

Beverly Chetram

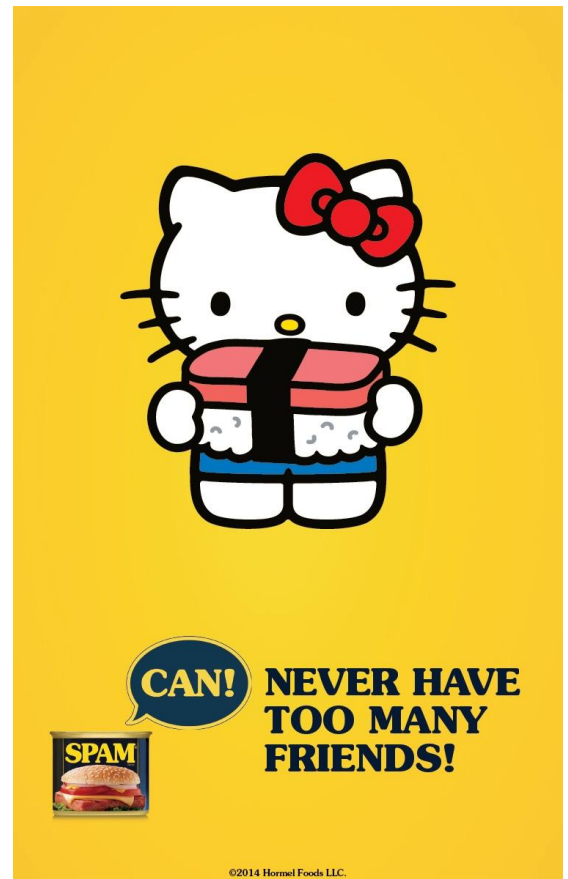
Communication Design Theory - Prof. Matthew Lange | Assignment 10 | April 12, 2022 |

Within the reading “Rhetoric of the Image” written by Roland Barthes, reveals a perspective on how advertisement holds various preceptions and definitions, depicting its elements.

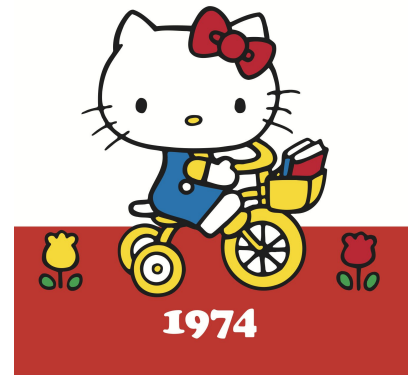
Amongst this bright yellow advertisement; we see a cat with a bow, holding a piece of sushi. Along the bottom half, would be a small can of SPAM on the left corner and on the right has text stating “Never have too many friends!”. This cat with its big red bow, is the iconic Hello Kitty and Spam, they did this collaboration advertisement together.

Sushi is a Japanese dish consisting of small balls or rolls of vinegar-flavored cold cooked rice served with a garnish of raw fish, vegetables, or egg, according to

Oxford's Language Dictionary. The sushi that Hello Kitty is holding is called a Spam Musubi. A ‘musubi’ is a ball of rice covered with nori (in Japanese cuisine, including in Hawaii), to which meat or salted or fermented vegetables are often added, differing from sushi in that the rice is not vinegared. Spam musubi is a snack and lunch food composed of a slice of grilled Spam sandwiched either in between or on top of a block of rice, wrapped together with nori in the tradition of Japanese onigiri.



