



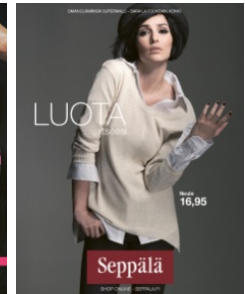
LOUIS VUITTON



Fashion advertising Research 2013



What makes the best ads best in fashion



I Orientation

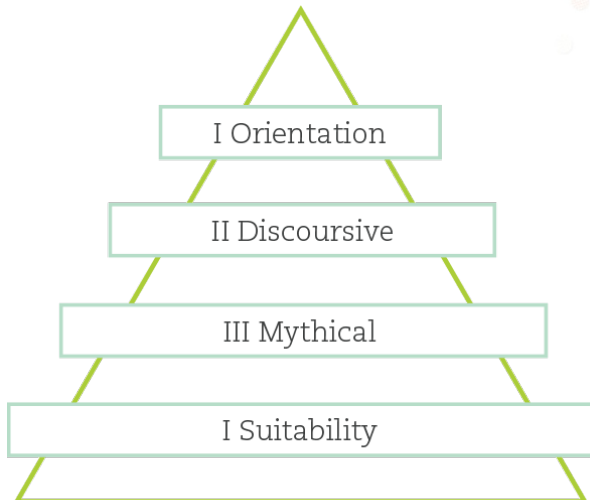
II Discursive

III Mythical

I Suitability

- What actually impacts the reader in the content or appearance of an advertisement?
- FIPP wanted to find out what makes the reader stop at an ad, be pleased with it and remember the ad.
- We well know the attention values and reading values of ads, but we don't really know why exactly these ads get such good values.
- A new kind of semiotic-qualitative research reveals the secrets of the best fashion ads in magazines in Finland.

What makes the best fashion ads the best?



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A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS

- 15 depth interviews lasting 1- 1,5 hours
- 'Ethnographic' method: readers would flick through the magazines and comment freely their feelings, opinions, reactions
- The magazines were filled with ads that already had gotten very good reading and attention values (and some not so good, for comparison)
- The following magazines were used: Anna, Costume, Elle, Gloria, Kauneus & Terveys, Me Naiset, Olivia, Trendi

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

- The same good (and some less good) ads were analyzed semiotically
- What kind of colors, forms and visual compositions are attractive in fashion and why?
- What kind of stories appeal to the readers in ads?
- What kind of mythical material is effective in fashion ads?

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A. Depth interviews



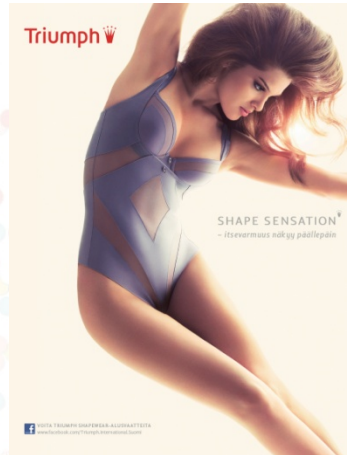
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Women 20-50 years, mostly 20-35-year olds

- Student, 20
- Sales lady, 21
- BBA, 22
- Student, 25
- BBA, 25
- Organization secretary, 27
- Nurse, 27
- Retirement expert, 33
- Project manager, 34
- Assistant, 35
- Teacher, 37
- Sales representative, 40
- Team manager, 44
- Decorator, 47
- Planner, 49

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54 ads that already got good reading and attention values in tests



Clothes
Accessories
Shoes
Jewelry, watches
Eye glasses



LITE BÄTRE.

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"Seppälä has had such a good concept, but now it's repeating itself. After three years it would be time to come up with something new now..."

"This Tommy Hilfiger is so great, I mean I don't care for the brand, but the ads are so much fun to watch"

"These Gant's are always so adorable, such sweet feelings..."

1a. Scanning according to feeling: "is this good-looking enough?"

