

READING CULTURE IN TV COMMERCIALS A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF A TV COMMERCIAL FOR THE PURPOSE OF TEACHING CULTURE TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

This paper aims to unfold the obvious and hidden messages in TV commercials for the purpose of teaching culture to foreign language learners. One advertisement has been chosen to unveil how codes and context within social relations, groups, classes, institutions, structures and things (Thwaites, et al. 2002, p2) play an important role in creating meaning. Daniel Chandler (2001) stated “Life is thus lived through texts and framed by texts to a greater extent than we are normally aware of” (Chandler 2001 web source). Fiske’s intertextuality (1987) shows that ads do not only refer to the ‘real world’ but that they also refer to other texts. These interwoven patterns can be discovered through semiotic analysis. This paper gives an example.

Key Words: Semiotic analysis; Language and culture; German Culture via TV commercials; Cultural values; Television commercials as teaching material; Authentic material in FL

Introduction

Advertisements are primarily introducing goods to the consumer in order to support the free-market economy. Sillars (1991) stated that arguments in advertising will be proven effective when they clearly express or indicate values that are important to the viewers. Hence, advertisers have to focus on the consumers’ interests, desires and aims which reflect their cultural values (Mueller 1987; Pollay & Gallagher 1990). According to the products to be sold, advertisers support some of these values more than others (Pollay 1986). On the other hand, consumers can also be manipulated (Pollay 1986) by weighing values differently or by implementing new values. Pollay (1986) states this in his famous metaphor of the ‘distorted mirror’. As Pollay and Gallagher found in an application of this metaphor in China, “The mirror is distorted ... because advertising reflects only certain attitudes, behaviors and values. It models and reinforces only certain life-styles and philosophies, those that serve seller’s interests. It displays those values that are most readily linked to the available products that are easily dramatized in advertisements. Advertising is, therefore, a selective reinforcement of only some behavior and values.” (Pollay & Gallagher 1990: 360) Based on this, TV commercials are a suitable tool to explore the current cultural values of a society. However, it must be assured that a critical, objective and conscious reading of the advertisement is taken care of.

The subject of this paper is the semiotic analysis of one German TV commercial. With this it is a follow-up paper to the author’s previous study on *Television Commercials as a Tool for Teaching Culture, Analysis of German TV Commercials*. In that paper the researcher analysed 72 German TV commercials for the purpose

of exploring current cultural values of the German society. The current paper investigates now more in detail the cultural values expressed in two commercials based on semiotics. A future study will then examine how Malaysian learners of the German language will read the signs. Will there be differences in interpretation by Malaysian and native speakers of German? But before we can look into this matter, we firstly have to get a clear picture of the signs used in the advertisements and their meanings.

The choice is one beer advertisements. With this the researcher follows the stereotype that Germans like to drink beer [no offence to the Muslim people]. Thus, it would be obvious those beer commercials can be found among German TV commercials easily. The commercial represents *Paulaner Weiss beer*. It is taken from the main German TV channels ARD and ZDF in February 2012.

As Berger stated (1997: 14, 15), “Television commercials are infinitely more complicated texts for semiotics to deal with than magazine advertisements. It is possible to think of a television commercial as being composed of a huge number of ‘shots’, each of which is equivalent to a magazine or print advertisement in terms of signemes found in it. To this we must add matters such as dialogue, music, narrative structure, sound effects, editorial manipulation, and the power of the human voice.” Berger added that it is impossible to make such detailed analysis as for magazine advertisements, “but we must deal with important signemes and tie these to the narrative structure of the commercial. And we must also consider Saussure’s suggestion that the mind finds meaning differentially – which means we must also look for the patterns of opposition in narrative texts, except that in commercials the polar oppositions are generally shown, not merely implied” (Berger 1997: 14, 15).

