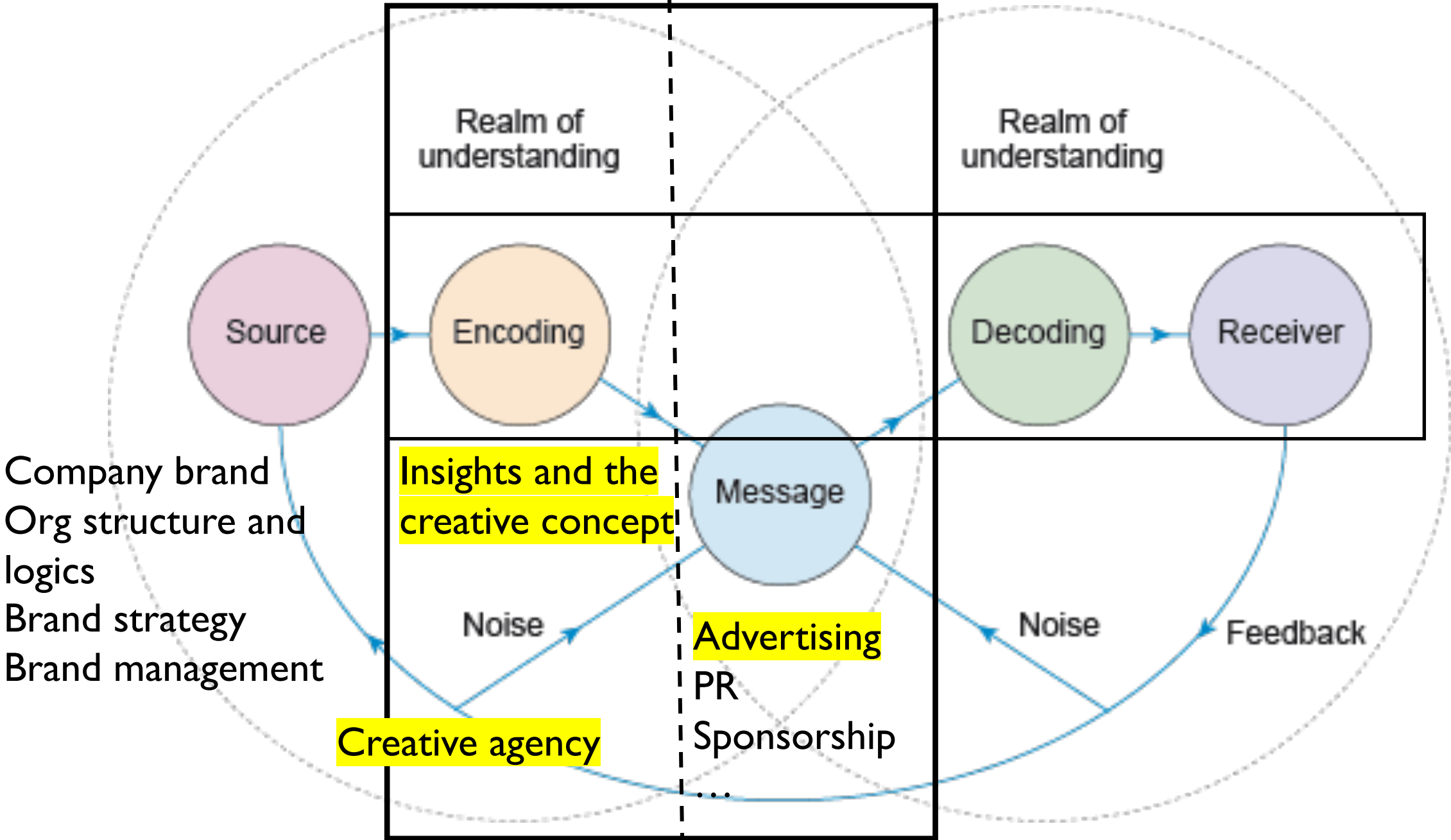


Encoding
IMC theory and advertising
Semiotics

2021



Client brand and the creative agency relationship

”Brand challenge/problem”

Consumer preferences and tastes have changed (e.g.: preference for healthier lifestyles and food → attitudes and behaviors changing)

Reposition your brand

React to competition

Enter a new product/service category

Communicate a social dimension of your brand

...

Brief / document

- What is your brand about?
- What is the “brand challenge” according to you?
- How do you see the overcoming of the brand challenge?
- Communication objectives?
- Your consumers/target segment
- Competitor analysis
- The message describing the brand value
- Communication channels on which the campaign will run (media strategy)
- Promotional mix (promotional strategy)
- Campaign evaluation and metrics!

Creative agency

- Market research to generate (more) insights
- Traditional market research techniques like focus groups & databases to gauge consumer needs and behaviors (Rust et al. 2000)
- Cultural knowledge to “read” insights (Kelly et al., 2005)
- Insights: “an identification in consumers’ experience that can open up a commercial link” (Ariztia, 2013)
- Creative idea/big idea: “X”

(Re)write the brief:

- Rearticulate the “brand problem/challenge”
- How to overcome the brand challenge? (strategy)
- Creative concept/idea
- Slogan embodying the creative idea
- Communication objectives? (e.g., increase awareness ...)
- Consumers/target segment (assumptions to why they would positively respond to the message)
- Competitor analysis
- Communication channels on which the campaign will run (media strategy)
- Promotional mix (promotional strategy)
- Campaign evaluation and metrics

SNICKERS BIG IDEA

(Piercing Insight)

When you are hungry, it's hard to concentrate and hard to focus on what matters. You don't perform to the level you normally do because there's something missing.

(Brand Connection)

Snickers is the perfect way to get back to being yourself. Packed full of peanuts, caramel, nougat, and milk chocolate, Snickers satisfies your hunger – all in a quick and easy-to-carry snack.

(Succinct Expression)

Snickers: You Are Not You When You Are Hungry.



