

Paulina Tipantasig

Communication Design Theory

Professor Lange

Human lives are surrounded by ads that try to communicate in a way that entices people to buy the product, but have you ever thought about the composition of the ad and its meaning. Philadelphia cream cheese created a print advertisement that emphasizes the used cream cheese to make a cheesecake at home.

Additionally, Philadelphia cream cheese was made at New York by William Lawrence in 1872, however, the product was named under Philadelphia, a city of Pennsylvania

because at that time Pennsylvania was considered the home of top-quality food (Philadelphia - Our Brand). This advertisement contains a photograph in a rectangle that covers almost the entire page in a vertical position. In the photograph, you can see a still life image of raspberry-lemon cheesecake bars as well as pieces of real lemon and raspberries going all around the white table. It also shows a paper, which contains the recipe of how to make a cheesecake, it is surrounded by



pieces of tablecloths, aluminum, dishes, and a cake spatula. In the lower part of the ad, we can see the product that the ad is selling with a phrase.

Roland Barthes made an essay named “*Rhetoric of the Image*,” it gathers a deep analysis of an advertisement made for Panzani. He said that an ad contains three messages that can be seen on the photograph or on the text. First, there is the linguistic message, which is the supportive text within the image/advertisement that is separated from the image itself, is usually seen in the form of slogans, captions, and labels. Barthes said that this message can be Anchorage, images that are prone to multiple meanings and interpretations. Anchorage occurs when the text is used to focus on one of these meanings, or to direct the viewer through the maze of possible meanings. Also, it can be relay, which happens when the text adds meaning, and both text and image work together to convey the meaning. With this explanation, the linguistic messages that can be seen on this Ad for Philadelphia are “Cheesecake the reason everyone saves room for dessert,” presented at the

top of the ad in a script and sans-serif dark blue fonts similar to the colors of the logo of Philadelphia. The font used is easy to read and indirectly emphasizing



the product that is being advertised. Another linguistic message is the title of the recipe, which says “Raspberry-Lemon Cheesecake Bars,” it is at the middle left side of the page and it is in a sans-serif font with a dark blue color same as the logo. There is another message that

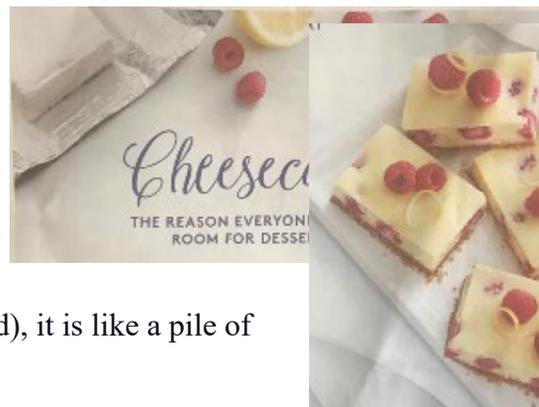


states, “Perfect cheesecake made with Philadelphia,” presented at the bottom of the ad in sans-serif and in a script font the word “cheesecake” within the same



dark blue color. Moreover, next to the text below, there is the product that the ad is selling, by implementing two meanings: one the product with the logo and the other one by having just the word Philadelphia on a phrase, it is saying that you should buy Philadelphia cream cheese to make the perfect cheesecake at home. Anchorage is seen at the placement of each of these linguistic messages, which help to guide the reader through the ad itself: the eye is drawn to the top, “Cheesecake the reason everyone saves room for dessert” before taking in the recipe entitled, “raspberry-lemon cheesecake bars” and then finishing with the phrase “Perfect cheesecake is made with Philadelphia,” with the familiar brand symbol at the bottom. This has the effect of moving from something not familiar, the cheesecake dessert to the safe familiarity of the logo within the slogan and the product. The effect of this is to establish trust with consumers who may be familiar with the best ingredient for a cheesecake but are familiar with and enjoy doing other things with Philadelphia cream cheese. The relay message can be seen as the image and the text work together to convey just one meaning which is to let the readers know that they should buy Philadelphia to create a perfect cheesecake at home that can be eaten with your family.

Barthes's second message is the coded iconic that comes in the form of the connoted image. He said that people looking at the ad should play a part in understanding the image by applying their knowledge of systematic coding to the image. In this ad, it is shown in the system of signs that appear within the image, such as the tablecloth, the raspberries, lemon, aluminum, and the cheesecake bars. All of these are signifiers (icons that are not coded), it is like a pile of



words that are on the page that represent the utensils, creamy, familiar, freshness, and the theme in which the Philadelphia cream cheese cheesecake will be created “at home.” For example, the lemon on the ad can represent the health and cleanliness of the recipe. The raspberries represent the promises in love, telling readers that they will love the cheesecake. The aluminum, the tablecloth, and the spatula are seen as the perfect utensils to create a cheesecake. All of these signifiers are in the composition of a still life photograph (convention of taking a picture) where we start to imagine what the advertisement is trying to convey.

The third message is the literal message or the denoted one, which is seen in the image that does not contain a code. For example, Barthes said that the tomato represents a tomato, the image of the pepper represents a pepper, and so on with the other signifiers on the image. Also, he said that in this case, the image contains signifieds and signifiers, which are seen to be the same. Furthermore, Barthes says that if the reader could, he or she would try to comprehend the image at what he calls the "first degree of intelligibility," which is the point at which we see more than shapes, form, and color, but instead see the real tomato there. Barthes identifies photography as the only medium with this characteristic of having no code. This message is also seen in this Philadelphia ad since it contains more than just the product on an image. There is the still life photograph on the ad that contains multiple signifiers to convey a intended signified. There is the image of a lemon that represents the lemon, the image of a raspberry which represents the raspberry, which is what we see and so on with the other items. As a conclusion, Barthes's method of deconstructing the meanings that an advertisement has can be seen in other ads that contain a photograph within.

Works Cited

“Philadelphia - Our Brand.” *Philadelphia United Kingdom*, www.philadelphia.co.uk/our-brand.

Roland Barthes' 1977 essay, *Rhetoric of the Image*.

Philadelphia Advertisement, *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, September-2019.