



## Semiotic Analysis of Signs Found in Algerian TV Advertisement

التحليل السيميائي للعلامات في إشهار التلفزيون الجزائري

BELHADJ Rymel (\*)

Université Sidi Bel Abbès, Algeria  
[rymberka@hotmail.fr](mailto:rymberka@hotmail.fr)

MOSTARI Hind Amel

Université Sidi Bel Abbès, Algeria  
[hmostari@yahoo.com](mailto:hmostari@yahoo.com)

Received : 10/05/2020

Accepted : 24/09/2020

Publication : 30/04/2021

الملخص:

إن الهدف من وراء هذه الورقة البحثية يكمن في إبراز نجاعة مقارنة علم سيميائيات الأساطير المقترحة من قبل رولان بارث (1977) في تحليل إشهار التلفزيون الجزائري، وهذا ليتسنى لنا معرفة الغاية الإيديولوجية من وراء استخدام واختيار مختلف المصادر سواء كانت هذه الأخيرة لفظية أو غير ذلك. تبين عينة الدراسة المنتقاة وهي إشهار لمكمل غذائي آرثروفيت +، أن كلتا العلامات النصية والبصرية تندرجا تحت مفهوم سيميولوجيا الأساطير، والتي بدورها قد تساعد المعلنين على تمرير رسائلهم المقنعة النابعة عن إيديولوجيات مضمرة. فضلا عن ذلك، سيساهم هذا البحث في مقارنة مفهوم موت الكاتب لبارث؛ والكيفية التي اتبعها هذا الأخير في فضح النوايا الخفية للكاتب، وكيف استخدم ذلك لتأسيس فكرة التفسير المتعدد الأوجه.

الكلمات الدالة:

الأساطير، السيميائية، الإشهار، الإيديولوجية

### Abstract:

The aim of this article is to show the usefulness of the semiology of mythologies approach proposed by Barthes (1977) in analyzing an Algerian TV advertisement to reach the aim of uncovering the ideology behind choosing different resources (verbal and non verbal). The case study selected is Arthrofit+ dietary complement shows that both textual and visual signs are among semiology of mythologies which could help the advertisers to convey persuasive messages under ideological assumptions. This work will strive to explain how and why Barthes decreed the death of the author. Moreover, it explains how he denounced the author's

(\*) Corresponding author: BELHADJ Rymel, [rymberka@hotmail.fr](mailto:rymberka@hotmail.fr)



intentionalism, how he used it to institute the notion of multiple interpretation.

**Keywords:**

mythologies, semiology, advertisement, ideology..

\*\*\*\*\*

1- Research issue or question:

-How and why are semiotic approaches very effective in decoding ad or ads?

-What is the myth contained in the Arthrofit + dietary complement?

-How do TV viewers interpret the myth contained in Arthrofit? +

2- Objective & purpose:

The aim of this study is to analyze advertising signs by applying a semiotic approach based Barthes ' mythologies. Hence, studying the meaning and the symbolic messages that advertiser tries to send through this approach is the key focus of this study. Briefly, analyzing this advertisement using a semiotic analysis would help to formulate an understanding of the different strategies that advertisers use to communicate and or sell to their target customers .

3- Data used:

Observation, experiment, documents (books, articles..etc), video recording.

4- Methodology employed:

We used quantitative approach which is based on testing Barthes ' semiotic mythologies, measuring with numbers and analyzing by using statistical techniques. The ultimate objective of quantitative methods is determining whether the predictive generalizations of Barthes ' semiotic mythology continue to be true .

Research tools:

Observation: as a method and a scientific tool of data collection is different from such casual viewing. When it serves a formulated research purpose is systematically planned and recorded and is also subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability. Under the observation method, the information is sought by way of investigator's own direct observation without asking from the respondent.



