

AN INQUIRY INTO PRODUCT DESIGN AND ADVERTISING
AS MEDIATORS OF CONSUMER IDENTITY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

APRIL 2005

Approval of the Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences

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ABSTRACT

AN INQUIRY INTO PRODUCT DESIGN AND ADVERTISING AS MEDIATORS OF CONSUMER IDENTITY

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April 2005, 126 pages

This study mainly investigates the roles of product design and advertising in conferring identity related meanings upon products and associating them with certain consumer identities. For this purpose, firstly, the concept of identity and increasing centrality of objects in its construction and expression are explored. Secondly, the nature and dynamics of the relationship between people and objects are discussed with a specific emphasis on the identity related aspects of this relationship. Then, a more detailed discussion is held on the roles played by product design and advertising in the process of identity construction through designed products. Finally, a case study on a selected product group is presented in order to illustrate the theoretical discussions in previous chapters.

Keywords: Identity, Consumer Identity, Product Identity, Product Design, Advertising

ÖZ

TÜKETİCİ KİMLİĞİNİN ARACILARI OLARAK ÜRÜN TASARIMI VE REKLAM ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

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Nisan 2005, 126 sayfa

Bu çalışma temel olarak ürün tasarımı ve reklamın ürünlere kimlikle ilgili anlamlar yüklemdeki ve ürünleri çeşitli tüketici kimlikleriyle ilişkilendirmedeki rolünü incelemektedir. Bu amaçla, ilk olarak kimlik kavramı ve kimlik oluşturma ve ifade etme süreçlerinde nesnelerin artan önemi ele alınmıştır. İkinci olarak, insanlar ve nesneler arasındaki ilişkinin doğası ve dinamikleri bu ilişkinin kimliğe işaret eden yönleri üzerinde durularak tartışılmıştır. Daha sonra, ürün tasarımı ve reklamın ürünler aracılığıyla kimlik oluşturma sürecinde oynadığı roller üzerine daha detaylı bir tartışma yürütülmüştür. Son olarak, önceki kısımlarda ele alınan teorik tartışmaları netleştirmek için, seçilen ürün grubu üzerine bir vaka çalışması sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kimlik, Tüketici Kimliği, Ürün Kimliği, Ürün Tasarımı,
Reklam

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to:

Inst. Dr. Aren Kurtgözü for his guidance, support and encouragement in every phase of this thesis,

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gülay Hasdođan, Assist. Prof. Dr. Fatma Korkut, Assist. Prof. Dr. Şebnem Timur, Inst. Figen Işık Tüneri and Berke Atasoy for their advices and comments,

Yeşim Özalp, for her invaluable friendship and for her inspiring remarks,

My parents Sevgi and Ertan Ergun, and my dear brother Ali Rıza Ergun for their patience and support during this thesis and in every challenge I have encountered throughout my life,

Finally, Kansu Gül for all his encouragement, support and mostly for his endless trust without which I would hardly find the strength to accomplish this study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Definition

Starting with modernity and carried to its extremes in the postmodern era, the problem of identity has gained certain prominence both as a theoretical area of interest and as a part of individual experience. Passage from traditional societies with more stable social structures to modern societies with increasing social mobility also points to a transformation in the notion of identity. Identity, previously 'ascribed' by birth, has become something that must be 'achieved' by the individual. At the same time, people have gained the consciousness that who they are is no longer inherited and fixed, thus they can transcend the old boundaries of class and hierarchy - at least at the level of appearances (Dittmar 1992). Together with this consciousness, symbolic qualities of objects have become more and more important as mediators in the construction, preservation and expression of identities.

Although attributing the relationship between objects and identity construction solely to our times and consumer culture would be a superficial approach, its increasing centrality and intensity today is undeniable. Throughout the history, in their relationship with objects, people have endowed them with certain identity related meanings. However, in contemporary societies, conferring certain meanings upon products and associating them with certain identities has increasingly become the object of a systematic effort organized around several social institutions, mainly design, advertising, mass media, and fashion system. We should acknowledge that product meanings are open to construction, reproduction, negotiation, and transformation at all stages of the product's life-cycle, and the symbolic function of products as mediators in identity construction is realized at the level of individual experience. On the other hand, we should also recognize the dominance of

aforementioned social institutions in the systematic production of meanings and identities.

In this study, we will particularly focus on two of these institutions - design and advertising - and their interrelated roles in the construction of identity related meanings of products. It is apparent that while shaping product's materiality, designer shapes instrumental as well as symbolic qualities and meanings of the product. A significant portion of these meanings refers to identity related issues, more specifically to the identity of the 'would-be-consumer'. On the other hand, advertising appropriates the product together with the meanings inscribed to its materiality in the process of design. Contextualizing the product within the advertising message, it reinforces and emphasizes certain meanings, conceals others, transfers new sets of meanings and constructs more explicit links with certain identities and lifestyles. Consequently, as a part of a more extensive system through which product meanings and identity associations are constructed, product design and advertising can be identified as two crucial agents in this process.