Paulaner Weiss Beer

The commercial starts with an oval shaped signboard. In the center is the man’s portrait from the right side view. He is wearing a coat with a high, large collar. The colour of face, hair and coat is light brownish. His picture is set on bright red background surrounded by a blue frame with white wording in capital letters. With a bigger font size on top is written ‘Paulaner’, with a slightly smaller font size at the bottom of the blue frame ‘München’. The whole signboard is framed with a light brownish border. It is connected to a post and partly surrounded by green leaves that can be identified as chestnut trees and pine trees. Behind the signboard a big church can be seen. In the background are snow covered mountains and above all blue sky with white clouds. A male voice says: “ G’schichten aus dem Paulaner Land”. The scene changes: An approximately 35 years old man in dark suit and neck tie is sitting together with an informal dressed, ca. 50 years old man in an open air restaurant under trees. There is a fountain in the background. There are many people around. The first man is continuously interrupted by phone calls: “Yes...yes...”. The second man, casually dressed in a light brown polo shirt, is observing and smiling at him. A waitress in a white blouse with puff sleeves and a red-white checked kind of tight vest, a dark blue skirt and a red apron is coming and carries a tray with two glasses of beer. She looks a bit compassionate at the casually dressed man and smiles at the man in the suit while she puts down the glasses on the table. At that moment the man wants to drink, the phone rings again. The second man picks up the phone and says in English “The person you have called is temporarily not available. “*Pfiat’ di!*” At first, the man in the suit looks surprised, and then he is smiling and says: ‘Cheers!’ – “Yes!”, the second man replies. The commercial ends with the demonstration of a bottle of Paulaner Weiss beer right beside a freshly filled glass of the same beer. In the background one can see the water from the fountain in a close-up view. The words ‘Gut. Besser. Paulaner.’ appear on the screen as well as in spoken.

Some Basics on Semiotics

Before a detailed semiotic analysis of this *Paulaner* commercial is elaborated, basic concepts of semiotics should be introduced in the terminology.

The term *semiotics* (often also referred to as ‘semiology’) derives from the Greek word *semeion* meaning ‘sign’. It is the study of signs and symbols, and although it often focuses on words, any communicative element from an image to a hairstyle counts as a sign. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), a Swiss linguist, gave the subject its name when he first taught the ‘Course in General Linguistics’ in the University of Geneva. Saussure investigated the nature of sign and the laws governing them. He split signs into signifiers (sound and images) and signifieds (concepts). In this dyadic model the ‘signifier’ is the material vehicle for the sign and the ‘signified’ the mental concept it represents.



Figure 1: Saussure's dyadic model; retrieved on 2 August 2012 from <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem02.htm>

For him, the meaning of signs was only lying in the relation of signs to each other. “The *sign* is the whole that results from the association of the signifier with the signified. The sign is the whole that results from the association of the signifier with the signified (Saussure 1983, 67; Saussure 1974, 67). The relationship between the signifier and the signified is referred to as 'signification', and this is represented in the Saussurean diagram by the arrows. The horizontal line marking the two elements of the sign is referred to as 'the bar'.” (Chandler 1997).

It will be clearer in a linguistic example. The word 'Open' (when it is invested with meaning by someone who encounters it on a shop doorway) is a sign consisting of:

- a *signifier*: the word **open**;
- a *signified concept*: that the shop is open for business.

However, the American Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) argued that there should be a triadic model of signs to explain the relationship between ‘sign-object-interpretant’, what he termed *Semiosis*.

- The **Sign**: something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity (not necessarily material);
- An **Object**: to which the sign refers;
- An **Interpretant**: *not* an interpreter but rather the sense made of the sign. (Berger 1997: 2; Chandler 1997).

For example, within Peirce's triadic model of the sign, the traffic light sign for 'stop' would consist of: a red light facing traffic at an intersection (the sign); vehicles halting (the object) and the idea that a red light indicates that vehicles must stop (the interpretant).

In the 1970's, Teresa de Lauretis realizes a new movement away from the Saussurean way of thinking towards the integration of the individual as the subject of semiosis. The reason is that the individual is performing an activity which constitutes and/or transforms the codes.

The term 'semiosis' is expanded by Eco to designate the process by which a culture produces signs and/or attributes meaning to signs. Eco looks at two different perspectives of semiotics: One is focusing on the subject as an effect of the signifier; the other one stresses “the social aspect of signification, its practical, aesthetic, or ideological use in interpersonal communication; there, meaning is construed as semantic value produced through culturally shared codes.” (de Lauretis 1984, 167)

As Fiske (1990) points out, the ‘signified’ can be understood as the mental concept it represents which is common to all members of the same culture, who share the same language (Fiske 1990: 43). The author identifies three main areas of interest:

- The sign itself;
- The codes or systems in which the signs are organized;
- The culture within which these codes and signs operate (Fiske 1990: 40).