Scientific experimentation: paves the way to determine the nature of the relationship between independent and dependent variables; which are different signs. Our investigation is the analysis of linguistic versus non-linguistic signs found in Arthrofit +dietary complement advertisement

#### 5- Brief findings:

-Advertising language plays an important role as well as certain images which are imposed on people and which are usually stereotypes shown through certain models of how for instance healthy old man should look like. This point was achieved via [Arthrofit + ] by showing an old man who is satisfied and on his top form just by taking Arthrofit +

-The light was shed on potential consumers by putting them in the central figure of the ad's structure. Therefore, image creation is one of the leading persuasive technique.. The product itself is less important

-Nostalgia is a marketing tool that gives the brand a capital of credibility, longevity and quality by capitalizing on the emotion it arouses in consumers.

-From a semiotic point of view, the types of signs produced by social construction are mostly symbols the meaning is no longer an individual construct. However, it is a social construct.. ---Colors are used by advertisers to reflect a specific brand, and make effort to communicate a certain mood dictated by the product itself.

#### 6- Contribution to the field or implication

The semiotic analysis is an age old concept, however very less research has been conducted, specifically , on semiotic analysis of Algerian TV advertisement . This research study may add value to the existing literature in Algerian advertising . Although, we have come across some empirical studies conducted on Algerian market, they mainly highlighted on print ads or, just advertising discourse. This study is an attempt to explore and evaluate various variables which affect the TV watchers pertaining to their choices in television advertisement .

Additionally, we shed light on Barthes' true discursive intentions: the categorical absence of the author, a pluralist reading of the text and the re-establishment of the author. The central point of the concept of the death of the author revolves around the notion of auctorial intention; what responsibility should we grant to the author in the interpretation of his text?

## 1. INTRODUCTION



Advertising is everywhere, it is obvious everyday there are dozens, even hundreds of commercials that we receive, especially through our TV screens most of the time without being given the choice . Given the pivotal role of understanding and decoding meaning in advertising, semiotics has its importance in identifying the copywriters target consumers. Semiotics is used to decode as well as to create meaning (Bignell 2002 ). Semiotics is one of the richest areas to study communication and meaning in advertisement .It provides copywriters with the tools to introduce new concepts and bring new advertising messages through using effective signs and symbols to variety of products or services. This paper outlines the emergence and principle theory of semiotics. Especially the one leading scholar's theory ,namely Barthes is presented .This is because of the fact that this theory is revolutionary in the field of advertising. As a matter of fact, Barthes gives great importance to photographs and myths which are widely used in Arthrofit + Algerian TV ad. Moreover,the findings of the semiotics analysis are discussed .Finally, limitations and a conclusion are outlined.

## 2. Literature Review

This section presents a snapshot of some prominent definitions of semiotics and signs. Semiotics inculcates learning about sounds, words, signs, logo, pictures...etc. and their analysis (Hamper, 2001 ) It is also the oldest paradigms for perceiving meaning (Mick and Oswald, 2006 ). The concept semiotics is derived from the Greek “semission” which means “sign”. In general the definition of semiotics is “the study of signs or an epistemology about the existence or the actuality of sign in social life” (Yakin and Totu 2014, p. 1 ). In a semiotic sense, sign is anything that signify something else (Eco ,1979 ). A sign is the central concept of semiotics. Bignell argues that “in the sign , meaning and form are fused into one entity.

## 3. The Semiology of Communication and Signification

After the emergence of the general theory of signs, whose reference is mainly Ferdinand de Saussure, other current postsaussurians make their appearance. There will be two main semiological currents: the semiology of communication, the semiology of signification; which shows the existence of a semiology in the singular and "semiology" in the plural while speaking of the semiology of communication, we recognize, in the intention to communicate, the fundamental criterion that delimits the semiological. field, representatives of this current are disciples of Saussure such as Louis Prieto, Georges Mounin and Eric Buyssens Indeed, these researchers limit their