1.2 The Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore and discuss the roles of product design and advertising in conferring identity related meanings upon products and associating them with certain consumer identities. In this study, we will investigate the relationship between objects and the process of people's construction, preservation, and expression of identities. Locating this relationship within the context of contemporary societies, we will specifically focus on how product design and advertising mediate it by conferring identity related meanings upon products.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The following chapter will focus on the question "what is identity?" through exploring the notion of identity from various perspectives in essentialist, psychodynamic and sociological traditions. Briefly discussing how 'identity' is conceptualized in these traditions, we will try to identify the main axes of the

contemporary debates concerning identity. Then, we will explore the problem of identity in contemporary societies by tracing the changing notion of identity from traditional to modern and postmodern societies and corresponding increase in the importance of objects in identity construction and expression.

Having clarified the concept of identity and the centrality of objects in its construction and expression process, in the third chapter, we will specifically focus on the nature and dynamics of this process. A general discussion on the subject-object relationship and the ways in which people and objects are related will provide the basis for understanding the nature of this relationship in the more specific context of identity construction. Then, we will locate this relationship within the dynamics of contemporary societies, and focus specifically on how the consumer - as the subject of mass consumer society - relate with the 'designed' product and its meanings.

In the fourth chapter, firstly, we will identify product design and advertising as crucial agents in endowing products with certain meanings. The rest of the chapter aims to investigate design as a process of constructing 'product identity', with a particular emphasis on the dimensions of 'product identity' that are associated with the identity of the 'would-be-consumer'. Fifth chapter focuses on the advertising side of the process. In this chapter, first we will have a concise historical overview of the changes in predominant representations of person-product relationships in advertisements. Then, we will discuss how advertising appropriates, contextulizes, reinforces or conceals product meanings and constructs more explicit associations with certain identities and lifestyles to facilitate identification.

In the sixth chapter, we will present a case study on the selected product group, mobile phones, in order to illustrate the theoretical discussions in previous chapters. In the final chapter, we will review and conclude the points drawn out throughout the study with a discussion on the opportunities for further studies in the area.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS IDENTITY?

2.1 The Notion of Identity

The concept of identity has maintained its centrality to theoretical debates in diverse disciplines since modernity. It has been explored and conceptualized from various perspectives and pervaded into everyday language. In most general sense, identity can be defined as the answer to the question “who are you”, as “how a person defines who he or she is” (Fearon 1999, 11). The root of the term is the Latin word *idem* which implies sameness and continuity (Marshall 1998, 293). As will be explored in details later, these two notions - ‘sameness’ and ‘continuity’ - also outline two interrelated axes that are crucial to the discussions around identity. The emphasis on ‘sameness’ and ‘continuity’ can be identified in many of the common dictionary definitions of the term.

In *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the most inclusive entry for identity is as follows: “The sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else” (1989). This definition assumes a unique essence that remains identical over time, which preserves the person’s ‘sameness’ to him/herself and at the same time his/her ‘difference’ from others. A similar definition in *Webster Dictionary* is “sameness of essential or generic character in different instances; sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality of a thing” (1995). Both conceptions refer to the essentialist understanding of identity that is implicit in the notion of Cartesian subject in modern Western thought.

2.1.1 Essentialist Understanding

In the essentialist understanding, identity of a person consists of “the properties that are essential to him or her being that person” (Fearon 1999, 12). These are the properties or qualities in virtue of which she is herself. That is, if these properties or qualities are changed, the individual will cease to be herself and be someone else (Fearon 1999). This perspective conceptualizes identity as the substantial and constitutive property of a person that is coherent, unified and stable over time. For the self-conscious subject at the center of the Cartesian tradition, identity is “a discovery and affirmation of an innate essence” which determines who he or she is (Kellner 1992, 142).

Derived from discussions within a variety of disciplines, contemporary notions of identity share at least one common aspect, that is the critique of this essentialist understanding (Hall 1996). Contemporary debates concerning identity are influenced primarily by two major traditions: psychological (particularly psychodynamic) tradition and sociological tradition. As discussed in *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, while disputing the essentialist understanding, both traditions emphasize “the invented and constructed character” of identity (Marshall 1998, 293).

2.1.2 Psychodynamic Tradition

According to Fearon, works of psychoanalyst Erik Erikson in the 1950s have an important impact on the development of the contemporary sense of identity (1999). Identity theory of Erik Erikson was derived largely from the Psychodynamic paradigm of psychology, and mostly from Freud’s theory of identification. For Freud, identity is constructed through the child’s assimilation of external people and objects. It is structured through the interaction of id, ego and super-ego: where id is “the instinctive substance of the self” and super-ego is “the constraining moral consciousness that is internalized in the process of psychological development” (Edgar and Sedgwick 2002, 185). The ego stands in between the two and the

outside world, trying to balance instinctual gratification of id, internalized constraints of super-ego and the demands of the outside world.