- **Fashion ads are watched as entertainment**
 - Is it good-looking enough to watch
 - Is it funny/ different/ interesting enough to make me look at
 - Is there something extraordinary that grabs my attention?
- ⇒ **A good-looking ad is watched nevertheless what one thinks of the brand**
- ⇒ People who see lots of advertising recognize different concepts of brands, remember them and wish renewal of concepts every once in a while



"Nanso's are always good and their products are quality, too (...do you have Nanso clothes?...) yes, of course, shirts and pajamas, I like"

"Louis Vuitton, I will never be able to afford it, but I still yearn for it"

"I don't like this brand, so it's same for me what they have in their ad"

1b. Scanning according to my own brand preferences : "is it a brand I want or use myself"

- **Brands I use**
 - My brand, I always look at the ads
- **Brands/ Ads you admire:**
 - I would buy this brand if I could afford it
 - I will never be able to buy it, but I watch and admire
 - I admire the advertising, though I don't care for the brand
- **Brands I don't admire or use:**
 - I don't use this brand so I'm not interested
 - I don't like this brand so I don't like their ads, either

What makes the best ads the best,
Fashion



A good fashion ad according to consumers

1. Surprising!
2. Different.
3. Sensual.
4. Stylish.
5. The mood appeals.
6. The story fascinates.
7. Clear.
8. Shows product well.
9. Not cheap looking.
10. Suitable for the brand.

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A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



Exclusivité photo: Raphaële Lecoq - Paris - France - 01 42 42 42 42 - www.louisvuitton.com

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AIKAKAUSMEDIA

A good fashion ad



77%

"Wow, what colours, wooh! And the jacket is living its own life, fun idea."

Attention
value

91%

1. Surprising!

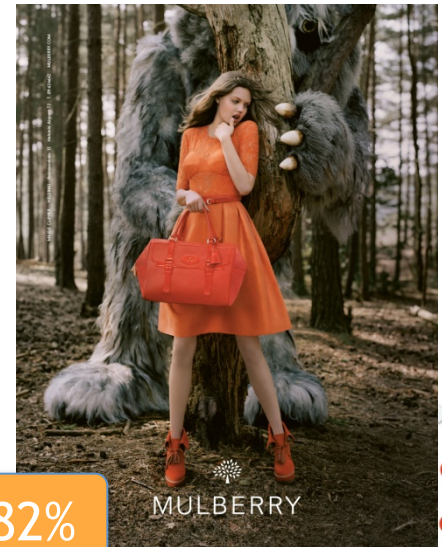
- ⇒ Startling, "something quite different"
- ⇒ Imaginative
- ⇒ Visually strong

"Funny! Just different, great orc behind, like from a scary movie, but not scary anyway."



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A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



82%

"Nice group picture, people are like themselves and they look at the camera. Everybody has same kind of foxhunting clothes, and beautiful English countryside there."

AIKAKAUSMEDIA

A good fashion ad



83%

"This is great, you have that real Nanso worker behind, too, and it's nice they show the real factory. The black-and-white background looks good, too."

"Seppälä has been so good for so many years. But it was a better idea when they used 'real' people as models, now you have a celebrity there..."

2. Different

- ⇒ Different from others
- ⇒ Original concept, colour, story etc.
- ⇒ "Model and worker" (Nanso), "the supermodel of her own" (Seppälä)
- ⇒ Distinctive – from the magazine, from other ads



80%

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A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



"Iih! My favorite colour! It's fun to have the whole thing of same colour, this makes me stop and look."

Attention
value

AIKAKAUSMEDIA

A good fashion ad



73%

"Wonderful sensitive photo and that jewelry is just shining here"

"These Gant's are always adorable, I would like to be there too, sun is shining and all relaxed..."

3. Sensual

- ⇒ Feeding the five senses
- ⇒ Beautiful colours and shapes
- ⇒ Sensuality of the photo
- ⇒ Touching mood



87%

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



74%

"Oh, such a beautiful woman in a beautiful pose... photographed in a soft way..."

Attention value

A good fashion ad



75%

Interactella - photo:Karlheinz Böhm - Paris - © Louis Vuitton - Tel. 09 481 14 410 louisvuitton.com

LOUIS VUITTON

"Classy ladies, let's play 'old time' all is so sophisticated here."