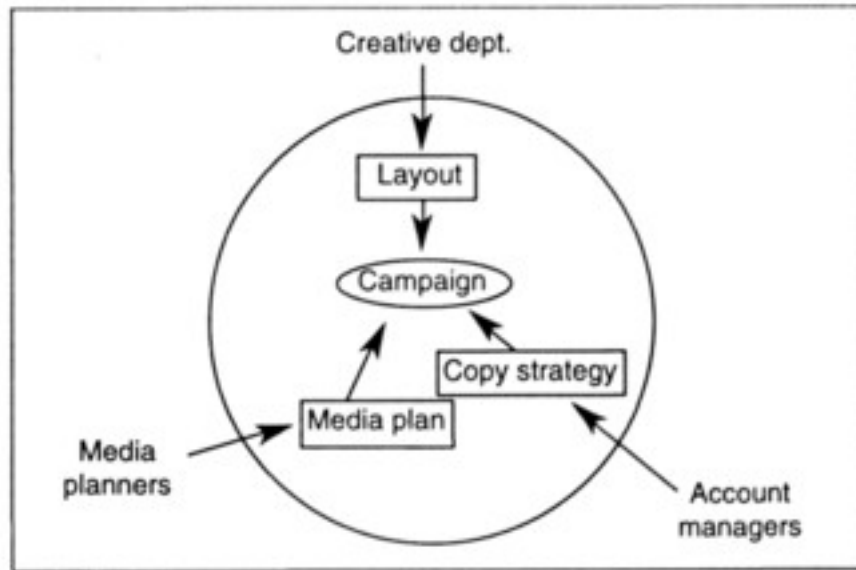
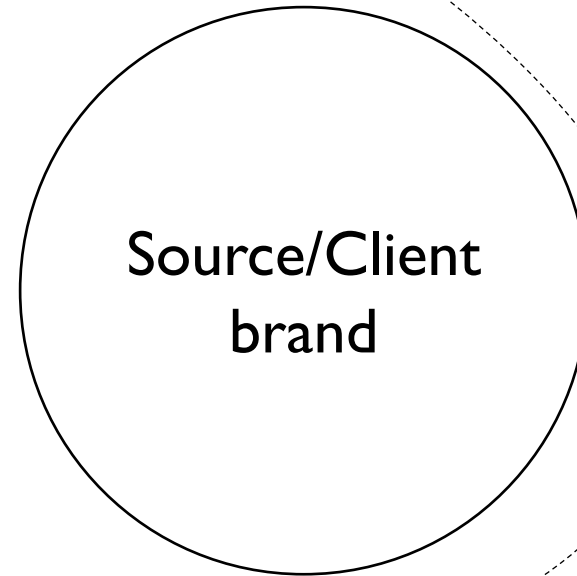


Fig. 2. The three main activities in advertising.

Henion and Meadel, 1993

Brief +



Encoding (copywriters and art directors)

Tone of voice

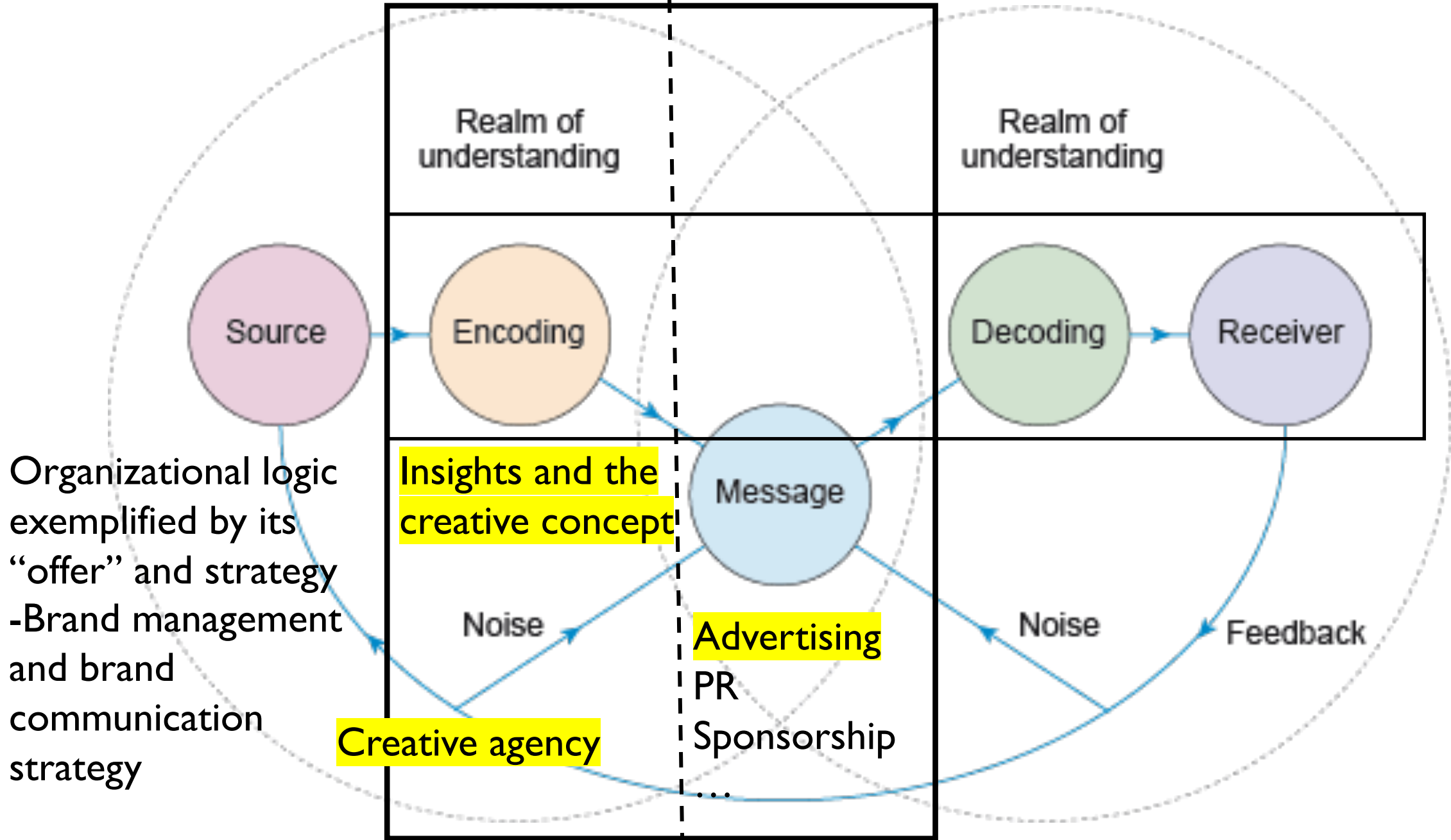
The Aesthetic appeal

Endorsement

→ Story boards!

(Moeran, 2009: The organization of creativity in Japanese advertising)

?



Advertising and advertising theory

few ideas and perspectives

What is advertising?

- One of the promotional mix tools
- Advertising = communicating with specific audiences
- Differentiate or (re)position brands, reinforce brand messages, inform and persuade...
- Bottom line: there's a disconnect with the customers' perception and the company's preferred perception qua a brand!

Strong vs. Weak theories of adv.