Berger mentions in this context: “We’re all different. We have different backgrounds, levels of education, interests, incomes, occupations and so on-but we probably understand most of the messages that are found in commercials and advertisements.” (Berger 1997: 3).

Hence, semiotics refers to a kind of social interaction between the individual who tries to make sense out of the different interpretation possibilities of the sign. As it is a common belief that signs are organized in codes, a look at the structural forms in which signs are organized into codes is necessary. Again it was Saussure who first provided a structural context within which signs make sense. These structures he termed *syntagms* and *paradigms*. “A paradigm is a *set* of associated signifiers or signifieds which are all members of some defining category” whereas a syntagm is defined as “an orderly combination of interacting signifiers which forms a meaningful whole” (Chandler 1997). According to Thwaites et al. “paradigms provide a plurality of possible meanings, while syntagms tend to narrow these down according to context” (Thwaites et al. 1994: 40).

The term *intertextuality* is another important factor to understand advertisements. Introduced by Kristeva, intertextuality refers to texts “in terms of two axes: a *horizontal axis* connecting the author and reader of a text, and a *vertical axis*, which connects the text to other texts” (Kristeva 1980: 69). Thus, the combination of the two axes results in shared codes. As Chandler words it, “every text and every reading depends on prior codes” (Chandler 1997). Related to signs, this means that signs are determined by a set of codes that generate their meaning.

Semiotic Analysis of the Paulaner Weiss Beer Commercial

The type of the present commercial follows the ‘Narration of a story’, the format belongs to the category ‘Personalised Format’. The analysis adopts Saussure’s dyadic model of *signifier-signified*. Several different signifiers can be identified. Obviously, the main signifiers are the two men in the garden restaurant drinking beer. The signified – the mental concept – they are representing is *taking a break as it is tradition*. But what is the connection between the beer drinking men and a traditional break? The narration of the story in this commercial provides the necessary information to understand the relationship between the signifier and the signified. The text in the commercial is another signifier at which the displayed text as a whole is the sign. The spoken text is another sign for its own.

Table 1: Signifiers of displayed and spoken text used in the Paulaner commercial

<i>Displayed Text</i>	<i>Spoken Text</i>
SIGNIFIERS	
Paulaner München	G’schichten aus dem Paulaner Land [English translation: Stories from Paulaner Land]
Gut. Besser. Paulaner. [English translation: Good. Better. Paulaner.]	Yes Yes Yes ...
	a) The person you have called is temporarily not available.

	b) Pfiat di! [English translation: ‘Pfiat’ di!’ (Bavarian dialect) means <i>Be protected (by God)!</i> or just <i>Bye!</i>]
	Cheers!
	Yes!

The signifiers are the letters or words as individual units and the signified concepts are:

Table 2: Signifieds of displayed and spoken text used in the Paulaner commercial

<i>Displayed Text</i>	<i>Spoken Text</i>
SIGNIFIEDS	
The company ‘Paulaner’ which is based in Munich/Germany	a) Emporium ruled by Paulaner company: Paulaner beer is sold and consumed everywhere b) Compared with fairy tales, Legoland and Ribena Land, etc. Paulaner has a whole kingdom where beer is flowing everywhere; episodes and news from different angles of the kingdom are expected to be told
Paulaner is the best beer.	Agreeing statement
	a) A common phrase in telecommunication on the answering machine expressing that the person is right now unable to pick up the phone.
	b) A common phrase in Bavarian dialect to say Good Bye.
	Common toast
	Agreeing statement

So far it is understood that the advertisement promotes beer, but why do the men speak English in a German advertisement? What does the Bavarian dialect mean in this context?

Paradigmatic analysis

A *paradigmatic analysis* will bring more details into the whole picture in which the commercial is designed and the understanding of its message. As mentioned above, a paradigm can be explained as a set of associated signs which are all members of the same category, but in which each sign is significantly different. Thus, the paradigm of this commercial can be designed as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| The signboard | The dress of man 1 |
| The trees | 9. The dress of man 2 |
| The church | . The dress of the waitress |
| The snow covered mountains | . The colours of the dresses |
| The blue sky with white clouds | . The displayed text |
| The garden restaurant with trees | . The spoken text |
| The fountain in the garden restaurant | |

In the following passage the various signs will be elaborated.