"Stylish and simple. You start thinking about the glasses exactly because she lacks them in the other picture."

4. Stylish

- ⇒ Refined style
- ⇒ Solid, harmonic entirety
- ⇒ Just a little 'information'
- ⇒ Quality in all implementation
- ⇒ Price can be mentioned, as long as it's put in a stylish way and a neutral font



85%

production : danmark MAX&Co.

Laadukkaat silmälasit tekevät sinusta SINUT.

SYNSAM
www.synsam.fi

LITE BATTRE.

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A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



BOSS
HUGO BOSS

"Stylish. All is of quality, the photo and implementation, too. Stylish 'windows' or whatever."

AIKAKAUSMEDIA

A good fashion ad



63%

"Such nice feeling, summer and warm sand..."

"It's fun they have taken the bed out and kids are playing, brings back memories from my own childhood."

5. The mood appeals

- ⇒ Good mood comes often from a picture taken at a live setting, where the ambience can be sensed
- ⇒ Mood can be relaxed, exciting, dramatic, lyric or funny feeling that the ad triggers in reader
- ⇒ Fashion ads are expected to be stronger in emotion than others



87%

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



77%

"You should have more this kind of real surroundings in pictures – like they have in fashion stories, for you to feel..."

A good fashion ad



75%

Instagram: @loisvuitton, @loisvuitton - @loisvuitton - @loisvuitton

LOUIS VUITTON

"This goes 'over' in purpose, and that's why it's so good... Russian aristocrats in the orient express..."

"Romantic story, of course that bicycle appeals, too, and the lyrical feeling..."

6. The story fascinates

- ⇒ A peculiar story
- ⇒ 'Unreal', different time, place and happening
- ⇒ A classic, recognizable story, well pictured
- ⇒ The reader completes the story by his/her own imagination



87%



83%

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A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



82%

"This is so fun, the girl has get lost in the forest and that cute monster is supposedly after her, but just a toy..."

"It's nice they appreciate the worker, too. You have some interaction between them, too..."

AIKAKAUSMEDIA

80%



"This is clear. A purse on a table. Expensive and fine purse."

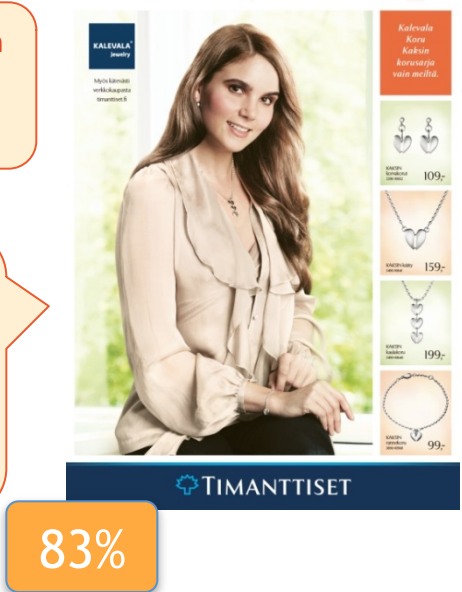
"This shows the jewelry well. And even though they have many things here, it's still clear and peaceful"

83%

7. Clear

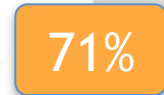
- ⇒ The reader wants to get the point at glance
- ⇒ Clarity = visually simple enough or balanced in order
- ⇒ Clarity = little enough information

- ## 7. Clear
- ⇒ The reader wants to get the point at glance
 - ⇒ Clarity = visually simple enough or balanced in order
 - ⇒ Clarity = little enough information



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A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



"This is nice and clear,
better than many other
ads from this brand."

"So simple: just a woman and the dress. The dress shows here well."

A good fashion ad



83%

"Here you see the tights and their details very well. You can think that if you would work hard in the gym with those tights, you could look like that, too."

"Moomin-boots! For grown-ups and kids. And different colours. Not bad actually."