Strong theories

- Take on a more critical view
- Advertising can persuade someone to buy a product they never have (passive consumer)
 - "Advertising tricks people into believing things!"
 - Sometimes (maybe with new products), but (especially now) this is more and more difficult to achieve

Weak theories = advertising just increases familiarity, awareness and identification (active problem solving consumer)

Advertising is more about
shifting people's perspectives,
making certain views more
salient or compelling

Perspectives

Psych perspective (Information processing perspective)

- Individual consumers as rational and autonomous
- Individual consumers and the society separate
- The social world, the information to be processed
- Consumers viewed more as information processors
- Information about the world handled via **cognitive** processes
- Aggregation

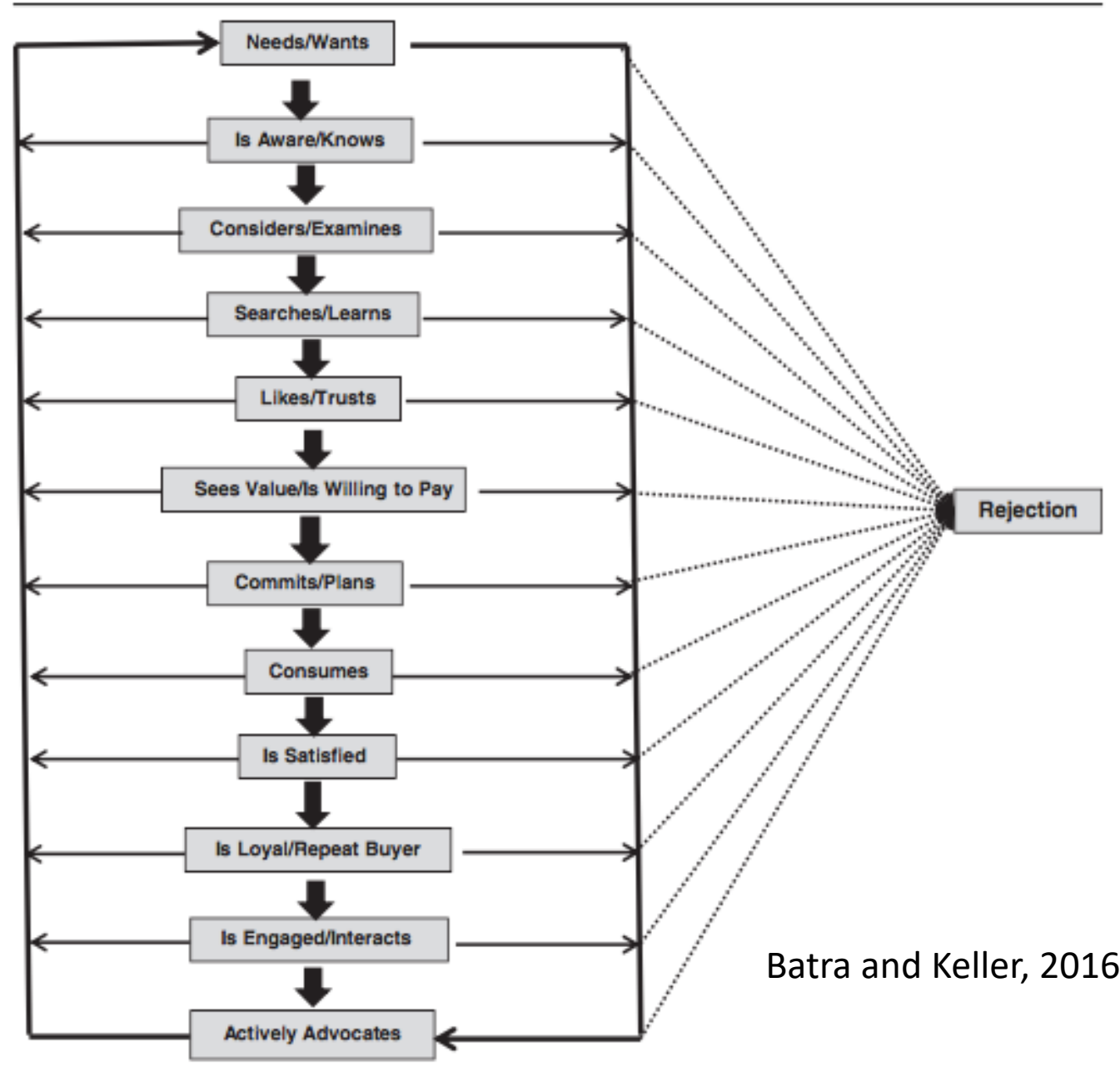
- Classical conditioning
- Attitude toward the ad or affect-transfer model
- The elaboration-likelihood model (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983);
- Information processing (MacInnis and Price 1987).

- (see: Scott, 1994)

- Linear model of communication (One-way comms models. See Kozinets et al. 2010)
- AIDA model
- → Criticism: reductionist, oversimplification
- In advertising → a combination of rational and cultural/emotional appeals

Enter relationship
marketing
paradigm and the
two-way comms
model (see
Kozinets et al.
2010)

FIGURE 1
A Dynamic, Expanded Consumer Decision Journey



Batra and Keller, 2016

EXAMPLE

Consumer psych. exercise

- Take Coca-Cola as an example
- Shout out words that you think of when you think of Coca-Cola
- Anything: emotions, colors, word associations, positive/negative etc.



Consumer psych. example

Associations

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.