Ad 1): The signboard

The signboard looks like a place name signboard at the roadside which could be found at the entrance of a city, but the shape, colour and format are not in accordance with the official signboards in Germany. It could be also a sign at a monument or an event. Looking at the pattern, it can be identified as the Logo of the Paulaner Company, with one difference: its shape has changed from round to oval.



Figure 2: Paulaner Logo; retrieved on 2 August 2012 from <http://www.google.com/imgres>

Together with a metallic look, this causes the effect of a street sign. The Paulaner Logo includes the picture of 'Franz von Paola', the founder of the order of Saint Francis of Paola, as an investigation on the Paulaner homepage reveals. The friars in the convent of 'Neudeck ob der Au' near Munich had been part of this order. They had brewed beer for their own use since 1634 in order to overcome meager times and hard work. Quickly they became a concurrence to the private brewers of Munich. This is also the reason for the collar shape and the light brownish colour which reminds of a monk's cowl. The red in the center part might be linked to the cardinal red worn in the Christian religion by cardinals.



Figure 3: Bavarian Flag; retrieved on 2 August 2012 from <http://www.google.com/imgres>

Blue and white are the traditional colors which represent the Bavarian flag. By right, for real Bavarians it should be white and blue. Thus, the white letters on blue ground symbolize the Bavarian colours. The larger font size used in the word 'Paulaner' compare to 'München' shows that 'Paulaner' is here more important than the place although it is necessary for the continuation of the story.

Ad 2) The trees

The signboard is placed near trees; chestnut and pine trees can be identified. This shows that in Paulaner Land nature is still in good condition compared to other industrialized areas of Germany. Furthermore, pine trees are related to higher areas above sea level and cooler regions, a link to the south of Germany.

Ad 3) The church

The huge church is the 'Frauenkirche'; its two towers symbolize Munich, the capital of the Bundesland Bavaria.

Ad 4) The snow covered mountains

The snow covered mountains in the background make clear that Munich is located at the foot of the Alp Mountains. This is another signifier for that the venue is Bavaria.

Ad 5) The blue sky with white clouds

In Bavarian dialect, we better say ‘the white-blue sky over Munich’. It is again a signifier for the venue Bavaria.

Ad 6) The garden restaurant with trees

The huge garden restaurant under chestnut trees where people are sitting and drinking beer is a ‘Biergarten’



Figure 4: Beer garden in Munich; retrieved on 2 August 2012 from <http://www.google.com/imgres>

(beer garden). The one, which is to be seen here in the commercial, is related to Munich and therefore it should be located at the ‘Viktualienmarkt’ in Munich. Thus, it is in the heart of the city at one of the places which enjoys a long tradition. Background information from the homepage provides some details: As typical beer garden trees, chestnut trees protect people at a snack and a mug of beer from the hot summer sun and keep them in case of rainfall dry. The special feature of this beer garden is that all of Munich's breweries come into play to serve thirsty traditional Munich locals and tourists of all nationalities. The audience is

mixed. There are no class distinctions or fear of contact. So it might happen that you sit next to the mayor of Munich. Right in the middle, the statue of the popular actor Weiß Ferdl keeps an eye on the lively bustle (<http://www.paulaner.de/home.php>).

Ad 7) The fountain in the garden restaurant

Several fountains in the beer garden provide a lively atmosphere and refreshment on hot summer days.

Ad 8) The dress of man 1

Man 1 is formally dressed and wearing a dark grey suit with a white shirt and a necktie. This outfit characterizes him as a business man. Furthermore, he is equipped with a hand phone that he uses frequently. He is of small size and has black straight hair.

Ad 9) The dress of man 2

Man 2 is casually dressed and wearing a beige Polo shirt. His size is bigger than the one of man 1 and he has curly brown hair. Man 2 can be identified as a local person whereas man 1 is characterized as a foreign business man, most probably an Asian because he is small in size and has black hair. In man's 2 background, a person is wearing a hand knitted jacket that is typical for South Germany and the Alpine area. This is another link to the venue of the scene which is Munich/Bavaria. Man 2 is in real life the 50 years old Bavarian actor Jürgen Tonkel .

Ad 10) The dress of the waitress

The waitress is wearing a traditional South German dress, called *Dirndl*, again a signifier for the signified Bavaria.

