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Paper 2

Everywhere we go, something or someone is trying to sell us a product or idea. If you're driving you will see billboards with ads talking about new tyres, if you're taking the bus or train there are ads try to sell you the newest smartphone. Nevertheless, we are bombarded with ads that not only try to sell you a product but an image of what that brand or item represents. They sell these ideas strategical using certain elements such as typography, colours, and images to create a unique identity for the given brand. Roland

Barthes, a French literary theorist summarises and describes that the images and language used in these ads are a form of distinctive communication. In his essay titled *The Rhetoric Of The Image*, he challenges and defines certain key fundamentals in the image and captioned design.

To understand Barthes' concepts I will be using an ad from a McDonald's advertisement which promotes the use of their mobile app. In this image, you can see an ice cream cone with a charging cable attached to the bottom. The ice cream is then being held by someone; then above that, the image is captioned "*Get fully charged...Download the new app.*" To begin, the image the ad as defined by Barthes "*linked to the root imitari*" which means to copy or imitate. In this case, it refers to how the image plays a role in the intention of the ad.

The images of the plays a vital role in defining the message of the ad. According to Barthes, this is a form linguistic message of the ad which can be broken into variations. The first



variation is the denoted or the non-coded image which by definition signifies realism or reality of the given scene. Barthes describes this in his book as “...*knowledge than what is involved in our perception.*” Simply put, what we see is literally what we see. In the case of our McDonald ad, the ice cream cone is just an ice cream cone. The ice cream cone is the signifier or the object that is universally known without any additional meaning behind it; this in itself is a pure photograph.

On the contrary, some visual aspects are not so quite literal and can seem “out of place”. These signifiers contain various meanings and can be interpreted differently. These interpretations vary based on the individual(s) own perception and experience interacting with that object. This variation of the linguistic message is known as the coded or connoted message. In this case, the cable attached to the ice cream cone is the connoted message. However, you may argue that a charging cable is not the connoted message and it should be the non-code message since we all know the purpose of a cable, which is to provide power to an electric device. Yes, this is true however when combined with an ice cream cone this doesn’t make any sense. What is the message(s) these two objects are trying to communicate? Not only that, what does McDonald’s have to do with anything electrical in this sense? Just looking at the photo with the two objects we can make various assumptions as to what the designer is trying to communicate. For instance, you can assume that they are trying to say that they have rechargeable ice cream cones, a cone that of ice cream can be saved with a cable, or that you can charge your device with the ice cream, the possibilities are endless. This is where we need clarity, we need something to form a link between the denoted and connoted languages; these missing elements are anchorage and relay.

Ads that only contain an image can be interpreted in many ways. What clarifies that image is the use of text. With the addition of text, the meaning of the ad is clear and the message

is established. In this case, the text in this ad states, “*Get Fully Charge... Download the new app*”. Here we can say that the intention of this ad is to promote the use of their mobile app. The anchorage in a sense “anchors” or establishes the purpose of the message. Then when this text is combined with the image or the relay, it defines the ad’s intended message.

With all of the information provided we can fully understand Roland Barthes’ techniques in this ad and how the designer used them. What we can conclude is:

1. The ice cream cone is the denoted (non-coded) message. We can safely say that because an ice cream cone is something know that is obvious and it has no hidden message.
2. The cable attached to the ice cream cone is the connoted (coded) message because the cable makes no logical sense. Therefore something is needed to connect the two objects.
3. The anchorage and relay bridged the gab between the connoted message and makes the intended message clear and easy for the cusomer to understand.