Dealing with the psychological process of identity construction, psychodynamic tradition emphasizes the continuity of identity together with its conflicts causing anxiety and ‘crises’ (Marshall 1998, 293). In *Concise Encyclopedia of Psychology*, identity is defined as follows:

Personal identity refers to **a sense of sameness or continuity of the self** despite environmental changes and individual growth. Personal memories of the past as well as hopes and aspirations for the future provide evidence in the present of this sense of identity [emphasis mine] (Corsini, 1987, 562).

With its emphasis on the sameness and continuity, at first sight, this definition seems to have commonalities with the previous definition, and thus with the essentialist understanding. However, we should note two crucial divergences. First of all, referring to a ‘sense’ rather than an absolute essence, the above definition positions identity as a person’s definition of himself or herself. Secondly, and more importantly, here, the sameness or continuity of the self is ‘constructed’: particularly constructed from “personal memories of the past as well as hopes and aspirations for the future”.

Offering a parallel account and taking it one step further, Erik Erikson sees identity as “an integration of all previous identifications and self-images” (Corsini 1987, 561). Describing the process of identity formation as a “restructuring of all previous identifications in the light of anticipated future”, he points to the constructed character of identity more explicitly (Corsini 1987, 561). Moreover, this constructed identity is not a stable and finalized one, rather it is continuously ‘restructured’ while a sense of continuity and sameness is tried to be maintained. A break in this continuous process of restructuring can cause ‘identity crises’.

As developed by Erikson in the 1940s in reference to the experiences of Second World War veterans, the concept of ‘identity crisis’ was initially defined as “a lost sense of personal sameness and historical continuity” (Edgar and Sedgwick 2002,

186; Corsini 1987, 561). While Erikson sees the process of identity formation as making the connection between the individual and the community, in 'identity crises', the individual is "separated from the culture that can give coherence to his or her sense of self" (Edgar and Sedgwick 2002, 186). Although 'identity crises' is most likely to be experienced in adolescent years as a normal stage of psychological development of a person, it can also occur in the later stages of the life.

2.1.3 Sociological Tradition

The sociological tradition of identity theory is developed mainly by a theoretical perspective known as symbolic interactionism (Marshall 1998, 294). Based mostly on the works of William James and George Herbert Mead, the emphasis of this perspective is on "the social nature of self-definition" (Solomon 1983, 321). Self-definition is identified as a social process in the sense that:

The self is defined largely through interaction - one's attitude toward oneself is basically determined by the same processes that impel one to assign meaning to other social objects. A corollary to this supposition is that one's self-image is in part determined - via role taking - by estimates of how others are evaluating oneself ...The integration of the estimated appraisals of oneself by others is termed *reflexive evaluation*... (Solomon 1983, 321).

Two important points should be underlined in this notion of identity formation. Firstly, the individual assigns meaning to herself, thus defines herself by the same process that she assigns meaning to others. Secondly, identity is constructed through the individual's relation with the others, by internalization of their viewpoint (Edgar and Sedgwick 2002, 185). In the process of developing a sense of identity, the person sees him/herself from the perspective of others: "the self becomes the object of reflection" (Dittmar 1992, 75). Identity is the result of 'reflexive evaluation', that is the internalized projection of how one is seen by others.

Based on William James's division of the self as 'I' and 'Me', George Herbert Mead argues that: "The 'I' is response of the organism to the attitudes of others; the 'Me' is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organized 'Me', and then one reacts toward that as an 'I'" (Mead 1934: 175). While the 'I' is the acting, responding, experiencing agency: self as knower; the 'Me' is self as known. The 'I' can become self-conscious and construct its sense of identity only by means of knowing the 'Me' which is its assumed reflection in the eyes of others (Edgar and Sedgwick 2002, 185).

Following the same line of thought, Erving Goffman takes the emphasis on the 'social nature of self-definition' further. According to him, identity is not only constructed socially, but it is also transformed by the changes in the person's social environment. Since the sense of self is formed in reference to particular social interactions, it changes as these social interactions are redefined or the people around the individual change (Edgar and Sedgwick 2002, 185). Goffman's conception, most importantly, underlines instability and fluidity of the sense of identity.

In the symbolic interactionist conception, identification can be defined as "a process of naming, of placing ourselves in socially constructed categories, with language holding a central position in this process" (Marshall 1998, 294). In later chapters, we will explore this argument more comprehensively while identifying the role of objects in this process.

Structuralist and post-structuralist perspectives share the above view that socially shared meaning systems are crucial in the construction of identity. Moreover, from these perspectives, identity - like all socio-cultural meanings - can only be constructed through and within systems of representation, and mainly language (Marshall 1998, 294). Offering a parallel account, however with an emphasis on subject as a product of ideology, Althusser argues that individuals acquire their sense of self and form their identities through the social process of 'interpellation', or 'hailing' (1971). They are 'interpellated', addressed, by ideology to be

positioned as certain sorts of subjects. Individual acquires a certain subject position because “he has recognized that the hail was ‘really’ addressed to him” (Althusser 1971, 174).