Ad 11) The colours of the dresses

The colours of the Dirndl are repeating the colours of the Paulaner Logo: white, blue and red. With this, the waitress is clearly associated with the Paulaner beer, and she represents the signified Paulaner beer. The business man is a foreigner, and therefore he is not included in this colour scheme. The local man's Polo shirt matches again in the colour scheme because the light brown colour matches with the colour chosen for the monk Franz von Paola in the Paulaner Logo. With this he signifies the olden days of Paulaner beer, the tradition in Bavaria. Additionally man 2 is sitting in front of an empty glass. This reinforces the impression of ‘tradition’ because apparently he is used to drink several glasses of beer at daytime.

Ad 12) The displayed text

The text on the signboard gives the information of the product and the venue.

The text at the end of the advertisement is a play with words. Instead of completing the sequence of ‘Gut. Besser....’ with ‘Am Besten.’ [*English: Good. Better....with The Best.*], the superlative is replaced with ‘Paulaner.’ This can be interpreted in that way that Paulaner itself is the best beer among all.

Ad 13) The spoken text

“G’schichten aus dem Paulaner Land” is to be heard in scene 1 short after the introduction of the Paulaner Logo. The missing ‘e’ in ‘Geschichten’ indicates that it is Bavarian dialect. “Paulaner Land” stands here for Munich and Bavaria where Paulaner beer is commonly drunk by the people.

In the rest of the commercial, the spoken text is with one exception in English. English becomes necessary to make the viewer understand that there is a foreign business man in Munich meeting a local acquaintance. The ringing of the phone and yes...yes can be heard several times. When the waitress is bringing the beer with a pitiful look at the local, signaling that she has a compassionate feeling for him, and a smile to the foreigner, the local’s patience comes slowly to an end. At the next ring, he reacts and speaks in English into the phone, copying the common machine generated phrase. He ends with the Bavarian greeting. With this the message is conveyed that either the phone is switched off or that the person does not want to be disturbed further. This would sound quite rude in business partners’ ears. Thus, he weakens it by hanging on the Bavarian greeting. This makes the purpose clear. It functions as the clue for the underlying message conveyed in this commercial. Said *Pfiat’ di!*, the speaker indicates that the person, that is unavailable at this moment, is in a foreign country, in Germany. With his dialect he further specifies that the person is staying in Bavaria. It is Bavarian custom to take a break from work that should not be disturbed by any work concerns. The counterpart on the phone has to respect this tradition.

The foreigner (man 1) reacts at first surprised upon the rigorous action of the Bavarian, but then he smiles and says happily ‘Cheers!’. His facial expression relaxes and we can read his mind. He might think “Yes, I’m in Germany now. Here it’s like that. He is right. Let’s follow German style.” That means he accepts the action of his acquaintance. The Bavarian replies with a strong ‘Yes!’. Using English in this situation means that he is happy about two things: 1) that he can finally drink his beer now, and 2) - and this is more important - that the foreigner tolerates his action and can adjust himself to the Bavarian custom. This he is appreciating through the English reply. Thus, finally both cultures converged.

Even in the Paulaner homepage (<http://www.paulaner.de/home.php>) there is a special paragraph on this matter. The words in *Italic* indicate the link to the break time.

Pause im Alltag (*Take a break from the daily routine*)

Paulaner Hefe-Weißbier Alkoholfrei goes perfectly with Bavarian dishes. Why not, for instance, enjoy a ‘*Weißwurst*’ *breakfast* with the non-alcoholic version of our yeast-based wheat beer? Hefe-Weißbier Alkoholfrei ist the perfect companion with lunch or a *mid-morning snack*. Are you watching the calories? With a crispy salad and a very low-calorie Paulaner Hefe-Weißbier, losing weight is fun! We all prefer lighter meals in summer, especially if it’s hot and humid. So how about a delicious asparagus or meat dish served with a cool refreshing Hefe-Weißbier Alkoholfrei?

Total View

The elaboration of the signs shows that the relationship among each other is versatile and interwoven. Some of the signs are getting a new, more precisely on the advertiser’s intention focusing meaning. Some examples will explain this.