investigations to the phenomena which concern communication and which they define as a voluntary process of information by means of an explicit system of conventions (a code) such as the highway code, the Morse code. In this context, Buysens believes that "semiology can be defined such as the study of communication processes, i.e. the means used to influence others and recognized as such by the one you want to influence" (Buysens 1970, p 13). As for the semiology of meaning, conceived as current with a restrictive orientation to the field of communication, it adopts a rigorous and rigid approach and refuses to analyze any phenomenon outside the framework of communication. Indeed, the semiological Saussurian project was taken up by Roland Barthes who concludes that many cultural objects handled by men can constitute systems of meaning. This approach goes far beyond the communicative current, because the semiology of meaning is more extensive in orientation. In this sense, the most utilitarian objects in our daily social life, such as food and clothing, can, according to Roland Barthes, constitute systems of meaning. In view of this, the present study adopts Barthes semiotics theory. A full theory of communication which seeks to look behind or underneath to manifest appearance of texts (interpreted widely to include all cultural artifacts) to reveal the underlying social and cultural structures that generate them. In this sense it "denaturalizes" them, generating insight into the forms of representation that we tend to take for granted. The more obvious the text appears, the more difficult it may be to get beneath the surface and reveal its hidden features. The constituents of Barthes theory of semiotics are the following:

Linguistic message for example: [ʔ wəʃhowa sir?] (what is the secret?). Coded iconic message shows pictures of performer. It carries denotative and connotative messages. Moreover, non coded iconic message refers to a cultural meaning and it makes a link between a picture and a linguistic message (Barthes, 1977). Thus, regarding the decoding process, in any ad we have to consider the distinction between denotation and connotation which is the guiding idea of Barthes' semiotics theory. Hence, denotation is the literal meaning or obvious meaning; it also refers to signifiers/signified relationship that is instantly understandable with no ambiguity. On the other hand, connotation is generally to be a secondary level of signification that according to Barthes it occurs when an initial denotative sign is taken as the signifier for another signified. This leads to an infinite process that can give emergence to unlimited number of connotations that as Eco points out are



not only dependent on the initial denotations but also the circumstance and context in which the initial sign occurs (Eco, 1976 ). Moreover, this connotation is determined by the socio-cultural codes that an interpreter is able to use in order to read this extra- level of meaning. Barthes identifies connotation with the operation of ideology (which he also calls myth). According to Barthes another aspect of the so- called secondary level of meaning that occurs when an initial denotative sign (signifier and signified) is taken as the signified of different signifiers. This is the ground for “figurative” or “metaphorical” signification whereby a signified concept, referring to one particular domain, is described by signifiers from another .It is very obvious here to mention that metaphor and connotation are very closely linked because they are both aspect of a second level of signification that is built on an initial denotative level of signification. Barthes’ contribution to semiotic is very prominent because he believes in death of the author. Thus, Barthes has closed an omnipresence and authority that is according to the tradition perpetuated by Gustave Lanson (1901), the one who speaks or writes in the text is always the author. The author's intention has ceased to be the determinant of textual meaning. This was the first trace of the transition from work to text, from signified to signifier and from author to writer. The analysis envisaged in this research will shed light on Barthes' true discursive intentions: the categorical absence of the author, a pluralist reading of the text and the re-establishment of the author. The central point of the concept of the death of the author revolves around the notion of auctorial intention: what responsibility should we grant to the author in the interpretation of his text?

Moreover, unlike De Saussure Barthes did not think of communication process as a transparent .He shows not only how texts are messages sent from an author to a reader which are susceptible to noise and miscommunication, but also the reader is in control of interpreting the message “so texts are opaque rather than transparent”.(Shaleph :2008)

#### 4 .Semiotics and Linguistics

Linguistics, established as a pilot science in the social sciences and humanities, occupies a preponderant position in the semiotic field. However, the relationship linking semiotics, or semiology, to the linguistics appears complex. We can summarize two essential points of view that have marked the evolution of the discipline of signs:



With Ferdinand de Saussure, the linguists / semiologists speak of "semiolinguistics" because semiological theory (Locke 1972 p,198 ) makes linguistics the patron of all non-linguistic sign systems. Thus, in this context, Saussure writes that : "Linguistics is only a part of this general science; the laws that semiology will discover will be applicable to linguistics, and linguistics will be linked to a well-defined domain in the body of human facts." (Rastier in De Saussure 1990 p,122 ). Thus, linguistics is part integral to semiology. The laws and rules specific to semiology will also be valid and applicable to linguistics, which suggests a dependence of one on the other. As for Roland Barthes, he tends to invert the Saussurian theory and notes that "semiology is perhaps called upon to absorb itself into a translinguistics whose matter will sometimes be the myth, the narrative, the press article, in short, all the signifying sets whose primary substance is articulated language, both the objects of our civilization, as long as they are spoken (through the press, the prospectus, the interview) [...]. Linguistics is not even a privileged part of the general science of signs. It is semiology which is a part of linguistics "(Barthes 1964 p1 ).Through these statements, the Barthesian conception is summed up in the fact that the poverty of the fields offered to semiology leads it to note that each semiotic set, whatever its nature, imposes on us the passage through language. This is how "any semiological system is mixed with language" (Barthes 1964 P 1 ).What makes: "more and more difficult to conceive a system of images or objects, whose signifieds can exist outside of language: perceive what 'a substance signifies, it is inevitably to resort to the cutting up of language: there is meaning only by name and the world of signifieds is none other than that of language' Ibid.p.2.

## 5 .Research Questions

The paper in hand examines the usage of semiotic approach in ad for a particular product which is "Arthrofit+" dietary complement based on variables such as age and gender .The research questions which guided this investigation were as follow:

- How and why are semiotic approaches very effective in decoding ad or ads?
- What is the myth contained in the Arthrofit + dietary complement?
- How do TV viewers interpret the myth contained in Arthrofit? +

A two-steps analysis was used to analyze the ad in question. These two guiding steps include decoding non-verbal and verbal signs .The non-verbal



signs incorporate signifiers, the denotative and connotative meanings and the general theme of the images .

The first step: the non- verbal signs (denotative versus connotative)of the ad in question are examined through a semiotic analysis by applying Barthes theory of signs. In this vein, the visual images were studied considering many factors such as (ideal and real), colors, power and angle, facial expressions i.e.: signifiers for instance : eye contact , social distance...etc .

The second step: the verbal signs (linguistic signs) were investigated while doing this a number of questions are addressed.

-How is the switch from denotative to connotative meaning?

-Do the words used invite or suggest something about the product in question ?

#### .6 .The objectives and Analytical Frameworks

The data are taken from Arthrofit+ dietary complement video ad .This commercial was aired through 2019. It plays at [fɔroq TV ] .Its duration is about 01:18. This ad takes place on the stairs of a building. This place is chosen purposefully in order to show how much the elderly are suffering while climbing the stairs.

Signifiers: the ad in question entails different signifiers , two old women , a young girl, an old man (on his top form); the text written in the package...etc.

#### 7 .Denotative and Connotative Meanings

The denotative meaning of this ad is the two neighbors crossed by chance and strike up a conversation about specific pathologies related to age which are :back pain and rheumatism.

While one of these two old women was explaining how it is painful to climb the stairs ; she was interrupted by her neighbor (an old man on his top form.)

The connotative meaning could actually be interpreted as a comparison between the three elders .The old man who takes “Arthrofit +” as opposed to the two old women who are not familiar with the dietary complement in question. As a consequence, it is clearly seen in the old women’s faces that they are suffering from chronic pains of the elderly which requires consideration of somatic comorbidities and psychological dimensions.



## 8 .RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 8. 1 .Myth and Ideology of the Advertisement

From the semiotic analysis above, it is revealed that ad Arthrofit+ , dietary complement tries to tell the consumers that the product is a good choice especially for elders because elderly suffer from rheumatism, back pain ..etc. In psychological sense targeting people's insecurities is frequently exploited strategy for marketing an ad work (Goddard, 2013 ) .As different target consumers require profiles they might want to have for themselves. Language here plays an important role as well as certain images which are imposed on people and which are usually stereotypes shown through certain models of how for instance healthy old man should look like. This point was achieved via [Arthrofit + ] by showing an old man who is satisfied and on his top form just by taking Arthrofit + which is one of the stereotype images intended to show the quality of the product.