In the contemporary debates concerning identity, the works of the French thinker Michel Foucault have a critical place. For Foucault, “subject is produced ‘as an effect’ through and within discourse, within specific discursive formations” (Hall 1996, 10). In the process of constructing a sense of self, identities formed within discourses - “shaped ways of talking about or representing or knowing particular object” - are taken up and inhabited by individuals (Marshall 1998, 294). Hence, identity has no continuity from one subject position to another, rather “individuals inhabit multiple identities” (Hall 1996, 10; Marshall 1998, 294). Marshall outlines two main dimensions of this conception as follows:

The first...is that different discourses generate particular and often divergent positions for agency and identity. Discourses associated with religion, the state, sport or consumption produce discrete and often contradictory versions of the self...as devout believer, as taxpayer, football supporter or hedonist. The second dimension is that multiple identities we inhabit in relation to a range of social practices are themselves linked to larger structures of identity...structures like class, ethnicity, ‘race’, gender and sexuality...It is important to note, however, that these different identities are not discrete - they interact with each other. (1998, 294-295)

2.2 Personal Identity vs. Social Identity; Differentiation vs. Integration

Throughout our exploration of psychological and sociological traditions, the duality between the individual and the social can be recognized as one of the main axes of the theoretical debates on identity. This duality is also closely linked with another one, which is between ‘differentiation’ and ‘integration’. The question “who are you” can possibly be answered in two interwoven dimensions: how I am differentiated from others, on the one hand; and into which social category/categories I am integrated, on the other. These two dimensions refer to personal identity and social identity respectively.

Individuals have a specific combination of personal attributes that construct their sense of self and uniqueness. As we see in the above definition in *Concise Encyclopedia of Psychology*, personal identity refers to “a sense of sameness or continuity of the self” which is derived from these distinguishing features and characteristics (Corsini 1987, 562). Personal identity both points to the individual’s sense of continuity as the same person, over time and in different circumstances; and at the same time marks his/her difference with respect to others. As discussed by Deschamps and Devos, it is “what makes you similar to yourself and different from other” (1998, 3). It is a combination of characteristic attributes, beliefs, and principles of behavior that differentiate the individual in socially relevant ways (Fearon 1999, 11).

Social identity is the other dimension of the sense of self, referring to the individual’s belongingness to a particular group or social category. While defining social category as “a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes”, Fearon identifies two kinds of categorization from which the social identities are derived (1999, 2). **Role identity** marks the people who are “expected or obligated to perform some set of actions, behaviors, routines, or functions in particular situations” such as taxi driver, toll collector, mother, father, president, professor, businessman, student (Fearon 1999, 17). On the other hand, **type identity** points to the groups who “share or are thought to share some characteristic or characteristics, in appearance, behavioral traits, beliefs, attitudes, values, skills (e.g., language), knowledge, opinions, experience, historical commonalities (like region or place of birth), and so on” (Fearon 1999, 17). National identity, gender identity, ethnicity, race and class are given as examples for this kind of categorization.

In the context of social identity, to have a certain identity means “to assign oneself to a particular social category or perhaps just to be assigned to it by others” (Fearon 1999, 13). Looking from the symbolic interactionist perspective, the individual’s own sense of integration to a social category is partly, if not mostly, shaped by the others’ point of view. However, here, as we will do in the rest of this study, we

should acknowledge the possibility for a sense of affiliation resisting to the others' attitudes and potential alternatives to dominant social categorizations.

If we locate personal identity as referring to the differentiation pole, social identity can be placed at the similarity or integration pole. However, Deschamps and Devos state that sense of belonging to a group or a social category is only possible in the existence of groups or categories that one does not belong to (1998, 2). While social identity integrates individuals into a social category in terms of common characteristics, it also differentiates them from the members of other categories. Hence, social identity points to 'social integration' within a group as well as 'social differentiation' between different groups.

Two dimensions of identity, 'individual differentiation' that distinguishes an individual from others and 'social integration' that points to her similarity to others seem to be contradictory at first sight. However, a deeper reflection on this relationship will illustrate that social integration is in fact the necessary condition of individual differentiation. For an individual to differentiate herself from others, others should share the same framework of meanings, thus they should be socially integrated (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 33). Duality, or rather dichotomy, of human being's craving for differentiation and integration at the same time; later we will explore the role played by objects as mediators in this dichotomy.

2.3 Sameness vs. Otherness; Continuity vs. Fluidity

Differentiation-integration dimension has a critical value for the efforts to define and understand the concept of identity. In fact, while exploring various perspectives, we saw that theoretical debates concerning identity are mainly structured through several dualities like this one. Apart from differentiation-integration, we can identify individual-social; sameness-otherness/difference; continuity-fluidity/instability as bipolar axes guiding the above discussion.