Consumer psych. example

Current associations

1. Red
2. Enjoy
3. Glass
4. Sugary
5. Santa Claus
6. Family



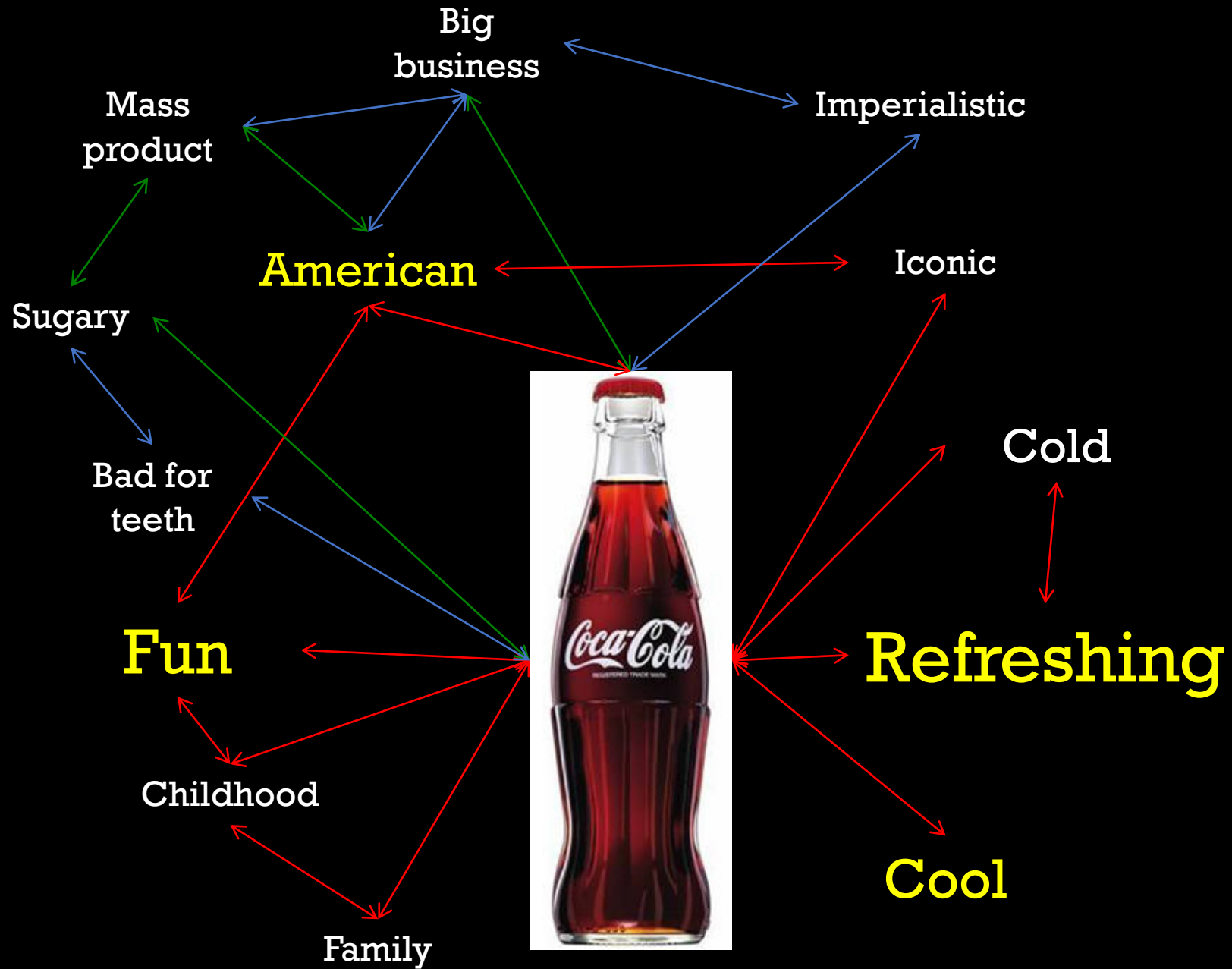
Desired associations

1. Enjoy
2. Red
3. Family
4. Santa Claus
5. Glass
6. Sugary

Consumer psych/cog. exercise

- From a consumer psych perspective, advertising strives to strengthen/weaken certain associations (or create new ones!), and increase salience in a product category
- You can also think of it as "in which order do certain ideas come to mind"





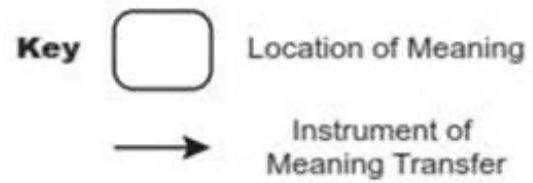
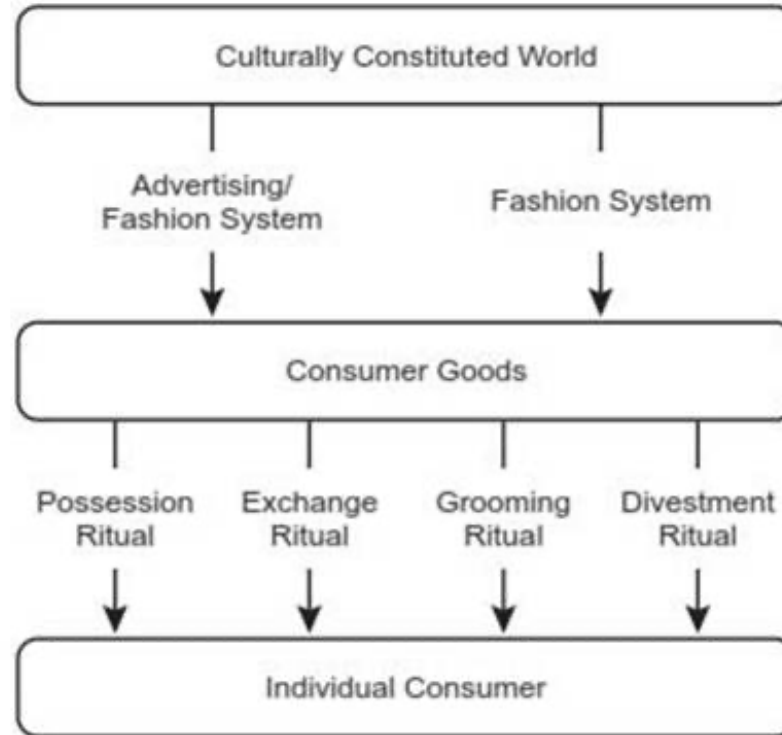
Cultural perspective

Contemporary advertising is conceived of not as an occasional conduit of product information but rather as an omnipresent communication arena in which human reality is mediated

Critique of the conventional perspective

- The individual → “locus of meaning and significance” (McCracken 1987, p.123)
- Managerial relevance ... why individuals buy ... the effect of the ad on consumers DMP, leave out the **how**
- Focus of message research, assessment of the message, i.e. if consumer “gets” it or not
- Methodological preponderance of experimental studies of advertising effect.
 - Exclusion of social interaction