### 8.2 . Verbal Signs

In terms of linguistic signs, using the following sentence:

] -1 likul mafakild'ahrArthrofit+ ] ( Arthrofit + for all back pain problems ) is to emphasize the magic meaning of the product as the older who would buy this dietary would feel (on top form , have gotten younger ). It is argued that there has always been magic in advertising starting by the ingredients of the advertised product. Thus, the copywriter shows that it is miraculous and very effective. On the other hand, other meaning appear while uttering the following sentences which are in the form of a dialogue between the old women who is suffering from different pains and the old man on his top form

2 - Old woman: [ rak'tirjasi "fouzi" wəʃhowa sir?] (you are flying MrFouzi What is the secret? ).The second sentence means that this old man has gotten younger .The copywriter is aiming to show the image of consumers as they endeavor to be , something they want to accomplish. Language here has a very prominent role as well as a particular image which is laid on people and which is usually a stereotype shown through certain examples . From the above it can be concluded that the light was shed on potential consumers by putting them in the central figure of the ad's structure. Therefore, image creation is one of the leading persuasive techniques. So, the discourse of advertising focuses on these techniques. The product itself is less important. Beside, descriptions are used as a primary persuasive mean. The idea behind image creation is to focus on the consumer through creating



product imagery in which the potential consumer can identify himself in ( Danesi, 2004 (

3 -Old man:[ sər Farida ? mataʃarfiʃ “Arthrofit +” ? ] [mjabəlmja ʃabiʃi ʃnin ʃələlməʃda wəklawi qawiʃlasʃar] ( The secret ? Do you know “ Arthrofit+?” 100%natural.itdoes not harm the stomach or the kidneys)The linguistic message attributed is twofold (denotational and connotational)At denotational level it means without chemicals or additives. On the other hand, at connotative level is healthy (with no artificial ingredients added). The deployment of signifiers for the aim of expressing and justifying the dominant values of a given society which is here nostalgia of childhood. This scenet is supposed to evoke in the reader at once grand mother’s remedies which are opposed to products marketed today by pharmaceutical companies such as capsules, tablets ... etc. the resemblance between phyto and grand mothers remedies is they are usually made from whole plants, an association of several plants or a part of the plant .

Capitalizing on the emotion it arouses in consumers, nostalgia is a marketing tool that gives the brand a capital of credibility, longevity and quality .

4 ]-ʃahaja “Arthrofit+ ’] ( thank you ‘Arthrofit+’) this sentence uttered by the old woman implies a metaphor which means saying yes for the advertised product “Arthrofit+’ it means thank you for the solution. Here also the meaning is no longer an individual construct. However, it is a social construct. From a semiotic point of view, the types of signs produced by social construction are mostly symbols, i.e., they are formed by arbitration and conventions and are learned solely by symbolic interaction (and to a lesser extent they are iconic or indexical) (Deely, 1990.(

### 8.3 . Verbal Signs

Putting aside the linguistic message, we shed light on the distinct images which are in the form of symbolic and literal messages. Figure 2( after taking Arthrofit + ) as opposed to figure 1 (before taking Arthrofit + )straight away reveals a number of signs which can be interpreted to form the symbolic messages. Thus, the opposition of figure one to figure two entails the switch from sufferance to in form, happiness..etc ; thanks to magic product the old women is smiling and on her top form .Additionally ,the seduction theme appears in the old woman’s look, facial expression ,and via the slogan « ʃaha jaArthrofit + .In this ad the old woman looks directly to viewers which implies an intimate relationship with them .Her look



shows confidence as well seduction as if she invites the viewers to taste this miraculous dietary complement . This interpretation could be explained because the old woman in real life is an actress a movie icon. Thus, the use of film icons is word doors, well-known personalities in TV and cinema; this is one of the strategies used to sell a product. The spoke doors encourage the consumer to do as they do and buy the product. Finally Figure 3 which is the package provides also a series of signs :