The duality between sameness and otherness / difference forms a broad axis that can encompass the aforementioned arguments on differentiation and integration. In a more comprehensive sense, we can argue that the individual's sense of sameness to herself and to a social category can only be "constructed through, not outside, difference" (Hall 1996, 4). Identity is always constructed through exclusion, through identifying the Other. Borrowing from Derrida and Laclau, Stuart Hall argues that:

It is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside* that the 'positive' meaning of any term - and thus its 'identity' - can be constructed...Throughout their career, identities can function as points of identification and attachment only *because* of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside', abjected. Every identity has at its 'margin', an excess, something more (1996, 4-5).

This duality of sameness and otherness is also closely related with the discussions on the axis of continuity-fluidity/instability, when we consider the 'continuity of the self' as the 'sameness' of the individual's sense of identity throughout time. As previous discussions demonstrated, the notion of continuity has been handled very differently in diverse traditions. The arguments in this dimension are shaped mainly by the essentialist understanding of identity as a substantial and continuous core of the individual, on the one hand; and contemporary critiques of this perspective supporting its fluidity and unstability, on the other.

2.4 The Problem of Identity: Increased Centrality of Objects in the Process of Identity Construction

The diverse ways and multiple perspectives by which identity is conceptualized suggest that the notion has a definite prominence as a theoretical problem in various disciplines. While there was a certain idea of identity in traditional societies, it started to occupy a central place in theoretical debates only after modernity. Douglas Kellner argues that in modernity, identity became not only a theoretical but also a personal problem (1992). In fact, he sees increasing centrality of identity in theoretical field as a reflection of a general anxiety about identity,

which became a constituent experience of modern individual. Transforming experience of identity also refers to the changing symbolic role of objects as mediators of this experience. Although symbolic aspect of objects is not peculiar to our times and consumer society, its role in structuring and sharing social meanings, in the construction, mediation and expression of identities have gained dominance in certain social and historical conditions.

In traditional societies with more stable social structures, where human relationships were continuous and with a small number of people who are familiar, ways of understanding the world, self and others were being structured by customs and tradition. Guided by the feudal idea, identity was ascribed by birth on the basis of inherited social position together with attached rights, privileges and obligations (Slater 1997). Kellner states that, in traditional societies “one was born and died a member of one's clan, a member of a fixed kinship system, and a member of one's tribe or group with one's life trajectory fixed in advance” (1992, 141). Identity was fixed, solid, stable, and not subject to debate, thus unproblematic (both theoretically and personally).

In these societies, being ascribed to a social position and identity was bringing certain rights and obligations regulating the domains of consumption and possession. Through defining and limiting the accessibility of certain objects by different social groups, sumptuary laws were forming a symbolic regulation in which objects mark out predetermined positions within status order (Slater 1997).

From the mid-eighteenth century onwards, rooted in social, economic and political developments as early as the sixteenth century, the social life became the scene for drastic changes. Released from the predetermined positions within the feudal social structure, with the massive migration from rural and familiar settings to big industrialized cities, people are displaced from accustomed ways of living. While social life has been transformed into something increasingly unfamiliar and anonymous, previous patterns of giving meaning to the world and people became inadequate (Ewen 1990).

According to Dittmar, an important consequence of these changes was “the increasing consciousness that *who somebody is* and their social position are not necessarily fixed and inherited any longer” (1992, 12). Identity was no more ascribed through inheritance but it should be achieved by the individual him/herself.

In the new social structure, Ewen points to a ‘crisis of self’ which was posed by two important changes (1990, 44). Firstly, while daily encounters became increasingly with ‘strangers’, people realized that they were also ‘strangers’ in the eyes of others and they will be evaluated by the way they present themselves. Secondly, increased possibility of social mobility brought a change in the definition of self. This is the recognition of self as a ‘mobile individual’ who can transcend the old feudal patterns of class and hierarchy, at least at the level of images. In a world of strangers and mobile individuals, while surface impression became a crucial medium of encounter with others, objects became important instruments in the construction of an identity “to be seen, to be judged, to penetrate the wall of anonymity” (Ewen 1990, 46).

All these changes - from ascribed to achieved identity, from regulated access to objects to so-called ‘free access’ limited solely by economic buying power, from objects marking out predetermined social status to objects creating them - can be read as interwoven dimensions of the same social and historical passage into a new era, namely modernity. Together with these changes, identity became “more mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive, and subject to change and innovation” (Kellner 1992, 141).

However, according to Kellner, identity in modernity is also relatively substantial, limited and fixed (when compared with the postmodern era): “identity still comes from a circumscribed set of roles and norms: one is a mother, a son, a Texan, a Scot, a professor, a socialist, a Catholic, a lesbian -or rather a combination of these social roles and possibilities” (1992, 141). Although the boundaries of possible identities are continually expanding, individuals still strive to acquire a stable identity which will be recognized by the other. Hence, ‘other-directedness’ is a

crucial component of identity in modernity, too. In order to gain a recognized identity, one should still choose and appropriate among the available socially defined roles, norms and expectations and should acquire the necessary signifiers – such as objects and images (Kellner 1992, 142).