Movement of meaning

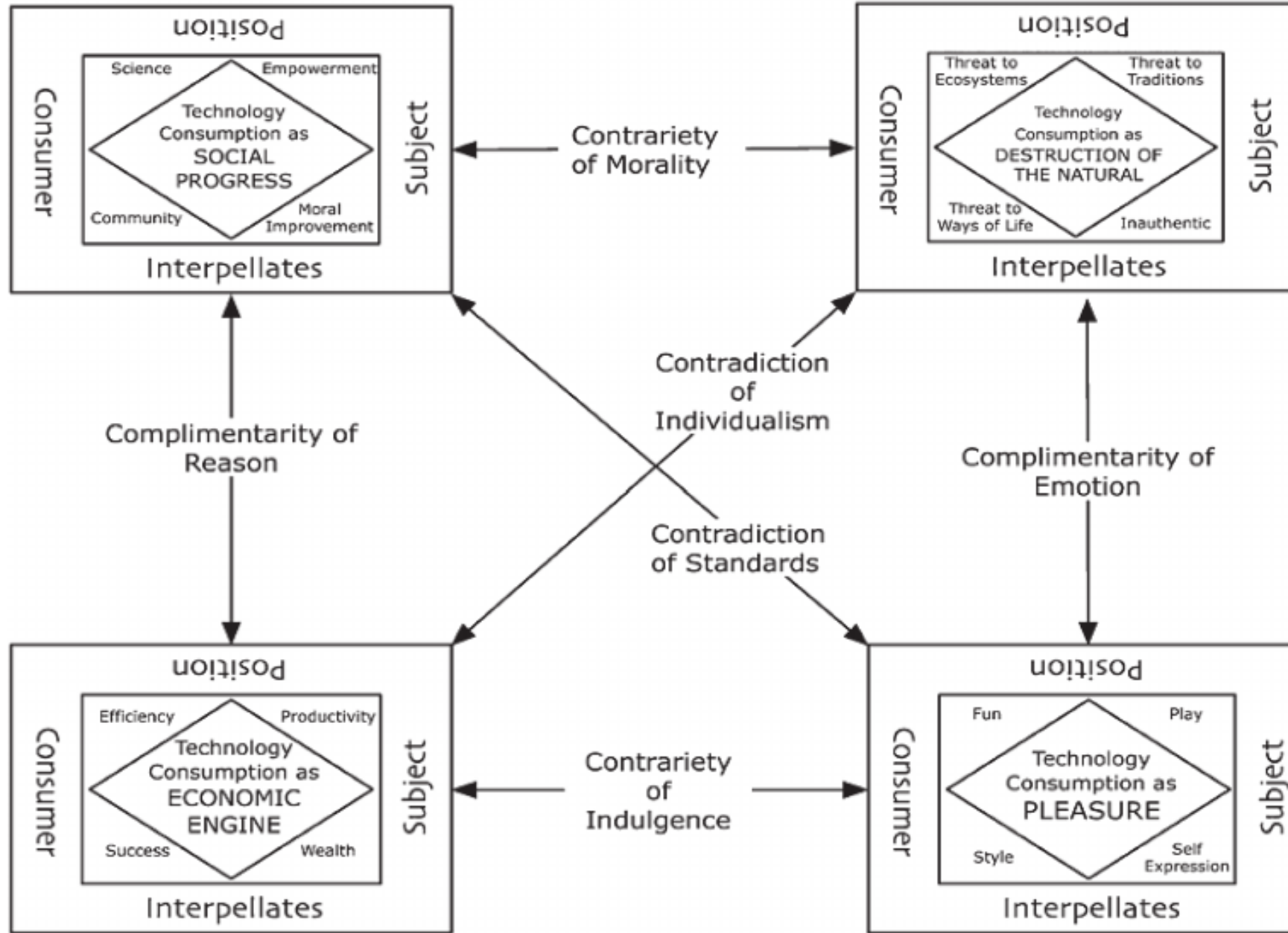


McCracken, 1986

EXAMPLE

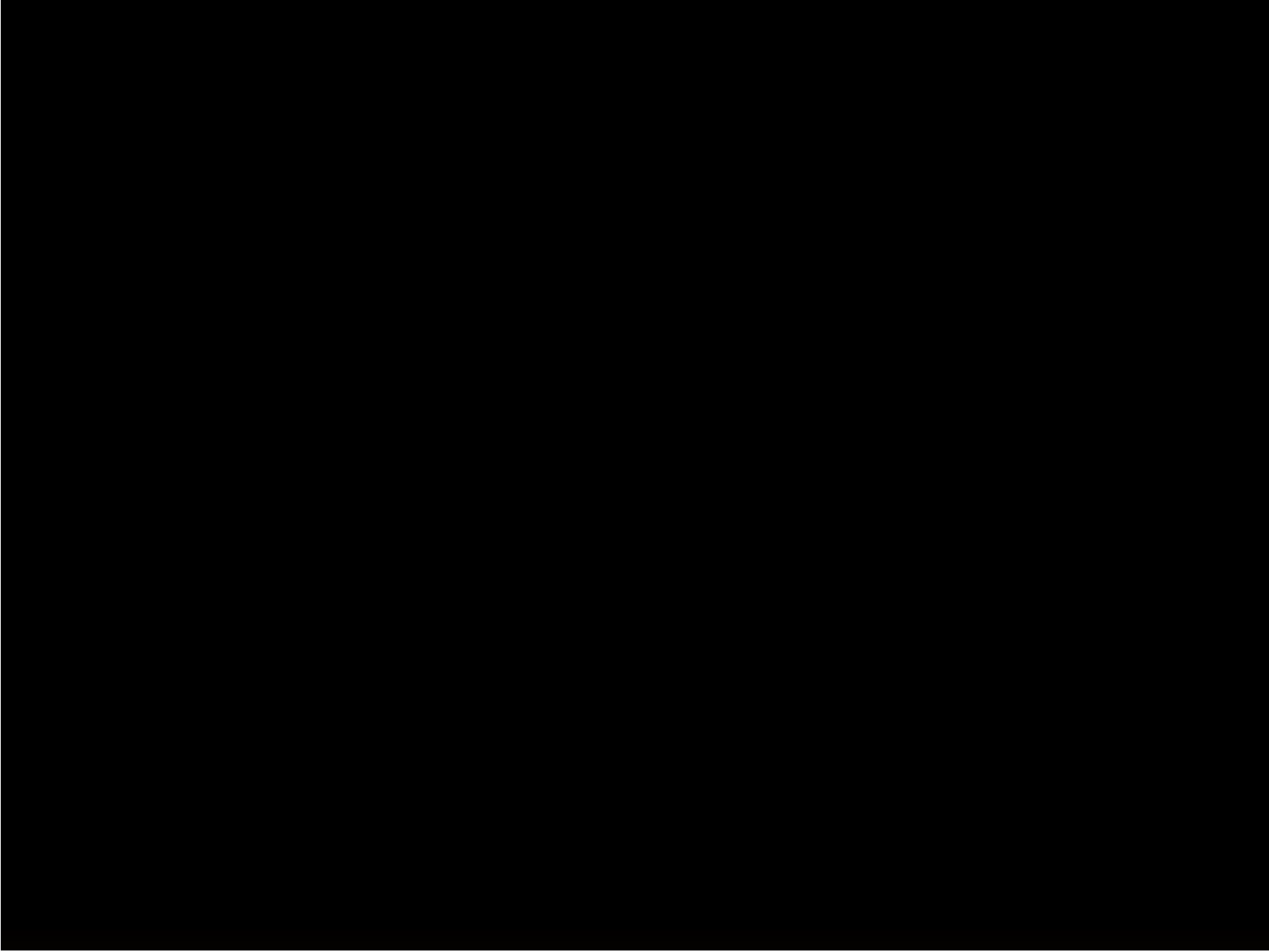
TECHTOPIAN

GREEN LUDDITE



WORK MACHINE

TECHSPRESSIVE



Semiotics

A (super) brief introduction

- Semiotics a broad field
- No consensus
- On semiotics as a method of analysis

- ‘semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign’ (Eco 1976, 7)
- A sign = anything that stands for something else
- In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects (Chandler 1994/2004/2017)
- “semio[tics] confronts the question of how images make meanings head on ... produce detailed accounts of the exact ways the meanings of an image are produced through that image (Rose 2016)
- Study of signs, or **how signs convey messages**

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)

- Swiss linguist
- Lecture series or seminars in "general linguistics" (1907-11)
- The founding father of semiotics