Bathes proposes to distinguish three types of signs present in the image

1. the iconic signs (what were cognize ie the combination of colours ..etc
- 2 .the plastic signs( pure aesthetic dimension ).And the linguistics signs ( all that pertains to written words).The image of the package immediately yields a first message whose substance is linguistic is delivered by captions and product labels within the image. The code from which this has been taken is more other than that of the French and Arabic languages. The only knowledge required to decode it is the knowledge of writing French and Arabic. This message can be broken down for the sign “Arthrofit +” it gives not simply the name of the product but also by its lyric an additional signified that of ; arthro:: a prefix meaning joint, or to fit together.fit : a suitable quality, standard, or type to meet the required purpose. Thus, the linguistic message attributed is an advanced natural extract formulation to promote and preserve joint health.continuing to explore the image. There is no difficulty in discovering at least other signs which are the colors of the package. Color plays an important role in the success or the failure of one ad and seems to be the first thing the viewers notice. Colors are used by advertisers to reflect a specific brand, and make effort to communicate a certain mood dictated by the product itself “From ideational perspective, color clearly can be used to denote people, places and things as well as classes of people , places and things and more general ideas”( Kress and Leween 2006:229 ).Thus, it is obviously no accident that the package and the photographic image appear to have two dominant colours purple on a white background. By combining these two colors it sends us to aesthetic signified (purple bring a feeling of calm) white is the symbol of purity, chastity, divinity and cleanliness. Excellent for hygien product and medicine.

## 9 .CONCLUSION

Dietary complement advertisement “ Arthrofit+” can be analyzed through Roland Barthes’ theory of semiotics. It is revealed that all signs:



(linguistic sign versus non- linguistic sign)in the advertisement carry meanings . As a matter of fact , the deconstruction of Barthes is without failure, it teaches us to read the images and also reminds us how much they play on fantasies and manipulation flirting with lies. We also deconstruct coded and iconic messages; finally, we believe that this product manufactured in the chain in our factories is comparable to natural medicine made by our ancestors because it is natural and without side effects.

#### **.10 .Bibliography List:**

- Barthes r(1964)., « Présentation », in Communication, n°4
- Barthes r(1964)., « Présentation », in Communication, n°4
- Barthes, R. 1977. "The Rhetoric of the Image." In his book Image-Music-Text, trans. S. Heath. 1964; rpt. London: Wm. Collins Sons and Co., pp. 32-51.
- Bignell,J.(2002) Media Semiotics: An Introduction (2nd ed.) Manchester : Manchester University Press 1
- BUYSSENS E (1972). : La communication et l'articulation linguistique,cité par MOUNIN.G, dans Introduction à la sémiologie, Ed. Minuit, Paris,
- Danesi, 2004
- Deely, 1990
- Eco, U. (1976) [1975], La production des signes, Paris, Livre de Poche (trad. française partielle duTrattato di semioticagenerale(
- Eco, U. (1976) [1975], La production des signes, Paris, Livre de Poche (trad. française partielle duTrattato di semioticagenerale(
- Goddard, 2013.
- Kress, G & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). Reading Images, the Grammar of Visual Design (2 nded.). London: Routledge.
- LOCKE J(1972): Essai philosophique concernant l'entendement humain, livre IV, Chapitre XXI, Ed. Vrin, Paris, p.198
- Mick, D.G. ,& Laura, R .Oswald (2006).The Semiotics Paradigm on Meaning in the Market Place .In R.W. Belk (Ed.), Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing .Cheltenham, UK ; Edward Elgar



- Rastier in De Saussure 1990 p,122
- Shaleph O'Neill (2008) Interactive Media : the Semiotics of Embodied Interaction :Springer Verlag London Limited.
- Sharp, B. Applying Semiotic Methods to Requirements Recovery, In A. T. Wood-Hamper, N. Jayaratna, J.Wood (eds), Springer-Verlag.
- Yakin, H. S. M., &Totu, A. (2014). The semiotic perspectives of Peirce and Saussure: A brief comparative study. Social and Behavioral Sciences, 155(1): 4-8.