Modernity poses an ambivalent experience for the individual: awareness of the chosen and constructed nature of the identity, on the one hand; continuous endeavor to gain a relatively stable, recognized and valid identity, on the other. For the modern individual, anxiety concerning identity becomes continuous:

...one is never certain that one has made the right choice, that one has chosen one's 'true' identity, or even constituted an identity at all...Further, modernity also involves a process of innovation, of constant turnover and novelty...The experience of *modernite* is one of novelty, of the ever-changing new, of innovation and transitoriness (Frisby 1985). One's identity may become out of date, or superfluous, or no longer socially validated...By contrast, one's identity may crystallize and harden such that ennui and boredom may ensue. One is tired of one's life, of who one has become....Or, one is caught up in so many different, sometimes conflicting, roles that one no longer knows who one is (Kellner 1992, 142).

From modernity onwards, identity continues to be both a theoretical and an individual problem though the ways in which it is formulated have changed. While modern problem of identity was how to construct, perceive, interpret and present one's identity to oneself and others, postmodern theorists problematized the very notion of identity (Kellner 1992).

Within the postmodern perspective, identity becomes more and more fragmented, unstable, fragile and continuously shifting. As Jameson suggests, in postmodernity - in the social order of late capitalism, in the postindustrial or mass consumer society, in the society of the media or the spectacle - the autonomous and unified modern subject with a unique identity is 'dead', if not an illusion and a myth, thus really never existed, in the first place (1983, 115). No longer striving for a deep, substantial and coherent identity that was the ideal of the modern subject, postmodern individual no longer experiences ambivalence or anxiety (Kellner

1992, 142). Kellner outlines the changes in the notion of identity associated with postmodernity and corresponding repercussions in postmodern theory as follows:

- While modern identity was mainly constructed in the domains of work and production, through one's occupation and function in the society; postmodern identity has shifted to the domain of leisure and consumption. It is more and more constituted by appearances, images and objects.

- Both modern and postmodern individual have the awareness that identity is chosen and constructed, not given. In contemporary society, however, to modify and change identities is accepted as more natural and as a part of common experience. Postmodern individual sees identity not only as "a matter of choice, style, and behavior rather than intrinsic moral or psychological qualities", but also as role-playing and image construction, as a game in which one can easily shift from one identity to another (Kellner 1992, 153).

- Although modern subject could acquire multiple identities, "a stable, substantial identity - albeit self-reflexive and freely chosen - was at least a normative goal", which produced anxiety (Kellner 1992, 158). On the other hand, having accepted and affirmed multiple and shifting identities, postmodern individual is relieved from anxiety. Rather, she experiences a theatrical play in which "one is able to present oneself in a variety of roles, images, and activities, relatively unconcerned about shifts, transformations, and dramatic changes" (Kellner 1992, 158).

In the contemporary societies of pervasive fragmentation, commodification and image production, transformed socially and culturally by "late capitalism", identities are never unified, and increasingly fragmented and fractured: "never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (Hall 1996, 4). As argued by Kellner, accepting and affirming this condition, postmodern individual willingly participates in the play of freely chosen and multiple identities mainly presented on the stage of consumption. Don Slater beautifully suggests that:

...society appears as a kind of fancy-dress party in which identities are designed, tried on, worn for the evening and then traded in for the next. Appearances - the images we construct on the surfaces of our bodies, our living spaces, our manners and our voices - become a crucial way of knowing and identifying ourselves and each other, but ...precisely at the moment when signs have become detached from any fixed meaning or reference (1997, 30).

In the process of creating, negotiating and maintaining contemporary identities that are multiple and increasingly fragmented, socially shared meanings of objects and consumption became crucial mediators, while these meaning systems themselves became the object of continuous struggle, negotiation and recreation (Dittmar 1992, 8).

CHAPTER 3

IDENTITY AND OBJECTS

...between what a man calls me and what he simply calls mine the line is difficult to draw (James 1890, 291).

As we discussed in the previous chapter, together with the changing notion of identity in contemporary societies, the process of identity construction and expression through objects has gained certain dominance. In this chapter, we will specifically focus on the nature and dynamics of this process. Before initiating a more detailed discussion in the specific context of identity construction, we will start this chapter with a general exploration of the subject-object relationship and the ways in which people and objects are related.

3.1 The Relationship between People and Objects

The question of how people relate with objects has occupied a central place in modern Western thought, as part of a general subject-object problematic which can be traced back to Descartes' notion of *cogito*. Positioning human subject and object world entirely other to and different from each other, Descartes defines human subject as a mind and consciousness who "thinks, knows, believes and ascribes meanings and values to the world"; and object world as a collection of things which can be observed and grasped by the human subject but "which are devoid of subjectivity, of mind or spirit", of essence or any intrinsic meaning (Slater 1997, 101). In Cartesian understanding, the relationship between subject and object is through 'assimilation' by which subject makes the object world part of his/her subjective experience. Human subject can assimilate objects in two interrelated ways:

- **Practically:** through appropriating them to practical human ends by collecting, shaping, transforming, owning, and using,

- **Intellectually:** through making them part of human knowledge, classifying and ascribing meaning to them.