The “sing” is the most fundamental unit of mainstream semiology

By putting together **sings**, we create meaning

I – drive – a car

Brands as signs



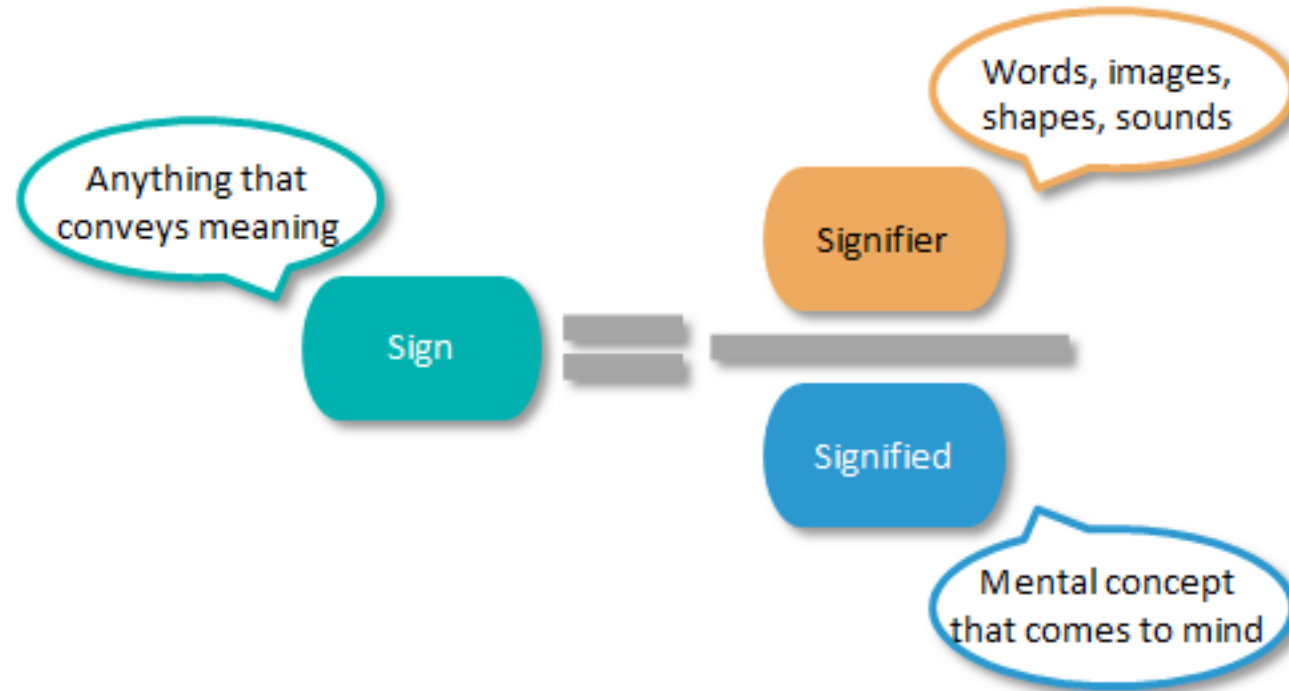
+ **VANS** =



Sing:

Er: Vans shirt

Ed: independence, non-conformity





Signified

Signifier

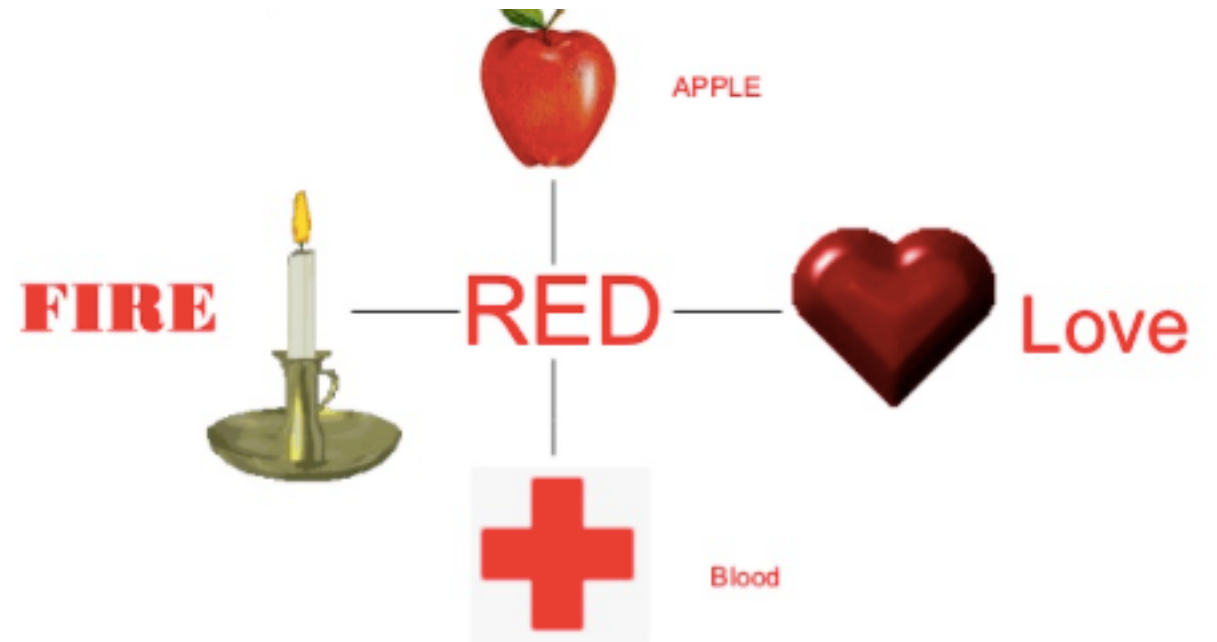


Sign

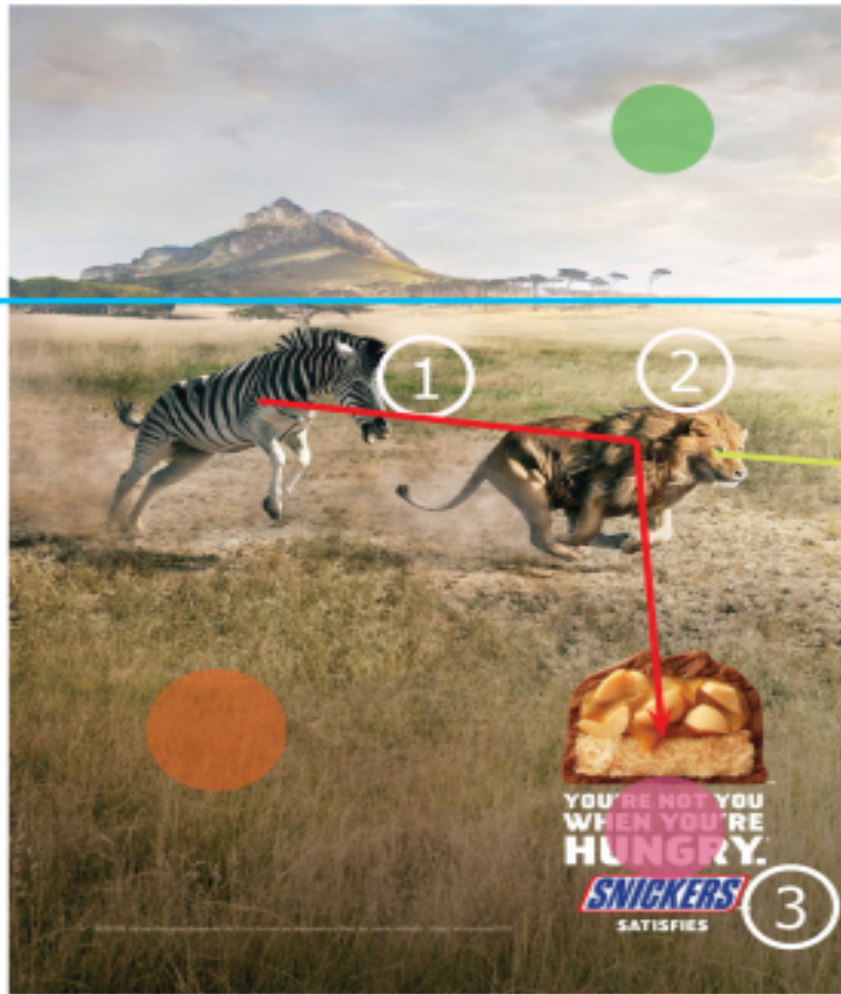
Signifiers can have multiple signifieds (*concepts**):