8. Shows product well

- ⇒ Product has to be well seen, not just a vague 'feeling photo'
- ⇒ The product must have a major role in the picture
- ⇒ The model should not draw too much attention
- ⇒ But there must be something else than the product, too
- ⇒ Price is appreciated, as long as it's put in a stylish way, with neutral font



62%

"The watches show well, even though there is the photo of the lady. You get a good idea of them, and there's not too many of them."

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



76%

A good fashion ad



83%

"Simple jewelry, but really stylish looking, the black-and-white photo brings them out well."

"An expensive and famous model in an expensive-looking pose gives credibility to even a cheaper brand."

75%

9. Not cheap looking

- ⇒ A fashion ad needs to be stylish and quality looking always
- ⇒ An inexpensive brand should not communicate visually it's inexpensiveness, but it has to look almost as stylish as the more expensive brands



A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



"This picture and this dress are really good-looking, much better-looking than Halonen image usually is."

A good fashion ad

marimekko

66%

"Typical Marimekko, some '70's retro, doesn't hit me, but works for that brand."

"This is a little... spotlights on the breasts... if it were any other brand, it wouldn't be good, but HM, you are used to expect something like this from them."

10. Suitable for the brand

- ⇒ If the reader likes the brand, she usually likes the advertising, too
- ⇒ If the reader is not the brand's fan, she might still think the advertising is good for that brand
- ⇒ The reader wishes that the brands renew their advertising concepts every once in a while



83%

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS

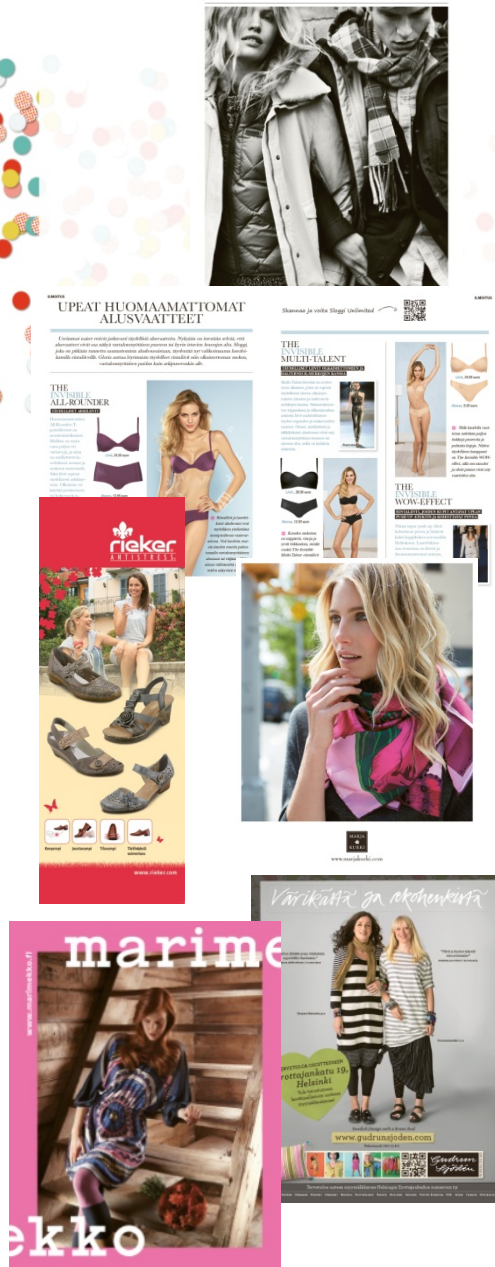


77%



"Well this is Intersport, practical sportsclothes catalogue, it doesn't have to play more than that."

Not so good fashion ad



1. **Boring.**
2. **Conventional, same like others.**
Doesn't differ from other brands, or sloppy work
3. **Ugly.** Dismal, ugly colours.
4. **Cheap looking, no style.** Helplessly outdated or a cheap price-ad
5. **No mood.** Just the product laid-out rationally and boringly.
6. **No story.**
7. **Scrappy, full of stuff.**
8. **The product is unclear.**
9. **Not suitable for the brand.** Deteriorates the brand image, outdated.