Disputing the Cartesian notion of external and mechanical relationship between subject and object, Hegel's dialectical understanding offered new insights into the subject matter. According to Hegelian understanding, while human subjects assimilate the object world through intellectual and practical efforts, their needs, goals and desires are manifested and embodied in the objects they assimilate (Slater 1997). The object world they transform, which is the concrete reflection of their subjectivity, constitutes the new environment which determines their new subjective experience and in which they define and refine their needs, goals and desires. Thus, different from the Cartesian understanding, "in transforming the world, we transform ourselves" (Slater 1997, 103).

If we turn back to our main focus, informed by the dialectical understanding of subject-object problematic, in this study, we will identify the relationship between people and objects as a process by which:

1. objects are assimilated both practically and intellectually: namely appropriated for practical human ends, on the one hand; classified and endowed with certain meanings on the other,

2. people construct their subjectivity and sense of identity.

Two interrelated forms of assimilation (i.e. practical and intellectual), in other words two ways by which people relate with objects, are closely linked with the duality of instrumental and symbolic aspects of objects, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.2 Forms of the Relationship: The Ways in which People and Objects are Related

3.2.1 Instrumental vs. Symbolic Relationship

The duality of object as instrument versus object as carrier of certain meanings, the efforts to distinguish between the utilitarian aspect and symbolic function of objects, has a significant place in material culture studies as well as in theories of industrial design (Maquet 1993; Barthes 1994; Heskett 2002). Although such efforts have provided productive theoretical frameworks for analyzing the role of objects in people's lives, it was acknowledged by most of the theorists that instrumental-symbolic duality is never that sharp, clearly identifiable and distinguishable in real life contexts.

John Heskett explores this duality by identifying 'utility' and 'significance' as two main aspects of objects. 'Utility' is defined as "the quality of appropriateness in use", which is related with "how things work, of the degree to which designs serve practical purposes and provide affordances or capabilities" (Heskett 2002, 39). Thus, in this aspect, object is considered as an instrument to practically act upon the world and it is judged by the efficiency in performing certain tasks. On the other hand, 'significance' is defined as the values and meaning that are assumed by the object.

Offering a parallel account in his essay *Semantics of the Object*, Roland Barthes argues that in the logic of instrumentality, object is defined as "something used for something", serving human to modify the world (1994, 180). That is to say, object is seen as something useful, having transitivity as a mediator between man and action. On the other hand, however functional the object remains in our eyes, it always has another layer: significance. In Barthes' words:

...these objects which have, in principle, a function, a utility, a purpose, we believe we experience as pure instruments, whereas in reality they carry other things, they are also something else: they function as vehicles of meaning: in other words, the object

effectively serves some purpose, but it also serves to communicate information; we might sum up by saying that there is always a meaning which overflows the object's use (1994, 182).

According to Heskett, it is possible to find objects that carry one of the two aspects as a dominant character - like professional specialized tools and medical equipment for the utility dominant pole, pieces of jewellery and porcelain figures for the significance dominant pole (2002). However, most of the objects are positioned in the continuum between the two poles, at a point where utility and significance are strongly interwoven. Even objects that are purely instrumental in our eyes are embedded into certain social practices and ways of life, and they are ascribed with meanings that are associated with that way of life. According to Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, "even the use of things for utilitarian purposes operates within the symbolic province of culture" (1981, 20). Similarly, Dittmar suggests that any simple instrumental-symbolic duality would be misplaced, since "even functional, utilitarian aspects are also (at least potentially) symbolic and communicative" (Dittmar 1992, 88). At the very least, objects are attributed with meanings that stem from their utility and instrumental use. Consequently, comprising the meanings referring to instrumentality as well, symbolic aspects of objects constitute an important part of the relationship between people and objects.

3.2.2 Identity Construction Through Objects

What are the ways in which people symbolically relate with objects? What kind of symbolic meanings are ascribed to objects in their relationship with people? In her study on individuals' relationship with their most valued personal possessions, Dittmar inquires why people consider certain objects they own as important and special (1992). Her findings are summarized in thirty-three meaning categories which are grouped into eight broader categories as illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Meaning categories constituting the relationship between people and objects, Modified (Source: Dittmar 1992, 130).