The relationship between scene 1 and scene 2 is of vital importance for the understanding of the advertisement as scene 1 introduces the topic, especially the venue. Additionally, it exhibits the company’s

name and incorporates the product in it. Thus, the consumer knows from the beginning: beer and Munich/Bavaria. This could be enough already, but now the consumer's interest is on alert: Beer and Munich, that's ok. But what's next? The spoken text line 'G'schichten aus dem Paulaner Land' [*English translation: Stories from Paulaner Land*] motivates to wait for the story. Numerous signs provide links to attributes associated with Bavaria as shown above. If the viewer misses out one, he/she still can adopt the venue through decoding other signs. This is crucial because scene 2 needs this background to be clear for the story which takes place in the following part of the advertisement. If scene 1 would have left out, the viewer is left alone with the story in the garden restaurant. The fact that it is about a beer garden would not be so obvious, and the viewer could not so easily understand the message than it is necessary in the short time in which the advertisement has to convey its information. It is only through the combination of scene 1 and scene 2 that the story is fully understandable by the consumer.

The frame around the signboard

The promoting phrase 'Gut. Besser. Paulaner.' [*English translation: Good. Better. Paulaner.*] at the end of the commercial it is clear that Paulaner Hefe-Weißbier is 'the Best'. Thus, it is the king in the 'Paulaner Land' kingdom. Hence, the colour of the signboard frame is not light brownish but golden. Only after looking at all the signs as a network, it is possible to identify the colour as Gold. At the beginning of the commercial it can be only an assumption.

The trees

In scene 1 especially, the trees are suggesting the healthy, natural environment still existing in Bavaria with plenty of fresh air and – most important for brewing tasty beer – unpolluted water. They also evoke deep rooted, straight forward – and good natured character, the Bavarian people are well known for. This healthiness connects also to the German purity law that sets the rules and conditions for the beer production. According to this law from 1516, beer may only consist of the ingredients water, barley and hops.

The chestnut trees in the garden restaurant are characteristic for a beer garden and identify the restaurant as a typical German Biergarten.

The fountain in the beer garden

The enlarged picture of the running water of the fountain at the end of the commercial connects with the product beer and stands for the refreshing beer in the hot summer season. The meaning is twofold. Depending from the viewer's background and perception, the signifier water could indicate the signifieds coolness, freshness, refreshment or it could indicate the unlimited flow of refreshing beer in the 'Paulaner Land' kingdom.

The text

The two signs, the displayed text and the spoken text, are indicating two different levels of text. The displayed text is in German only and provides solely information on promoting the product and marks the Paulaner Hefe-Weißbier as a German product and at the same time as the signified. In contrast, the spoken text is used on the second level of text. Here the spoken words are bearing the cultural aspect of the advertisement, besides the non-verbal communication. The signified is the Bavarian custom. It can be argued that the use of the English language is contradicting this idea, but just through the combination of the English language and the Bavarian dialect the message becomes very clear. Although both sorts of texts are strictly separated, the traditional facet in form of the Paulaner signboard (Logo) joins product and culture again. This leads over to polar oppositions of paradigms.

Polar oppositions of paradigms

Berger (1997) and other researchers remind of Saussure's suggestion "that the mind finds meaning differentially / which means we must also look for the patterns of opposition in narrative texts, except that in commercials the polar oppositions are generally shown, not merely implied" (Berger 1997: 14). The *polar oppositions* or also known as *paired contrasts* are in the present commercial scene 1 and scene 2. Scene 1 is associated with nature, landscape, town whereas scene 2 represents a part of the Bavarian custom and culture. In a smaller scale such paired contrasts can also be detected in each of the scenes. For example, the term 'Paulaner Land' could sound quite arrogant to some of the consumers, because the company claims a whole state (Bavaria) to be under its control regarding the beer consumption. On the other hand, 'Paulaner Land' rings also like in a fairy tale, with a more touching accent. Thus, viewers become interested to know the new episode from the happenings in "Paulaner Land".

Furthermore, polar oppositions are also detected in scene 2. The different way, the waitress looks at the two customers. For the Bavarian she has a pitiful, compassionate view whereas at the foreigner she is smiling neutrally. Another example are the different facial expressions of the two men in the beer garden before and after the local had taken the phone.