The fashion watcher is demanding!

"Nooooo, not even my granny would use those if it were up to this ad"

"This is SO BORING!"

"That hair ruins the whole advertisement, they didn't bother to comb..."

"The sweater looks lousy quality, the sleeves are hanging badly... Sure they would have prettier clothes, too, why they didn't use them and make this any better?"

"This is nothing but bum! I feel that bum is jumping to my face..."

"This is terrible colour, terrible font and terribly poor picture, don't they know we are long past year 2000?"

"Ugly, dismal, miserable, I can't say else."

"I just turn the page. I don't look if there's nothing to look at."

"Is this advertisement, too? I wouldn't have noticed at all."



B. Semiotic analysis of fashion advertisements

What is semiotic analysis



I Orientation

II Discursive

III Mythical

I Suitability

Orientation level: What colours communicate, shapes, typography, rhythm, perspective, scale, sensory impressions and the composition: harmony/contrast in the ad.

Discursive level: Everything that tells a story. Setting, characters, heroes, roles, acts, rituals, objects, gestures, reference groups, relations and showing who or what has status.

Mythical level: What makes an inexplicably strong feeling. What we interpret instantly as good or bad, desirable or not desirable. Myths, symbols, archetypes, stereotypes, universal values, good-bad-dichotomies.

Suitability: How well this communication suits this industry, branch, product group or brand.

Semiotic analysis studies especially the 'hidden' structures of communication.

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

Semiotic analysis examines the values the advertising communicates

Use values: The rational and practical benefits the consumer finds in the brand's communication

Show values: Emotional values consumer gets from the brand's communication

Core values: Ideological benefits the consumer gets from the brand's communication



Advertising is examined, what kind of values it communicates to the reader. The reader's own culture and background influences how he/she interprets advertising and which values he/she supports. However myths are set in us by culture, so that we take for granted the values the myths offer. On the orientation level i.e. the influence of colours is originally physiological, so we react to colours often the same way. On the discursive level the reader has most 'power' to interpret, and many stories are interpreted in different ways depending on the reader's attitude.

Semiotic analysis of fashion advertisements



1. Great, flashy colours.
2. Sensuous, earthy colours.
3. Stylish – refined colours.
4. Harmonic lay-out – Dynamic motion
5. Peculiar stories.
6. Idle stories.
7. Myths of woman:
Femme Fatale, Lolita, Superwoman,
Nature's child, Top model, Muse,
Sex object
8. Myth of luxury and upper class.
9. Myth of timelessness.
10. The brand myths.

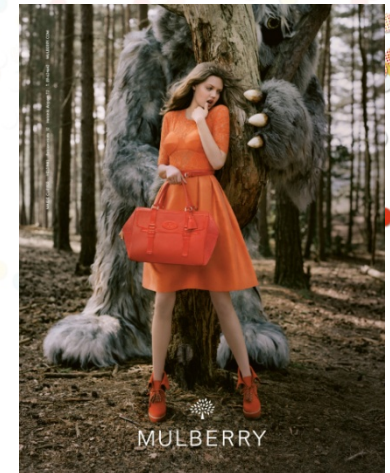
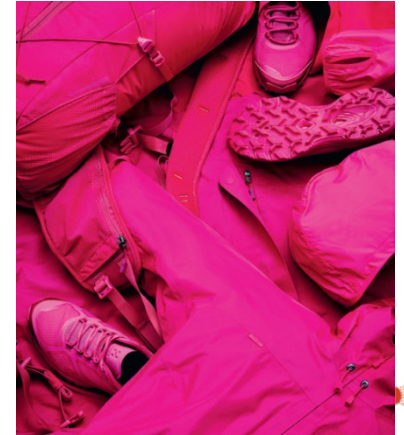
Messages of fashion ads



1. Great, flashy colours

- Neon colours: magenta, violet, orange
 - ⇒ Raise the pulse, stir up hormones
 - ⇒ Fastness, suddenness, dynamic
 - ⇒ Eye-irritating, impact, sudden movements
 - ⇒ Arousing attention, boldness
 - ⇒ "I! Am! Effective! Energetic!"
- Orange
 - ⇒ Raise the pulse, stir up hormones
 - ⇒ Fastness, dynamic
 - ⇒ Extrovert (look at me!)
 - ⇒ Arousing attention, deviance from group
 - ⇒ Originality, Sense of humour, boldness
 - ⇒ Hypersocial, glad, energetic
 - ⇒ "I want contact! I come to you!"
 - ⇒ "Now it's happening!"

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



Messages of fashion ads

1. Great, flashy colours

- **Red**
 - ⇒ Raise the pulse, stir up adrenaline
 - ⇒ Fastness, power, motion
 - ⇒ Dynamic, active, spontaneous
 - ⇒ Greed for power, challenging
 - ⇒ As a bright shade: happy, childish, play
 - ⇒ "I! Am! Here!"
- **Red - Black**
 - ⇒ Combination of competition and war
 - ⇒ Aggressive, hard values
 - ⇒ Street credibility, street culture
 - ⇒ "I am Strong! I can challenge"
- **Red - Black - white**
 - ⇒ Classic, urbane
 - ⇒ Clear, strong, willpower
 - ⇒ "I know what I want and I know how to get it"



B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



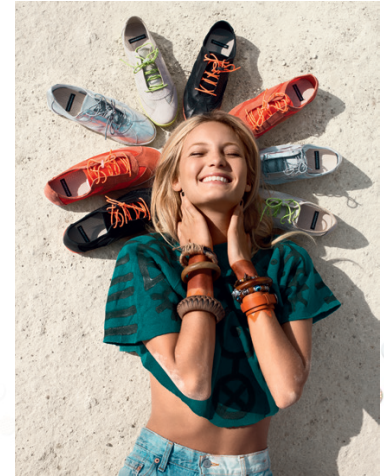
Messages of fashion ads



2. Sensuous, earthy colours

- Brown, sienna
 - ⇒ Security, stability, protection
 - ⇒ Nature experience
 - ⇒ Earth, dirt, autumn leaves, bark
 - ⇒ Earthly, warmth
 - ⇒ Lenience, empathy, understanding
 - ⇒ "I embrace the world"
- Beige, sandy colours
 - ⇒ Mildness, quietness, unnoticeable
 - ⇒ Nice, adaptable, ductile
 - ⇒ Beach sand = freedom, warmth
 - ⇒ Permissive
 - ⇒ "I am nice and harmless"

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



Messages of fashion ads



ROLEX



zalando

2. Sensuous, earthy colours

- Green

- ⇒ Calming the heartbeat, soothing
- ⇒ Forest, grass = peace of mind, relaxing
- ⇒ Natural, positive
- ⇒ Friendly, sympathetic, empathic, participating
- ⇒ Symbol colour of life, growth, hope
- ⇒ "I will take care"

- Light green

- ⇒ New growth, youth
- ⇒ Illusions, innocence
- ⇒ Positive, trustful
- ⇒ Sprouts, new leaves: new life
- ⇒ "I am so positive!"

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



marimekko

Messages of fashion ads



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3. Stylish, refined colours

- Grey, greyish beige
 - ⇒ Composed, unnoticeable
 - ⇒ Conventional, respecting rules
 - ⇒ Modest
 - ⇒ Static, stable, status quo
 - ⇒ "I don't emphasize myself"
- Dark blue
 - ⇒ Uniform colour (police, customs, navy)
 - ⇒ Trustworthy, loyal
 - ⇒ Firmness, confidence
 - ⇒ Conservative, status quo
 - ⇒ "You can trust me"
- Gold, Silver
 - ⇒ Dignity, wealth
 - ⇒ Celebration
 - ⇒ Gold is for kings, silver for bourgeoisie

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



AIKAKAUSMEDIA

Messages of fashion ads



3. Stylish, refined colours

- **Black**
 - Professionalism, leading position (business)
 - ⇒ Dramatic, festive (black suit)
 - ⇒ Secretive, mysterious (witch, artist)
 - ⇒ Hiding, protection, sorrow (teenagers, funerals)
 - ⇒ "I have a position"
 - ⇒ Or: "Don't notice me, please"
-
- **Black-white**
 - ⇒ Plain, simple
 - ⇒ Rational
 - ⇒ Contrast, graphic
 - ⇒ Strength without shouting
 - ⇒ Willpower, certitude, unconditional
 - ⇒ "I know what I am, I know what I want"

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



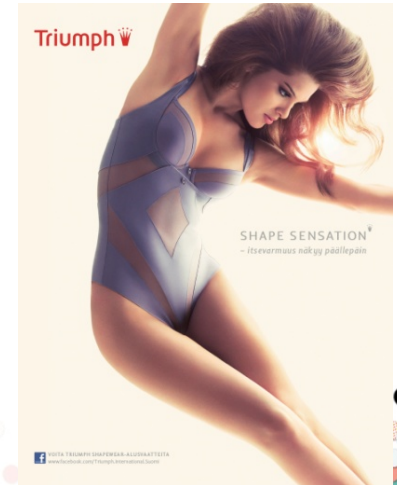
Messages of fashion ads



4. Harmonic lay-out Dynamic motion

- Still moment
 - ⇒ Static, no motion
 - ⇒ Harmonic lay-out, centralized, balanced
 - ⇒ Certain 'emptiness' there = rest, peace
 - ⇒ "Put under the reader's eye", voyeuristic view
- Dynamic motion
 - ⇒ Diagonal lines (a pose with diagonal lines)
 - ⇒ Excitement, tension, motion
 - ⇒ Motion made still by a photo is interesting

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



Messages of fashion ads



LOUIS VUITTON



5. Peculiar stories

- **Strange character, time, place or happening**
 - ⇒ "Little Red Riding Hood in the forest"
 - ⇒ "Upperclass women in Oriental Express"
 - ⇒ "An elite walk in the forest"
 - ⇒ "Female James Bond"
- ⇒ The purpose of fashion is to create fantasy
- ⇒ Rise above everyday life
- ⇒ Play, fairy tale, film, dream

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



BOSS
HUGO BOSS

Messages of fashion ads



6. Idle stories

- ⇒ "Sunday forever"
- ⇒ "Pastime of a rest day"
- ⇒ "I've fallen into oblivion"
- ⇒ "I've forgotten myself"



B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



Messages of fashion ads



BOSS
HUGO BOSS



MULBERRY

7. Myths of woman

- **Femme Fatale**
 - ⇒ Fateful, dangerous
 - ⇒ Whimsical, impossible to control
 - ⇒ Witch, damned, hexed
- **Lolita**
 - ⇒ Daddy's little girl
 - ⇒ Innocent, childish
 - ⇒ Needs protection

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



Messages of fashion ads

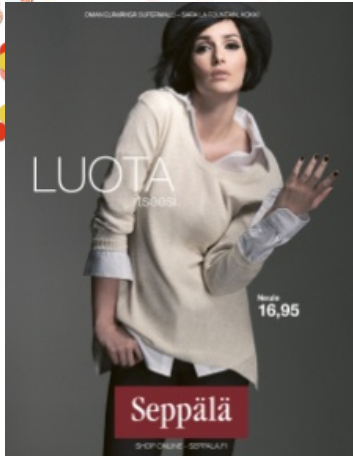
B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

7. Myths of woman

- Superwoman
 - ⇒ Powerful, scary
 - ⇒ Capable of anything and everything
 - ⇒ Despot, queen
- Nature's child
 - ⇒ Girlish
 - ⇒ Spontaneous, open
 - ⇒ Playing in a childlike way
 - ⇒ Sensuous nature lover



Messages of fashion ads



7. Myths of woman

- Top model
 - ⇒ For your eyes only
 - ⇒ A sculpture, an esthetic object
 - ⇒ Glamour's mannequin
 - ⇒ A mutually agreed fantasy

- Muse
 - ⇒ Ethereal, fragile dreamer
 - ⇒ A quiet ponderer
 - ⇒ Staring to the horizon
 - ⇒ Not present here and now



B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



Messages of fashion ads



7. Myths of woman

- Sex object
 - ⇒ Set for men's eyes
 - ⇒ The body in the main role
 - ⇒ The body twisted in a voluptuous pose that reveals all the parts for the reader's looks
 - ⇒ Character of sexual fantasy



B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



KappAhl



Messages of fashion ads



Source: <https://www.louisvuitton.com>

LOUIS VUITTON

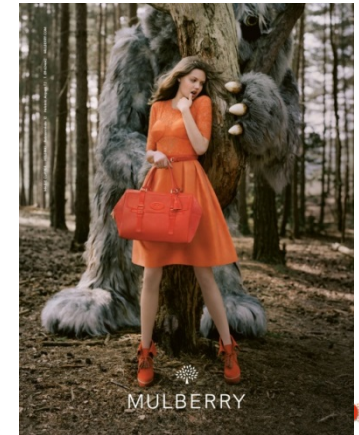


H&M

8. Myths of luxury and upper class

- **The superrich dream**
 - ⇒ "If I had all the money in the world, what a life I'd have!"
 - ⇒ Overexpensive brand clothes (woman whose only job is to show off)
 - ⇒ Overexpensive and oversize handbags (woman who is always travelling)
 - ⇒ Superhigh heels (woman who doesn't have to walk)
 - ⇒ Gloves, superlong nails (woman who doesn't need to use her hands)
 - ⇒ Hats (woman with a position)
 - ⇒ Strong make-up (woman like a doll)

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



MULBERRY



nanso

Messages of fashion ads

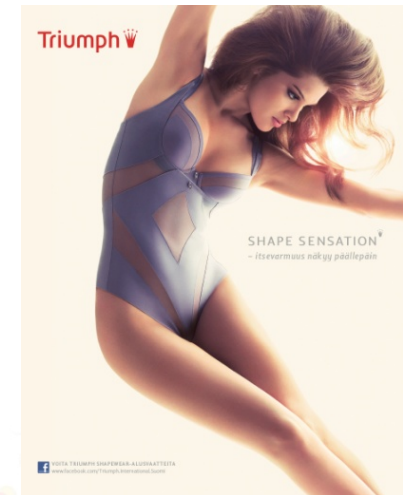


9. Myth of timelessness

- ⇒ Dream of perfect harmony
- ⇒ Dream of perfect idleness
- ⇒ Time and place are stilled
- ⇒ Characters are staring at eternity
- ⇒ Nothing happens, they just are
- ⇒ Static, motionless, quietness



B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



Messages of fashion ads



ROLEX



10. The brand myths

- ⇒ Brands that in themselves have become mythical
- ⇒ So expensive, so desired, so perfect that have grown into mythical proportions in consumers' minds
- ⇒ 'The lower' follower brands or inexpensive copies imitate the mythical brands and try to usurp their mythical capital
- ⇒ Louis Vuitton
- ⇒ Rolex
- ⇒ Lancel
- ⇒ Boss
- ⇒ Tommy Hilfiger
- ⇒ Gant

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

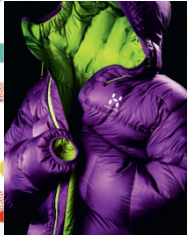


LOUIS VUITTON



BOSS
HUGO BOSS

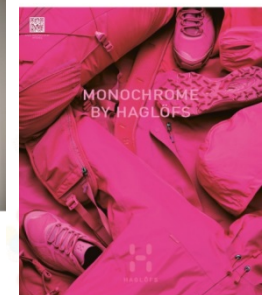
Messages of fashion ads



Summary

1. Fashion ad has to STARTLE! Surprise, difference, staying in reader's memory.
2. The ad has to glow STYLE and QUALITY.
3. A stylish quality PICTURE is very important.
3. Fashion ad has to offer DREAMS and ESCAPISM.
4. The stronger the MYTHICAL part, the better – with any brand.
5. CLEAR lay-out, very little text.
6. A PECULIAR story stands out.
7. Fashion ad should always be BRAND advertising.





Fashionable advertising!