



HULK

Band-Aid

Agency: **JWT**

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ANALYZING AN IMAGE

Through Roland Barthes "Rhetoric of the Image"

Advertisements use a system of signs to deliver messages. Roland Barthes' "Rhetoric of the Image" examines these signs and how they interact with each other. Barthes states that "the photograph analyzed offers us three messages: a linguistic message, a coded iconic message, and a non-coded iconic message" (154, Barthes). According to Barthes, there are three main messages that can be found in an advertisement. The linguistic message (the literal words in an image), coded iconic messages (the symbolic message of the picture), and the non-coded message (the literal image itself.) By using Barthes analytic terms, I will analyze this Band-Aid ad and find its meaning.

There isn't much when it comes to linguistics in this ad. Although, what is visible is very important to the overall message. In the box to the side of the ad, we see the words "Band-Aid" and the words "Flexible Fabric." Band-aids are the first aids used to help the healing process of minor wounds. When paired with the words "flexible Fabric," we understand that this bandaid will be able to stretch without breakage. This idea is further connoted through the color green as it has a strong connection to the concept of growth. This is an essential characteristic in bandages because consumers want to know that their wounds will be secure with a durable, firm fabric.

The coded-iconic message is in the ad's main character. We see the hand of Hulk, a cultural icon. Hulk (A.K.A The Invincible Hulk) is a superhero known for his unlimited strength. It is also known that Hulk is not always big and green; he presents as an ordinary human man most of the time. He transforms from an ordinary person to a substantial muscular humanoid when triggered. The color green is also a sign of growth, implying that this transformation happened. The connoted message here is that the "Bandaid" bandages are so strong and flexible that they don't rip even when put through extreme pressure. In this example, Hulk's bandage did not tear when he grew into his larger self, making the bandaid look just as strong as Hulk.

It can also be connoted that the fact that Hulk is injured gives the viewer a sense of empowerment. It shows that something so small can make a significant impact. Even a superhero needs help sometimes; in this case, it's from a bandaid.

Additionally, this image might be a sign of divinity. The position of Hulk's fingers resembles that of Michaelangelo's "Creation of Adam." This connotation is implied through the glowing light in the background, which could be a sign of Divine Light. It is comparing Hulk to a god. As if to say that Bandaid's (a human-made) product can heal even a god or that humans are capable of doing the impossible.

Last year Band-Aid came out with their "our-tone" bandages. These bandages were made to be inclusive of all skin tones. The Hulk Ad was released more than ten years ago. This ad could also be reflective of our current social climate. Inclusivity plays a vital

role in today's brand marketing and development. The bandage color contrasts the Hulk's skin tone, yet he is comfortable with that. It can be connoted that if Hulk can wear it, anyone can. "Band-Aid is for everyone."

Oppositely, it could also show the importance of an inclusive skin tone bandage. But, unfortunately, the Hulk's bandage stands out, which shows his weakness. It would hurt his image and give his enemies insight into his shortcomings. Similarly, there would be instances where someone would want to hide their injury. So it's important to have inclusive skin-toned bandages.

The "Band-Aid Flexible Fabric" packaging is the anchorage to the Ad. The phrase "flexible fabric" provides context to the image of the Hulk with a Band-Aid. It gives a reason for using the Hulk in the ad while showing how flexible and robust the product is. It literally anchors the image by having the Hulk point at the product, almost as if he was thanking Band-Aid for saving him. Without the product in the picture, the ad would look like a movie poster.

Barthes's "Rhetoric of the Image" has given us a way of applying context to an image. It analyzes a picture through its literal, symbolic, and cultural messages. Society changes over time; what once was accepted is no longer accepted, and what is now accepted was no longer accepted. An image is worth a thousand words and as culture and society evolve, so do the meaning of those words.