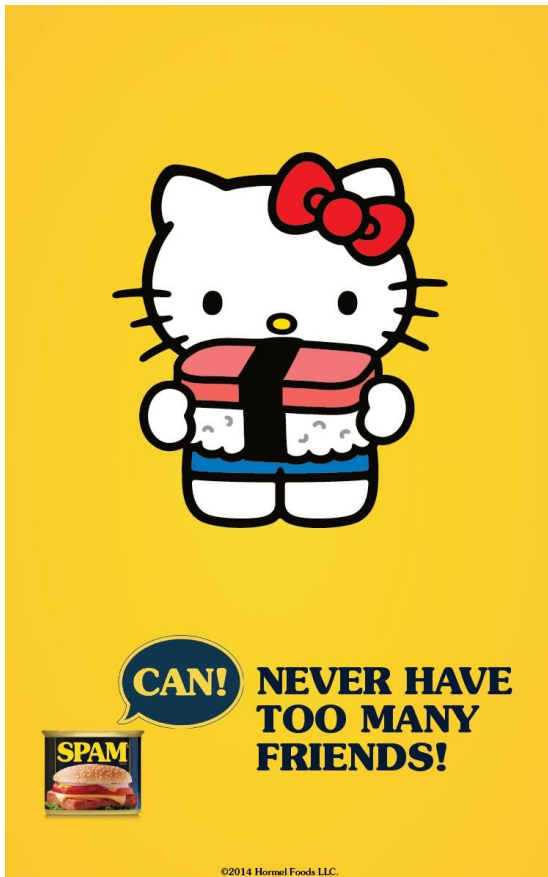
Created in 1974 by the Japanese merchandising company, Sanrio, Hello Kitty was created. Hello Kitty was originally created by Yuko Shimizu. But it is currently designed by Yuko Yamaguchi. Sanrio depicts Hello Kitty as a small, young female *gijinka* (anthropomorphization) of a Japanese Bobtail cat, with a round-faced, cartoon catlike girl with black eyes, a yellow nose, no mouth, and an iconic red bow perched on her left ear. Since the character's debut, the Hello Kitty media franchise has grown to include clothing, accessories, toys, games, books, manga, anime series, and music albums, along with other various product lines and media productions. After Hello Kitty's creation in 1974, the Hello Kitty vinyl coin purse was introduced by Sanrio in March 1975. Sanrio brought the character to the United States in 1976. Due to Japan's growing economy, many Japanese children could afford to buy Hello Kitty products. Her popularity has also been attributed to the emergence of *kawaii* culture, which embraces cuteness. Originally, Hello Kitty was only marketed towards a child and preteen audience. By 2010, Sanrio had turned Hello Kitty into a global marketing phenomenon, worth \$6 billion a year. By 2014, when Hello Kitty was 40 years old, she was worth about \$8 billion a year. Hello Kitty has become one of the highest-grossing media franchises of all time. Hello Kitty is idolized and collected worldwide as a popular iconic character.



Spam is a brand of canned cooked pork made by Hormel Foods Corporation. It was introduced by Hormel in 1937 and gained popularity worldwide after its use during World War II. By 2003, Spam was sold in 41 countries on six continents and trademarked in over 100 countries. Hormel reported in 2012 that the company sold 8 billion cans



and that number is still growing to this day. Today, younger generations see this spiced ham in a can as a nostalgic dish for older generations. Spam is still consumed and enjoyed around the world.



These two iconic nostalgic brands of Hello Kitty and Spam, coming together and creating this ad for Spam. Incorporating the Japanese iconic character, as a mascot and a well known food product, creating this unique but simple ad. Creating this icon of two nations brandings coming together in promotion of each other. Hello Kitty holds the dish, Spam musubi, which has 3 origin elements: A Japanese inspired dish, an American brand processed meat, and origins of creation within Hawaii.

Within the bottom of the ad, there's a nice word play with the can of spam having a speech bubble, stating

'Can!' and is continuing with the outside text of 'Never

have too many friends!' This is very interesting from having knowledge of the two brands. Two different countries' brands coming together, Japan and America. The typography remains in the classic, nostalgic font that is used in the 'Spam's logo's font. This gives the whole advertisement a nostalgic feeling, but the colors and characters still keep the piece modern and lively.

From looking at this advertisement, without any knowledge of the branding. We have a cute simple cat character, holding this form of food. Along the bottom, there's a can with a burger on it, an indication that it has to be some sort of savory product. And with reading the caption of

‘never have too many friends!’ , can come across in numerous definitions to the audience. But as a vague, simple way to interpret the caption and its linguistic message would be the friendship and relation between the food product/item that's being held, and the character holding the item.

The non-coded iconic message would be the prior knowledge of the brandings that are revealed in the piece, the prior knowledge of what is the character within the ad, and what is she holding. Both brands are very iconic, as Hello Kitty has been around since 1974 and SPAM has been around since 1937. With Hello Kitty being 48 years old and SPAM being 85 years old, most brands are very known worldwide. As adults and children could recognize and depict this ad. This ad also holds a slight pride, as it's very simplistic and expects the audience to know what the elements are, with little text of indication. We're only given the obvious, to what we are allowed to be shown amongst the branding; giving the unacknowledged audience a curiosity. The questioning of what are these elements, what is ‘SPAM’ in the corner of the work. SPAM is so popular that it is found in most local grocery stores and delis, so it is hard to un-identify what this product is.

Another non-coded message revealed amongst this advertisement would be the mascots, Hello Kitty holding the food item, which contains SPAM as advertised. Hello Kitty is looked up amongst young kids, teens and kawaii cultured individuals. Having such a mascot hold this food product, making it influenceable. Making it to the audience, the fans of the party within Hello Kitty, are more likely to purchase this food because their admired character is representing it.

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