Think of signifier red

A number of signifieds are possible:

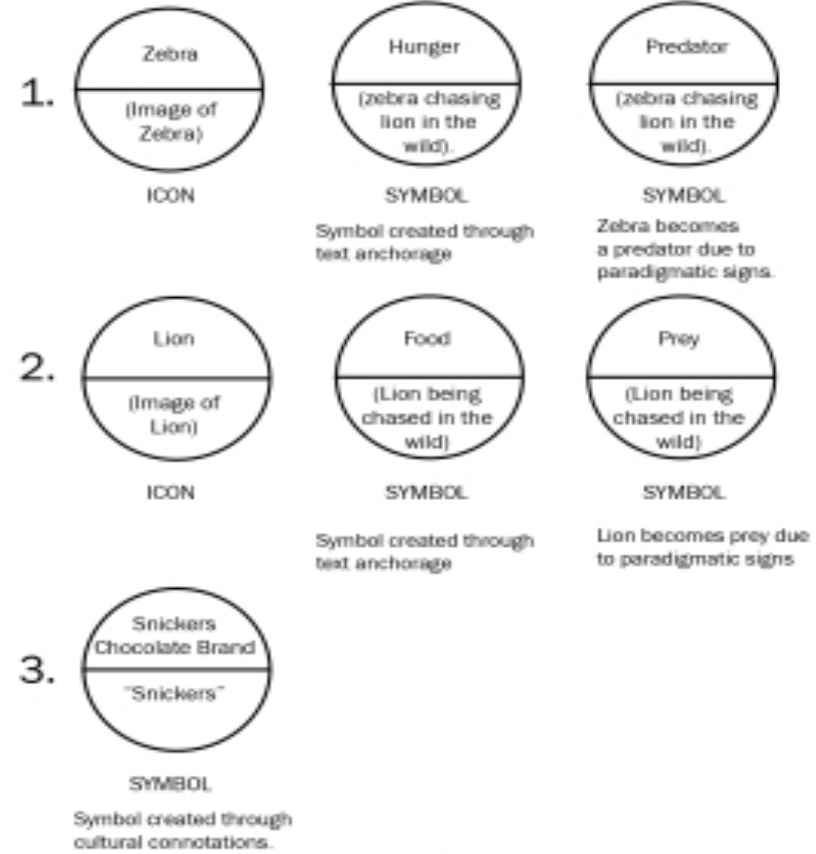


HORIZON LINE:
Above the subjects which indicates the viewer is looking down on the image, observing.



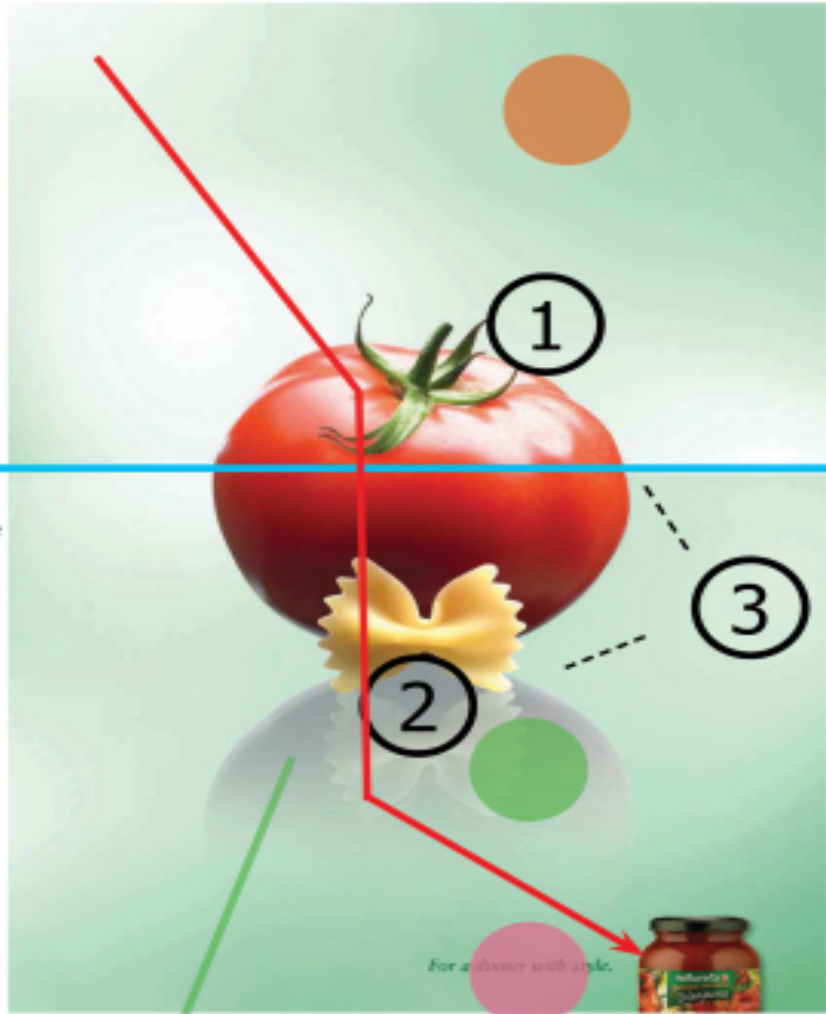
Focalisers indicate implied spectators

The gaze of the Zebra leads viewers eyes along to the lion and down to the product image



