Ads and Semiotics
Ad Analysis

• The Ad uses the image of a model, but the model represents more than him/herself,

• rather the picture also connotes ideas like youth, slimness, health and all of this then works as signifier of mythical signified “feminine beauty” and myths around sexually desirable women

• so the model signifies the concept

• it doesn’t matter who the model is but what they signify
Techniques of Advertising

- Attention
- Reassure/Persuade
- Brand Personality
- Appeal: (story, copy, model, colour, POV)
- Claim: what it says the product will do
The Technique of Advertising

- is to correlate feelings, moods or attributes to tangible objects, linking possible unattainable things with those that are attainable, and thus reassuring us that the former are within reach”

- Buying and using a product (attainable) gives access to feminine beauty (a social meaning) and to possess the product is to buy into the myth and possess some of its social value ourselves
Technique continued:

• Ads for perfume never directly say that they will make you beautiful – instead the message is communicated by the structure of signs in the ad, by the way that we are asked to decode the ad’s mythic meaning

• list the different attributes of different photographic models in groups:
  - Youthful/mature
  - Underweight/overweight
  - Above average height/below average height
Social Context: Values and Ideology

• Many see society organized by economic distinction and on class

• What distinguishes us from others: social status, membership in particular social groups and our sense of our special individuality are signified by the products we choose (beer, jeans, car, perfume)

• “the first function of an advertisement is to create a differentiation between one particular product and other in the same category” they also give different social meaning
Ideology and Social Function Continued:

- therefore ads have an ideological function

- advertising is criticized as a social institution which perform the function of naturalizing dominant ideologies in our culture (the notion of consumption

- problems with ideological analysis in ads

- material world (signifier) to the concept (the signified)

in applying semiotics we remove the ad from the context it was intended for (the magazine)
how might the situation in which an ad can be found affect its meaning, and the ways it is decoded?
Problems with Ideological Analysis in ads

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What do ads tell us about:

being a man or a woman?
Attitude is everything

- advertisements directed toward men often suggest that the male ideal is embodied by such traits as brawn and brutishness.
This can be used to sell

Calvin Klein
ESCAPE
for men
Calvin Klein
eau de toilette
Saks Fifth Avenue
• or this
This image of manliness is much less so.
The female image:

- advertising often projects a very narrow image of youth and beauty, as though this image were an ideal toward which all girls and women should aspire. What explicit and implicit messages are absorbed by young girls after years of exposure to such advertising?
• http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpaOjMXyJGk