



What makes the best interior decoration ads the best – FIPP 2013

Valores Consult www.vaulanorrena.com



What makes the best interior decoration ads the best?



- 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 found out the secret of the best interior decoration ads in magazines in Finland.

What makes the best interior decoration ads the best?



A. Depth interviews among consumers:

- 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 got very good reading and attention values (and some not so good, for comparison)
- The following magazines were used (February 2013): Anna, Avotakka, Deko, Divaani, Glorian Koti, Koti ja Keittiö, Meidän Talo, Unelmien Talo & Koti, Valitut Palat

B. Semiotic analysis of the ads:

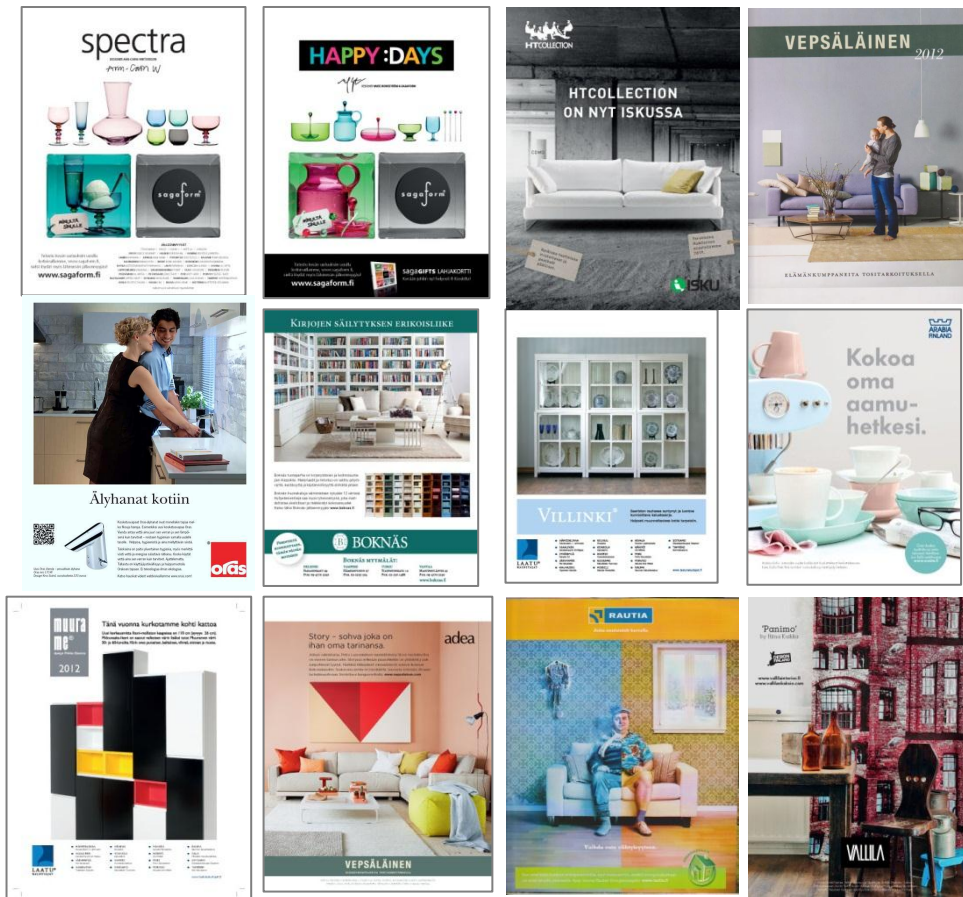
- The same good (and some less good) ads were analyzed semiotically
- What kind of colors, forms and visual compositions are attractive in interior decoration and why?
- What kind of stories appeal to the readers in ads?
- What kind of mythical material is effective in interior decoration ads?

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



- Sports massager 26 , woman
- Teacher 28 , woman
- Sales executive 29 , man
- Sales representative 35 , man
- Teacher of home economics 38 , woman
- Sports trainer 40 , woman
- Teacher in vocational school 43 , man
- Book-keeper 44, man
- Teacher 44 , woman
- Trainer of disabled people 4 , woman
- Small business owner, 47 , woman
- Nurse 48 , woman
- Cook 51 , man
- Interior designer 53 , woman
- Pensioner 62 , woman

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



Furniture
Curtains, fabrics
Kitchens
Dishes
Decorations
Building materials
Paints
Tapestries



1a. Scanning according to the feeling: "does this appeal to me or not"

- The ad's style or mood is appealing
- Something nice to watch
- "To my taste"



"These Pentik ads are always good! Delicious colours and soft atmosphere, wonderful peace at home"

"Great luxury here, this appeals, and lets you dream.."



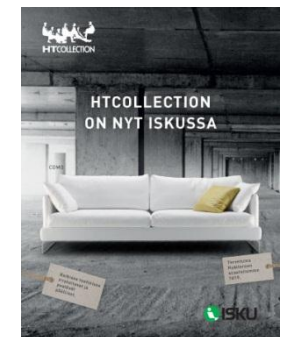
"The nature is adorable here. That moss makes you feel good."

"Our sofa is getting shaggy, it should be changed, so I keep an eye on all sofas around."

"We should renovate our kitchen , so I've started getting information on that field."

"Our home is ready and complete, so I don't decorate so much anymore. Every once in a while you gotta get a new a bed or a lamp for kids as they grow.."

"The closets can't take more stuff anymore. But I use fabrics to change the feeling here according to the season or when I see something so fun."



1b. Scanning according to consumer needs: "do I need this or not"

- **Some purchase on your mind:**
 - Thinking about acquiring some certain new (a lamp, a sofa, a kitchen, a summer house, a house)
 - Checking out the market, the selection and alternatives
 - The season or an upcoming celebration inspires to buy something new
- **Brands you use/ don't use:**
 - My brand/ not my brand
 - A suitable quality of brand for me
 - A well- known brand/ not known brand



2. 'Buying with your eyes'

- Enjoying things without a thought of buying
- Dreaming
- Planning, pondering
- Looking for ideas

"When you see a nice idea, here for example these bookshelves around a door, you like to try it at your home, too..."

"Wouldn't it be so luxurious to have a bedroom that big with such a massive bed,... maybe some other time then..."

"Always when you see something new, you gotta go fingering them in shops . We can't have much more stuff here, but it's always fun to watch..."

"You can put them on your mind, so that the next time you go shopping, you remember to go and check them at the porcelaine department ..."



3a. The magazine and the ad may well mix

- ⇒ It's not important whether the interesting decoration thing is in an ad or in an article, as long as it's offered.
- ⇒ Sponsored articles and leaflets are fully accepted in this field, and are seen as a customer service.

"Is this a story or an ad, but they put it nicely and gave some information, too..."

"Leaflets are good since they contain more information. And you have to do something with it – when it's already on the table, you easily look into it, too. .."

"I like Ikea brochures, for they give more information. You can start planning right away. With the help of that brochure."

"I always look through them all: Anttila, Asko, Isku, even Jyski.."



3b. The magazine and the ad may well mix

- ⇒ Examples of prices are very well appreciated.
- ⇒ People wish to have more examples of cosiness, small traces of everyday life, kind of non-perfectedness both in articles and advertisements.



"Well this is interesting (turn-around-magazine-brochure), lots of fine products. If I get with the same price a bigger magazine with such a good content, too, of course I'm happy to take it."

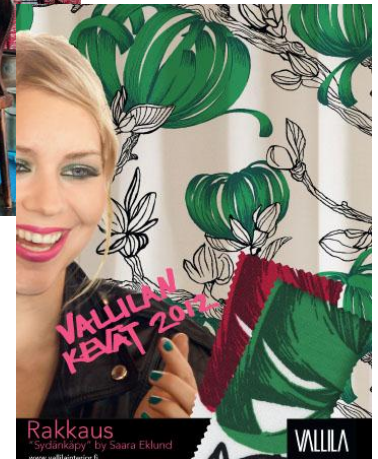
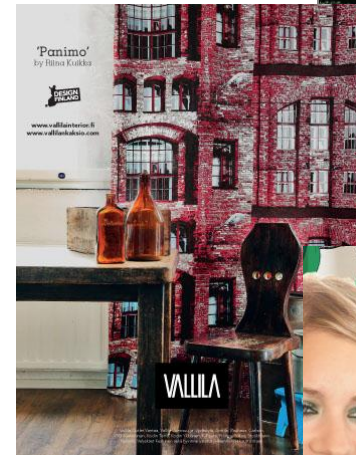
"Made with real quality. Great settings, and the details are well thought of, too. It's very good they have precise price information, too. You can think right away, would you buy it."



A good interior decoration ad according to consumers

1. Mood and style
2. Harmony
3. Colours
4. Things
5. Cosiness
6. Seasons
7. Selection
8. Brands
9. Ideas for interiors
10. Answers my needs

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



A good interior decoration ad



84%

46%

"Lovely put on the moss, you get a nice picnic feeling, fresh air and forest..."

1. Mood and style

- ⇒ Mood appeals immediately
- ⇒ Style pleases
- ⇒ Appeals to the reader
- ⇒ Create in the ad an enjoyable space, that the reader wishes to have for himself

80%

62%



HUOMIOARVO
87%

LUKUARVO
71% ilmoituksen
huomanneista

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



VILLINKI

Suomen laadun symboli ja luotteen
kunnioittava kuluttaja.
Halpaat muunnellut tuotteet tarpeisiin.

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"This is the kind of vitrine I would like to have"

"This is fun to feel and dream of the summer coming here soon And delicious strawberries and colours..."

A good interior decoration ad



"Placid, calm, you can rest your eyes on it, even if it's not your style, but fun to look at."

"All is so calm and peaceful, you get such a good feeling, somehow timeless."

2. Harmony

- ⇒ Pleases the eye, brings good feeling
- ⇒ For most readers can not be too agitated
- ⇒ For few can be strongly contrasted and 'full of stuff'
- ⇒ Colors, setting of things, the whole is pleasing and not too ascetic, too
- ⇒ Harmony creates good feeling to the reader

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



"Wow this is wild, quite a hodgepodge, doesn't hit me... OK they want to show the selection, but it's too restless for me."



A good interior decoration ad

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



75%

51%

"Is that picture sticking out too much now? And the sofa left in its shadow?"

3. Colours

- ⇒ Draw attention
- ⇒ Incite a greed to things
- ⇒ Most people prefer cosy, soft, natural or fresh colors
- ⇒ Some prefer dramatic, strong, blazing or dark colors
- ⇒ Colors fitting to the season urge buying something new

"Lovely colours! I love earthy colours and warm brown."

"Pentik always has DELICIOUS colours! HERKULLISET värit! I would like to eat them, it's so nice after this dark winter."



HUOMIOARVO
94%

LUKUARVO 66%
ilmoituksen
huomanneista



A good interior decoration ad

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS

4. Things are the main thing

- ⇒ Things for sale are the main thing: they have to be shown well and in an interesting way: furniture, fabrics, dishes etc
- ⇒ No other things to catch attention
- ⇒ People in an ad can 'harm', unless they are 'shadowed' to the background
- ⇒ Not too much stuff in one picture



"Very good they didn't spoil that bed with people, I like to think it's made ready for me..."

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62%

57%



"If I'd ever make a library, I'd have these kind of book cases there."



84%

69%

"Ikea has it so nice, for they have so many things and still a lovely feeling, too, and the different furniture are still well presented there."

A good interior decoration ad

5. Cosiness

- ⇒ A cosy spirit in the picture: gentle, relaxing, with small signs of everyday life, pleasant
- ⇒ Should not look like staging, not sterile, not too perfect

93%

64%



81%

67%



"This is normal life: all dishes are not the same, and all of them don't fit into the table."

"I'm annoyed by the perfect white homes of design magazines. There they have nothing on tables and shelves, or anywhere else for that matter. Who can really live that way?"

"You have to be able to imagine there are some people living in it- it should not look too sterile- you can't really have a kids' room with just one teddy bear and a white carpet."

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



77%

54%

"I'm not a decorator, but a home-maker. Everything must have a cosy spirit, our family's spirit. I can't bear stylish but spiritless design-interiors."

A good interior decoration ad

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS

6. Seasons

- ⇒ Colors and goods of the season draw attention and awake the will to buy
- ⇒ In the spring green, in the summer colourful, in the autumn rust and orange, in Christmas red, in the winter mild colours
- ⇒ The colours of the season are especially important to women.



90%

59%

"The Christmas gone it's fun to see what kind of spring fabrics they bring.

"Pentik always has seasons. You get feeling to go and get some of these colours to your home, too."

HUOMIOARVO %

LUKUARVO %
ilmoituksen
huomanneista



74%

56%

"My home is ready, so I don't decorate so much now. But I change the look a little bit with fabrics from winter to summer."



86%

54%



"When the spring comes, you get interested, would you buy new chairs to the balcony?"

A good interior decoration ad



82%

69%

7. Selection

- ⇒ It's more interesting to look at a selection of things rather than one thing
- ⇒ As long as it is not too much and too messy
- ⇒ A selection appeals to the reader: you can compare the alternatives, which ones you would like to have



"I like it there's a selection of things to see – that they offer alternatives, from which to choose. It's more boring to look at just one thing, what if it's not to my taste at all."

"Always I look through this Jysk. If it were summer coming, I'd think, which kind of chairs for our terrace ..."

"It's nice they show the whole series, so you can think would I like to collect it."

78%

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



44%

A good interior decoration ad

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS

marime
ri
ek
k
ar
mek
mekko



86%

54%

"Marimekko is just too colourful to my taste, sorry. At home my mother used to have it a lot.. Whereas Pentik, I could buy everything they have, and all my dishes in fact are Pentik. "

8. Brands

- ⇒ The reader scans interior decoration brands according to the quality and price: Is this suitable to my level and my wallet?
- ⇒ One's own taste tells, which brands to stop and look at, which ones to pass by.
- ⇒ A hypothesis: people have also a 'generation taste' referring to brands. Certain generations love certain brands, while other generations love quite other brands.

"Aina katson että on kotimaisia merkkejä. Arvostan Arabiaa, Iittalaa, Vallilaa... ja pienempiäkin - silloin ostin kun vielä oli olemassa Nuutajärven lasi, niin niitä..."



"This Gant is so wonderful, but sooo expensive, but I would like to have all this, of course!"



"I'm that age that I value domestic quality brands: Arabia, Iittala, Marimekko etc. I always look for and prefer to buy good domestic brands."

A good interior decoration ad



80%

41%

"That's a nice idea, the bookshelf around that doorway, would look good at our home, too."

"Ikea has these inventive ideas, how to use some furniture in a different way...."

9. Ideas for interiors

- ⇒ The reader gets excited of new ideas: another way to use a thing or another way to set it.
- ⇒ The reader is consciously looking for new ideas and handier solutions in interior design ads.
- ⇒ A really good idea awakes the need and a decision of buying.



73%

44%

"Interesting lay-out, could really work well.. I always study the floor plans and dimensions, too if they are there..."

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



"Now this is a trend to use a ladder as a bookshelf .. Seen in quite many places .. Instead I fell in love with the idea of an ordinary bench for TV, I had to get that."

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aikakausmedia

A good interior decoration ad

83%

51%



10. Answers my need

- ⇒ An acute need for acquisition of something makes the reader study ads carefully, stranger brands, too.
- ⇒ When you have a need, you easily move on from the ad to the homepage of the advertiser.



"Looking for a new sofa, so I study all sofas more carefully now.."

72%

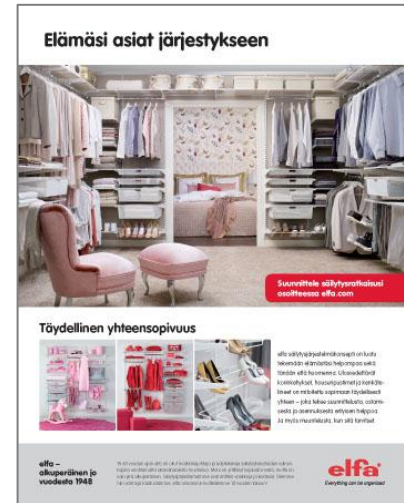
56%



"We should do something radical about our storage room..."

"We gotta renovate our kitchen at some point, so I study these now, then I go to internet to check the dimensions and selection. ",

A. DEPTH INTERVIEWS



A poor interior decoration ad

1. No mood, no style.
2. Messy, agitated, too full of things
3. Colours are not pleasant
4. The things are not presented well
5. A staging, not cosy
6. Wrong season
7. Not interesting things for the reader
8. Not interesting brand for the reader
9. Too bland and boring, no ideas
10. Something I don't use





B. Semiotic analysis of advertisements

What is semiotic analysis



I Orientoiva

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



II Kertova

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.

III Myyttinen

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.



IV Soveltuvuus

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

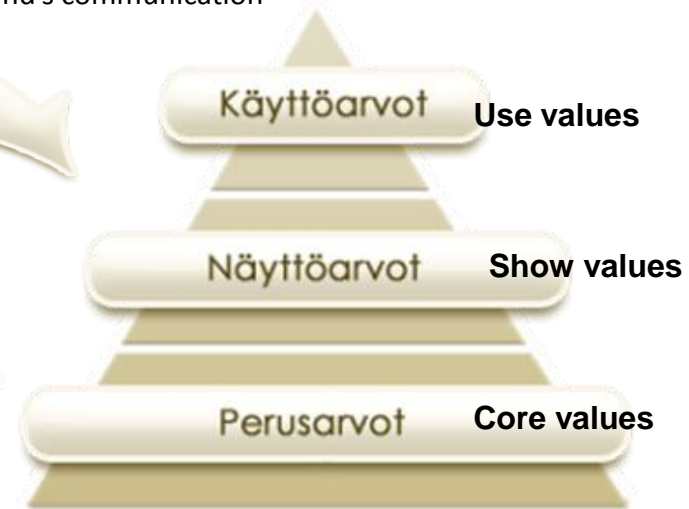
Semiotic analysis examines the values that the advertising communicates.



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 interior decoration ads



1. Secure natural colours and materials
2. Stylish statusmaterials and -colours
3. Perky young colours and materials
4. Static or active look
5. Sunday's story
6. Activity story
7. The story of upper class
8. Myths of nest
9. Myths of prosperity and owning
10. Myths of control and order
11. Conclusions and recommendations

Messages of interior decoration ads

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

1a. Secure natural colours

- Real wood and brown
 - ⇒ Natural, genuine
 - ⇒ Soothing, secure, warm
 - ⇒ Timeless, enduring
 - ⇒ Earth, ground, dirt, permanent
 - ⇒ 'From a generation to another'



- Green
 - ⇒ Natural, genuine
 - ⇒ Vital, vigorous, growing
 - ⇒ Healthy, fresh
 - ⇒ Settles your heartbeat
 - ⇒ Forest, plants, liveliness
 - ⇒ Growth, hope, life



Messages of interior decoration ads

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

1b. Secure natural materials

- Real wood or fabric of wool/cotton
 - ⇒ Warm, 'breathing'
 - ⇒ Sensual, pleasant to touch
 - ⇒ Smell of wood
 - ⇒ Contact with nature, long life
 - ⇒ Knowledge of origin brings feeling of security
- Leather, ceramics
 - ⇒ Cooler, still real and 'breathing'
 - ⇒ Sensuous to touch, heavy
 - ⇒ Smell of leather
 - ⇒ Contact with nature, long life
 - ⇒ Timelessness, security

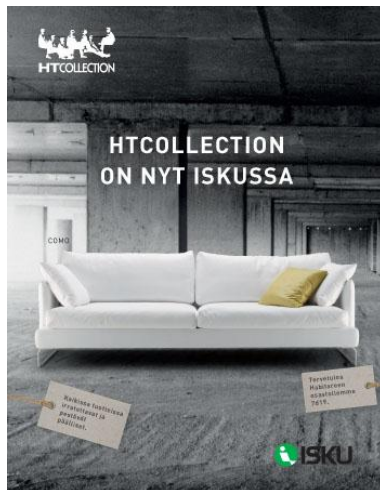


Messages of interior decoration ads

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

2a. Stylish statuscolours

- Dark, black
 - ⇒ Festive, dramatic
 - ⇒ Dignified and composed, also imperative and demanding
 - ⇒ Professional
 - ⇒ Awakes respect
- Grey
 - ⇒ Discreet, sophisticated
 - ⇒ Static
 - ⇒ Quiet, stylish
 - ⇒ Soothing, secure
- White
 - ⇒ Clean, bright
 - ⇒ Flawless, perfect
 - ⇒ Laboratory-like
 - ⇒ YUpper class or modern, depending on material



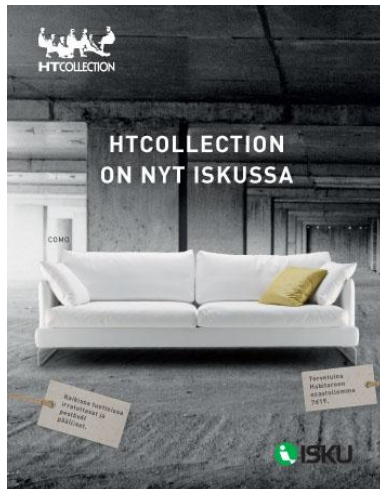
Messages of interior decoration ads

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



2b. Stylish materials

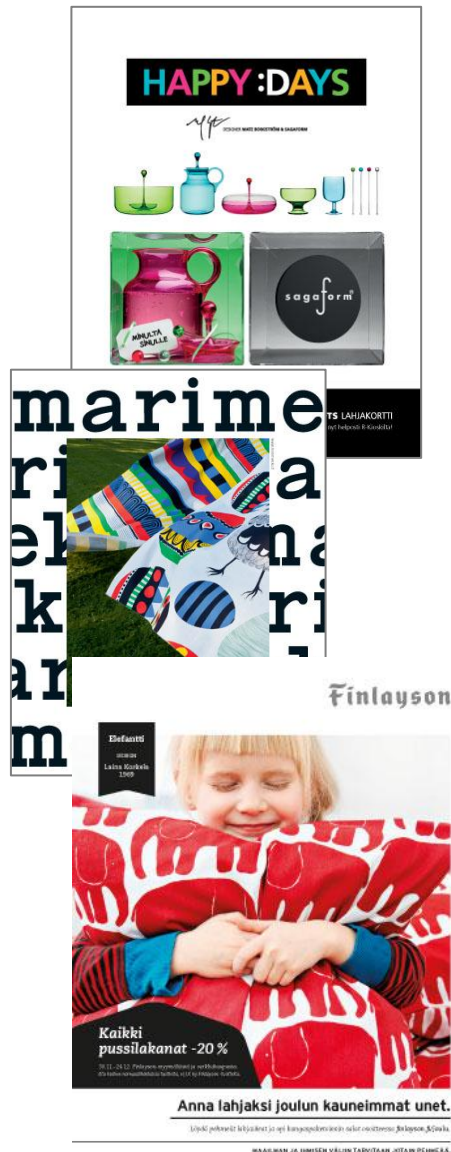
- **Real wood, leather, stone**
 - ⇒ Valuable, expensive
 - ⇒ Timeless, enduring, heavy
 - ⇒ Awakes respect
 - ⇒ Status value, upper class
 - ⇒ Colour determines whether it communicates modern (black, white, grey) or noble (finer wood) values



- **Metal, glass**
 - ⇒ Factory-made
 - ⇒ Hard, cold, heavy
 - ⇒ Valuable, expensive
 - ⇒ Urban city-culture



Messages of interior decoration ads



3a. Perky young colours

- **Bright basic colours**
 - ⇒ Spontaneous, effervescent, exclaiming
 - ⇒ Young, glad, energetic
 - ⇒ Urban, city-like, toy-like
 - ⇒ Arouses attention, contacts
 - ⇒ Strong opinions
 - ⇒ In large amounts red arouses adrenaline
- **Pink, turquoise lime**
 - ⇒ 'New', young colours => youth
 - ⇒ Child-like, spontaneous
 - ⇒ Cheery, energy-giving
 - ⇒ Active, always on the move
- **Joined with black**
 - ⇒ Strong contrast, dynamism
 - ⇒ Urban 'beat'
 - ⇒ Flimsical, impulsive
 - ⇒ 'Movement is more important than the goal'

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



The dynamic message is strengthened with acute diagonal lines in the composition.

Text and elements lopsided, triangles, sharp angles, things in motion

Messages of interior decoration ads

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

3b. Perky young materials

- Plastic , mdf-board, glassfiber
artificial leather etc
- ⇒ Factory-made
- ⇒ Hard, shiny surface
- ⇒ Rationality, hard values
- ⇒ Plastic broke through during the decade of modernization at 1960's
- ⇒ Practical
- ⇒ Urbane, young city-culture: hurry, fastness
- ⇒ Image of low-cost
- ⇒ Image of 'superficial'
- ⇒ In the recycling era plastic can be ecologically popular and valued material



Messages of interior decoration ads



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4a. Static look

- **Still layout**
- Harmonic, static, expected
- ⇒ In order, in control
- ⇒ Security
- Rest, no need to hurry
- Sunday's story

Grotesque unorganic 'matter-of-fact fonts'

- ⇒ Logical, rational,
- ⇒ Industrial, modern
- ⇒ Clear, accurate, truthful
- ⇒ As white it's soothing, as black it's urging to activity
- ⇒ Active, 'now'

Organic, 'Times Roman' 'novel fonts'

- ⇒ Humane, sociable, talkative, 'natural'
- ⇒ Living speech, telling by mouth
- ⇒ Interpretation, 'subjectivity'
- ⇒ As white it's very quiet
- ⇒ Timeless, 'floating'

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



aikakausmedia

Messages of interior decoration ads



4b. Active look

- **Moving layout**
 - ⇒ Moving elements, dynamique
 - ⇒ Diagonal lines create excitement
 - ⇒ A bit messy, 'not fully done'
 - ⇒ Energetic, full of life
 - ⇒ The activity story

Grotesque unorganic 'matter-of-fact fonts'

- ⇒ Logical, rational,
- ⇒ Industrial, modern
- ⇒ Clear, accurate, true
- ⇒ As white it's soothing, as black it's urging to act
- ⇒ Active, 'now'

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



Messages of interior decoration ads

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

5. Sunday's story

- Still layout
- Feeling of rest and pampering
 - ⇒ A lot of soft and round-shaped things: pillows, blankets, pots, jars
 - ⇒ Something good to eat and drink
 - ⇒ Mood-creating details: candles burning, flowers in a vase etc
- Time is abundant
 - ⇒ Idleness and holiday: a long breakfast, time to laze around
 - ⇒ Everyday life doesn't exist
- Perfect tidiness
 - ⇒ The cleaning-lady has done her job => a perfect Sunday



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Messages of interior decoration ads

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

6. The activity story

- **Dynamique layout**
 - ⇒ Motion, strong colours
 - ⇒ Fragmented, lots of details
- **Energetic feeling**
 - ⇒ Things and tools for use
 - ⇒ People are doing something
 - ⇒ Something has just been done, i.e. food has been prepared
- **Everyday life is there**
 - ⇒ All is not in perfect order
 - ⇒ Everyday things and acts are present
 - ⇒ "Things happen at our house!"



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Messages of interior decoration ads

7. The story of upper class

- Peaceful layout
 - ⇒ Time is money – and time you have
- The upper class is communicated by:
 - ⇒ People in fine clothes
 - ⇒ Luxury things and furniture
 - ⇒ Expensive brands
 - ⇒ Things and styles that tell about prosperity
- Prosperity is there
 - ⇒ Idleness
 - ⇒ Lot of time and space
 - ⇒ Nothing ordinary present
 - ⇒ "Buy this brand, so you will belong to this class"

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS



Älyhanat kotiin



Messages of interior decoration ads



B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

8. Myths of nest

- **The symbolics of nest**
 - ⇒ As of a bed as a nest to cuddle up in security
 - ⇒ Home is a closed safe space, far away from troubles
 - ⇒ Security and warmth is created by pillows, blankets, soft things, or wealth and expensive brands...
 - ⇒ Security is strengthened by natural, warm colours and materials
 - ⇒ Surrounded by soothing and secure nature



Messages of interior decoration ads

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

9. Myths of prosperity and owning

- **Symbolics of status**

- ⇒ Luxury brands and things create feeling of distinction and well-being
- ⇒ "I can afford quality and pampering"
- ⇒ Status brings sense of security, too

- **My home is my castle**

- ⇒ Home is for many the major property in life
- ⇒ People want to see their homes as of good quality and prosperous (if not in reality, at least in advertising)



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Messages of interior decoration ads

B. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

10. Myths of control and order

- Ideal of perfect home
 - ⇒ Ads often describe a perfect home
 - ⇒ Only a few things or traces of life, if any
 - ⇒ Things are in perfect order
 - ⇒ Responds to the need of dreaming and feeling of control
 - ⇒ On the other hands it irritates the reader, for it looks emotionless, cold, even alienated
 - ⇒ Solution: add some traces of real life, however so that the whole doesn't look messy
 - ⇒ A half-drunk cup of coffee, a book left open, a pillow with a dip...



Messages of interior decoration ads



11. Conclusions and recommendations

1. Feeling is the most important.

Stops the reader to dream and plan.

2. Colours and layout already create a feeling.

3. Things have the main role.

People are not needed, or are shown only vaguely, as a sidething.

4. Harmony is needed, in proportion.

Peaceful outlook, but also small traces of real life.

5. Myths of Sunday and the Nest.

6. A suitable amount of wealth and luxury.

Unreally perfect can irritate.

7. New ideas urge to buy.



Sensuous, good-feeling interior decoration advertising!