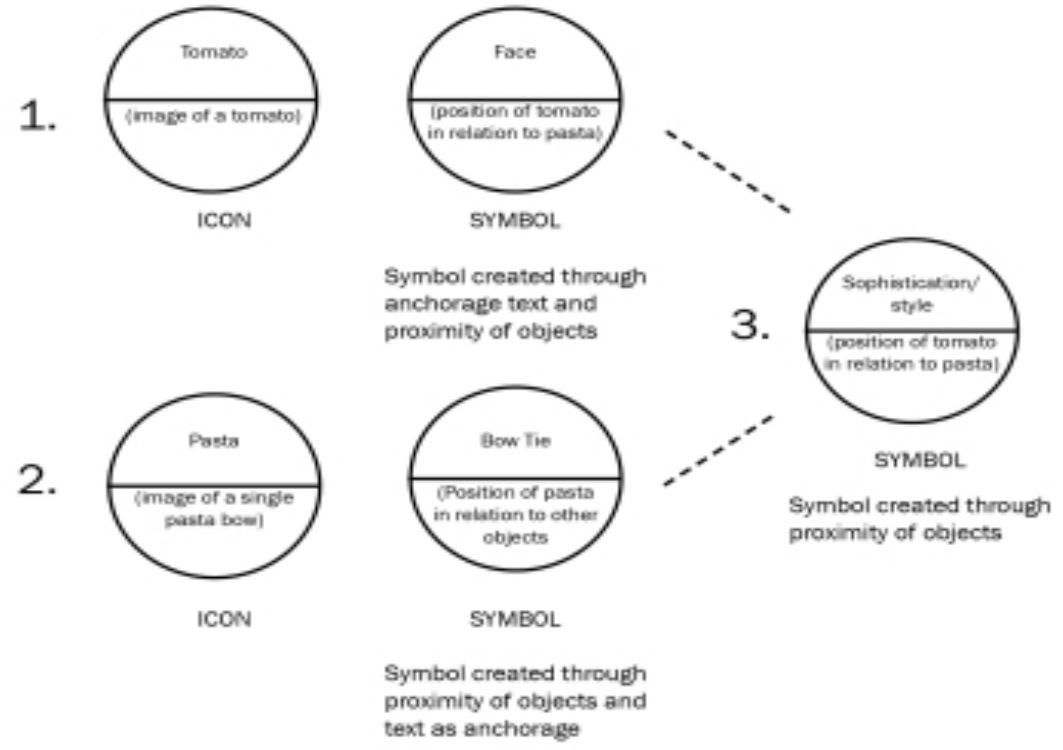
-  Light: Natural, realistic
-  Colour: Hues: brown, green, grey. Dull saturation, high value.
-  Text as anchorage, pins down meaning of image.

HORIZON LINE: At eye level, viewers are positioned to be equal with the subjects



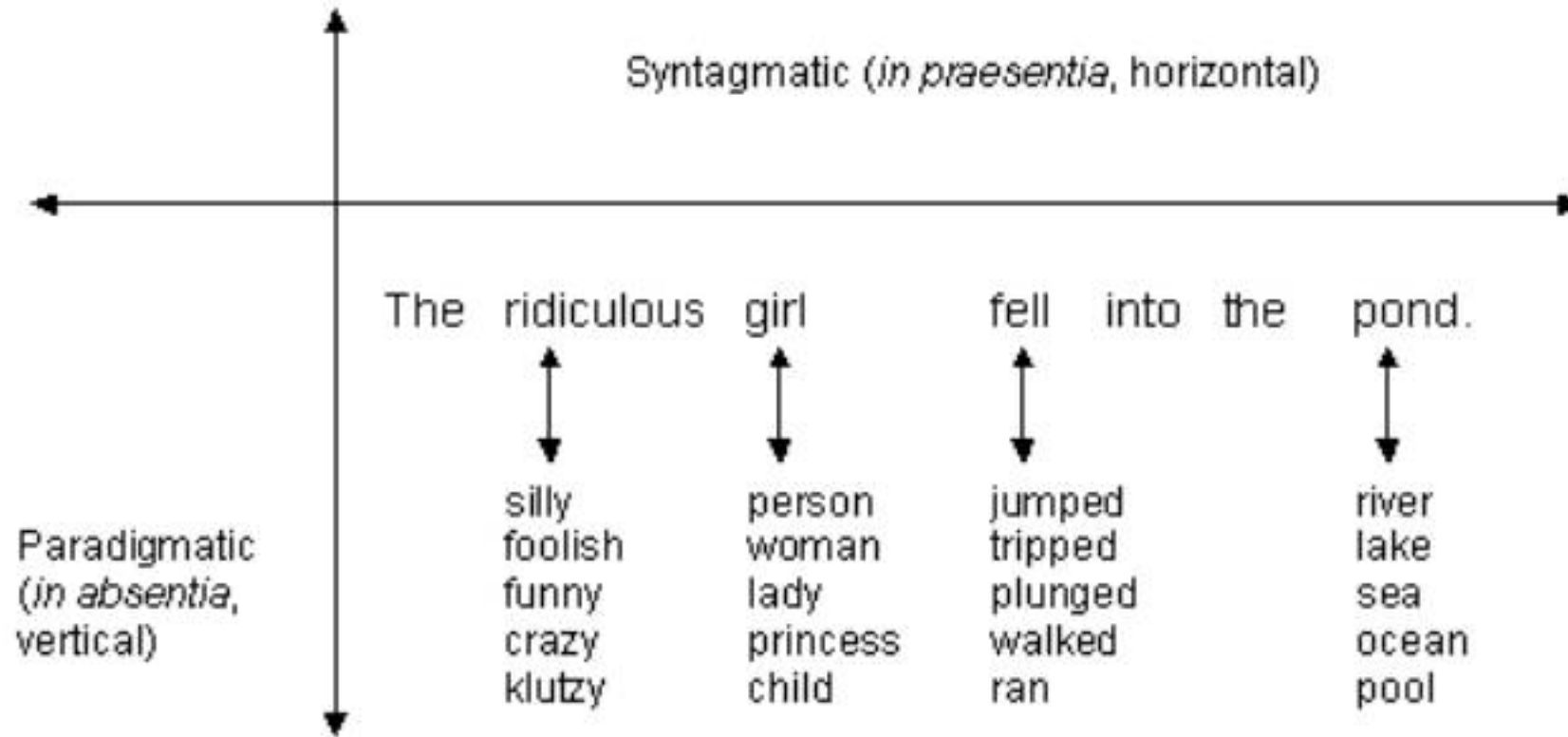
Reflective light creates feeling of class/sophistication

Light is used to draw viewers eye from the top corner of the image down through the subject to the product image



- Colour: Highly saturated, vibrant, high values
- Light: Bright, unrealistic.
- Text as Anchorage focuses viewers mind on the meaning of the image

Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations





Selected references:

- Puntoni, S., Schroeder, J. E., & Ritson, M. (2010). Meaning matters. *Journal of Advertising*, 39(2), 51-64.
- Mick, D. G., & Buhl, C. (1992). A meaning-based model of advertising experiences. *Journal of consumer research*, 19(3), 317-338.
- Ritson, M., & Elliott, R. (1999). The social uses of advertising: an ethnographic study of adolescent advertising audiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26(3), 260-277.
- Scott, L. M. (1994). Images in advertising: The need for a theory of visual rhetoric. *Journal of consumer research*, 21(2), 252-273.
- Phillips, B. J., & McQuarrie, E. F. (2004). Beyond visual metaphor: A new typology of visual rhetoric in advertising. *Marketing theory*, 4(1-2), 113-136.

Selected references

Chandler, D. (2017). Semiotics: the basics. Routledge.

Barthes, R. (1972). Mythologies. 1957. Trans. Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang.

Rose, G. (2016). Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials. Sage.

Mick, D. G. (1986). Consumer research and semiotics: Exploring the morphology of signs, symbols, and significance. Journal of consumer research, 13(2), 196-213.