filles jouant cinq rôles d'adultes dans le monde réel, les données ont ensuite été analysées par scène en fonction de ces rôles en tenant compte des éléments suivants : scène, couleurs, langage et langage corporel. L'analyse de la vidéo a donné plusieurs résultats ; a) Nous avons défini les composantes verbaux et non verbaux de la vidéo en fonction de leurs significations dénotatives et connotatives; b) Nous avons révélé le mythe et les différents codes sémiotiques; et c) Nous avons discuté de la façon dont les notions d'autonomisation des femmes et de féminité étaient représentées dans la vidéo à travers le message d'autonomisation que l'imagination est la clé et que tout est possible; les filles devraient être encouragées à rêver grand et à suivre leurs rêves. Enfin, ces résultats peuvent être utilisés comme modèle brut pour de futures recherches.

Mots-clés : publicité, sémiologie, Barthes, autonomisation, féminité

الملخص

أصبح الإعلان شكلاً من أشكال الاتصال ومصدرًا كبيرًا لترويج الخدمات والمنتجات لأي نشاط تجاري في السوق بأسرها بسبب تأثيره الواسع؛ حيث أن هذا الأخير له العديد من الإشارات الخفية التي توضع معا بطريقة إبداعية لجذب انتباه المستهلكين ومساعدتهم على اتخاذ قرار الشراء. وبناء على ذلك، تقوم السيميائية بدراسة وتفسير الإشارات والرسائل التي يصدرها المعلنون. فالهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو الكشف عن الإشارة والدلالة والأسطورة التي تظهر في الإشارات اللفظية وغير اللفظية لإعلان باربي "Imagine The Possibilities 2015" وكذلك لتعريف الرموز السيميائية و ما تمثله من مفاهيم كتمكين المرأة وأنوثتها. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج النوعي من خلال النظرية السيميائية التي اقترحها Barthes . نظرًا لأن الفيديو الذي تم اختياره تابع خمس فتيات صغيرات أثناء قيامهن بتمثيل خمسة أدوار لشخصيات ناضجة في العالم الحقيقي ، فقد تم بعد ذلك تحليل بيانات كل مشهد وفقًا لهذه الأدوار مع مراعاة العناصر التالية: المشهد والألوان واللغة ولغة الجسد. أسفر تحليل الفيديو عن عدة نتائج ؛ (أ) حيث حددنا المكونات اللفظية وغير اللفظية للفيديو من حيث معانيها الضمنية والدلالية ؛ (ب) كشفنا عن الأسطورة والرموز السيميائية المختلفة ؛ (ج) وناقشنا كيف تم تمثيل مفاهيم إمكانية المرأة والأنوثة في الفيديو من خلال رسالة تمكينية مفادها أن الخيال هو المفتاح وأن كل شيء ممكن وأنه ينبغي تشجيع الفتيات على الحلم الكبير ومتابعة أحلامهن. أخيرًا، يمكن استخدام هذه النتائج كنموذج خام لأبحاث مستقبلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاعلان ، السيميائية ، Barthes ، التمكين ، الأنوثة