Table 3: Facial expressions of the two men in the beer garden, appearing in the Paulaner commercial

<i>Situation</i>	<i>Foreigner</i>	<i>Bavarian</i>
Before taking the phone	busy stressed	waiting bored annoyed
While taking the phone	surprised slightly angry	determined smiling
After taking the phone	smiling relaxed	

Connotations

While looking at the paradigmatic structure, also connotations have to be looked at. According to Fiske and Hartley (1978: 41), "*Connotations* derive not from the sign itself, but from the way the society uses and values both the signifier and the signified." This is predominant in scene 1 where several signifiers have to be understood in the way the local (Bavarian) society uses those signifiers. If the viewer is a foreigner (in 2011, almost 7 million foreigners lived in Germany¹, ca. 1.1 million foreigners in Bavaria²), he/she might not find all or not the same signifieds as a local. For this possibility, the advertiser included many different signifiers to ensure that at least a few of them can be identified.

Another example for those connotations is the acceptance or rejection of the local's action while taking the phone. A Bavarian and also a citizen from another German Bundesland [*state*] will mostly agree with a smile at the action because he/she can identify him-/herself with the German culture, whereas a foreigner might take the same action as offence and arrogance.

Syntagmatic analysis

A *syntagmatic analysis* is looking in the kind of structure of an advertisement. The advertisement format is recognized already earlier as 'narration of a story'. This goes in line with the most common form of semiotic

¹ Information retrieved on 5 August 2012 from http://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/freizuegigkeit-lockt-einwanderer-hoehster-auslaender-zuwachs-seit-15-jahren_aid_732630.html

² Information retrieved on 5 August 2012 from http://www.br.de/themen/aktuell/inhalt/migration_auslaender_bayern100.html

structure. According to Chandler (1997), the most basic syntagm consists of a three phase model: equilibrium – disruption – equilibrium. This terminology refers to the beginning, the middle and the end of a story. The current commercial is constructed in this way. Scene 1 is the introduction of the story, in scene 2 is included the beginning, the middle and the end of the story.

Table 4: Applying the equilibrium – disruption – equilibrium model of syntagm on the Paulaner commercial

<i>Scene 1</i>	<i>Scene 2</i>		
Introduction	Equilibrium	Disruption	Equilibrium
	Beginning of the story	Middle of the story	End of the story
Getting acquainted with the venue and the product (name ³)	Tension setup Problem occurs	High tension Problem solving	Tension dispel Problem is solved

Intertextuality

“Intertextuality is the shaping of texts’ meaning by other text.” According to Barthes, “the meaning of a text does not reside in the text, but is produced by the reader in relation not only to the text in question, but also the complex network of texts invoked in the reading process.”⁴ In regards to advertisements and commercials, the definition must be applied in that sense that we have to look at the advertisement in relation to others of the same company or - in a more contextual way – in the specific context in which the advertisement is used.

Advertisement from the same company

In the screening sequence on air, the current Paulaner Hefe-Weißbier commercial is followed by a top-up advertisement after an interruption of one different commercial.

The sequencing is displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: Sequence of TV commercials before and after the Paulaner advertisement(s)

TV commercial sequencing	Wüstenrot Building & Loan Association	Paulaner Hefe-Weißbier	KIA Automobiles	Paulaner Hefe-Weißbier Alkoholfrei	Nivea Cosmetic for men
Format* used in ads	P-Image-F	PF	P-Image-F	LF	P-Image-F
Cultural Value	Quality Effectiveness Enjoyment	Enjoyment Tradition	Enjoyment Endurance	Enjoyment Tradition Healthy lifestyle	Health/Beauty Sports (Football) Enjoyment

³ Those viewers who know the product by name already will know that Paulaner is a beer company. For those viewers who do not know that Paulaner is a name of a beer company, just the product name will be introduced. The fact that Paulaner resembles beer, will first be explained in scene 2.

⁴ Information retrieved on 5 August 2012 from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intertextuality>

* P-Image-F = Product-Image-Format; PF = Personalised Format; LF = Lifestyle Format

The top-up advertisement of ‘Paulaner Hefe-Weißbier Alkoholfrei’ follows the same pattern as the first Paulaner commercial. The same two men in the same outfit are still sitting in the same beer garden and enjoying the beer that the same waitress in the same ‘dirndl’ (traditional dress) is serving. The spoken text is again borrowed from telecommunication fixed phrases and has been modified to suit the needs of the advertisement as shown in table 6 and 7. The intertextuality with the previous commercial and even with phrases that are well known through their use in everyday communication is made most explicit.

Table 6: Signifiers of displayed and spoken text used in the Paulaner top-up commercial

<i>Displayed Text</i>	<i>Spoken Text</i>
SIGNIFIERS	
Alkoholfrei Voller Weißbiergeschmack <i>[English translation: Non-alcoholic The full taste of Weiss beer]</i>	Servus, ich kann jetzt grad nicht hingehen. Ich hab’ alkoholfrei. <i>[English translation: Hi, I am unable to pick up the phone right now. I am on non-alcoholic leave.]</i>
Gut. Besser. Paulaner. <i>[English translation: Good. Better. Paulaner.]</i>	Bitte genießen Sie nach dem Prost! <i>[English translation: Please, enjoy after the Cheers!]</i>
	Paulaner Weißbier Alkoholfrei <i>[English translation: Paulaner Weiss beer Non-alcoholic]</i>

Table 7: Signifieds of displayed and spoken text used in the Paulaner top-up commercial

<i>Displayed Text</i>	<i>Spoken Text</i>
SIGNIFIERS	
Information on the product: It is non-alcoholic beer; the taste is the full Weiss beer taste (as before).	With the pronunciation as if it is recorded on the answering machine, an excuse for not picking up the phone is lodged. The second phrase is reminding of the phrase: ‘I’m on MC.’
Paulaner beer is the best.	A common phrase in telecommunication on the answering machine expressing that the caller may speak after the tone, is modified.
	Product information

Compared with the first Paulaner advertisement, the message conveyed is similar; the speaker does not want to be disturbed. The difference is the addition to the product information, ‘this beer is non-alcoholic’. The phrase ‘I’m on non-alcoholic leave!’, said with a smile, is again a play with words, as in German ‘frei’ means also ‘free’ or ‘on leave’. In the English speaking world, the phrase ‘I am on non-alcoholic.’, could also be associated with medication. Whatever signified we choose the message is similar: ‘Don’t worry, when I’m still in the beer garden. I am drinking non-alcoholic beer.’ This commercial is still keeping the

values tradition and enjoyment high, but at the same it promotes a healthy lifestyle with a non-alcoholic, refreshing, low-calorie drink that emerged naturally from the changing lifestyle in the traditional Bavarian society.

Advertisement from the other companies in the sequence

The KIA automobile commercial is promoting a small green car. A small cat is doing everything to follow the car. It meets a fierce dog, bigger than the cat, but the cat is not afraid of the dog and growls at it. The dog turns away and finally the cat reaches its destination, the small green car. The cultural values transferred through this advertisement are endurance and enjoyment. Similar to the Bavarian looking for the beer, the cat is eagerly looking for the small car. After overcoming the obstacles (dog, ringing phone), both are getting what they are longing for. With this setting, the KIA commercial interlinks both Paulaner advertisements. After showing also endurance for the duration of one commercial, the viewer is finally also praised by observing the second Paulaner commercial in which he/she will find the product he/she is long time waiting for: the non-alcoholic Paulaner Weiss Beer with the full taste of Weiss beer. The corner advertisement at the beginning is introducing the quality/effectiveness value through a very solid home loan advertisement and leads over to the quality of Paulaner beer. The commercial at the end is a lighter cosmetic advertisement that focuses on healthy lifestyle and enjoyment. The personality of Joachim Löw, the trainer of the German national football team, grants again for quality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the German beer commercial has uncovered the following values and themes that are important for Germans:

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Cultural Value</i>
Having time for friends between work	Keeping up custom and tradition
Fresh and pure produced food & drink	Living in a clean and healthy environment
Nice restaurants	Socializing with others
Refreshment	Looking for a healthy lifestyle
Fun & humour	Enjoyment

These results are in line with the results from the author's previous research.

As shown above, semiotic analysis supports the endeavor to analyse advertisements, to understand the signs and the messages. Knowing about the underlying messages and the manipulation of the consumer through advertisements, the semiotic approach may help to transfer the consumer to more critical customers. Therefore it is crucial to involve the audience in this analytical process. As we have discussed, their way to look at signs may be different. Thus, it is hoped that a future research project could be carried out in order to look at how foreigners are reading the signs in German TV commercials.

“Semiotics is important because it can help us not to take 'reality' for granted as something having a purely objective existence which is independent of human interpretation.” (Chandler 1997)

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