1	Qualities 'intrinsic' to object
	Durability, reliability, quality
	Economy
	Monetary value
	Uniqueness, rarity
	Aesthetics
2	Instrumentality
	General utility of object
	Enables specific activity associated with object
3	Other use-related features
	Enables social contact
	Provides enjoyment
	Provides entertainment or relaxation
	Enhances independence, autonomy, freedom
	Provides financial security
	Provides information or knowledge
	Provides privacy or solitude
4	Effort expended in acquiring or maintaining possession
5	Emotion-related features of possessions
	Emotional attachment
	Mood enhancer or regulator
	Escapism, switching off
	Emotional outlet/therapy
	Provides comfort or emotional security
	Enhances self-confidence
6	Self-expression
	Self-expression <i>per se</i>
	Self-expression for others to see
	Individuality / differentiation from others
	Symbols for personal future goals
	Symbols for personal skills or capabilities
7	Personal history
	Link to events or places
	Link to past or childhood
	General symbols of self-continuity
	Long-term association
8	Symbolic interrelatedness
	Symbol for relationship with specific person(s)
	Symbolic company
	Symbol of interrelatedness with particular group(s)

Dittmar states that the last three broad categories are of a symbolic nature, pointing to some sort of symbolic relationship between people and objects they possess (1992, 131). Considering several perspectives on the notions of identity that are

explored in Chapter 1, we can also see that a significant portion of these categories definitely refer to individuals' sense of identity and the role of objects in the construction, preservation and expression of it, by defining these objects as symbols of personal history and future goals, as vehicles of self-expression, of differentiation from others and integration with particular groups.

Focusing specifically on the identity related aspects of the symbolic relationship between people and objects, Csikszentmihalyi argues that objects give a concrete shape to our views of ourselves (Csikszentmihalyi 1993; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981). They help to objectify and stabilize our sense of who we are in at least three major ways:

1. They demonstrate personal qualities of the self.
2. They symbolize relationships and social affiliations.
3. They maintain the continuity of the self through time.

Objects that Demonstrate Personal Qualities of the Self

Many anthropological studies demonstrated that throughout the history of human being, in almost every culture, part of the objects' role in everyday life has been to express valued personal traits of the owner (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981). They have served as symbols on which qualities of self, or aspired self, can be projected and displayed to others. According to Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, when an object is associated with a certain quality of the self, it not only reflects an already existing trait but also anticipates and generates previously non-existing one. For instance, fighting spear of a man living in a preliterate society symbolizes and demonstrates the strength and speed of its owner as well as empowers him with these qualities.

When we come back to contemporary societies, a young man's relationship with his car, freedom and power he experiences and demonstrates to others when driving it, points to a similar experience and expressive role of objects (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 28). The car becomes both the symbol and the creator of his freedom and power. Objects not only serve to express

personal qualities to others, but also create those qualities in the eyes of the person himself and shape his sense of who he is. This is also a very familiar theme, exploited frequently by advertising discourse: products as mediators of expression and construction of the aspired self, products embodying transformative power and magic.

Objects that Symbolize Relationships and Social Affiliations

At this point, the duality of individual and social, of ‘differentiation’ and ‘integration’, comes once more into the discussion, this time within the context of role played by objects as mediators in these dualities. Through objectifying and expressing unique personal attributes and mediating their development, objects mark out person’s difference with respect to others: they serve ‘individual differentiation’. On the other side, we see objects as symbols of ‘social integration’, standing for the ties that link the individual to others (Csikszentmihalyi 1993, 27). They both symbolically give permanence to the relationships with specific persons, like family members, relatives and friends; and also mark the owner’s affiliation to particular groups or social categories. As stated by Csikszentmihalyi, they “remind us of who we are with respect to whom we belong” (1993, 27).

Objects that Maintain the Continuity of the Self

The sense of sameness and continuity of the self over time is an important component of the notion of identity, especially from the perspective of psychological tradition. As put forward by the definition in *Concise Encyclopedia of Psychology* discussed in Chapter 1, “personal memories of the past as well as hopes and aspirations for the future provide evidence in the present of this sense of identity (Corsini 1987, 562). A crucial portion of this evidence is provided by objects that objectify past memories, present concerns and future aspirations.

Kamptner argues that objects help maintain one’s sense of identity by being “concrete reminders of experiences, events, roles, relationships, and values that are important components of one’s lifelong sense of self” (1989, 175). Like snapshots

of the past, they trigger memories, feelings and other associations (Kamptner 1989). While some objects serve to preserve the continuity of the identity through evoking crucial aspects of the past self, some others serve as concrete signposts for the future self (Csikszentmihalyi 1993). They stand for the personal future goals and aspirations. Finally, and most importantly, through embodying the owner's current concerns, beliefs and attitudes, objects objectify and express the present stage of the self that bridges the memories of the past and aspirations of the future.

3.3 Perspectives on the Relationship between People and Objects

In the previous section, we explored the ways in which people and objects are related, and discussed that a significant portion of this relationship is constituted by the aspects related with construction, preservation and expression of identities. At this point, another important question arises: "How can we explain the relationship between people and objects in a way offering a comprehensive account of the process of identity construction, preservation and expression through objects?" Dittmar identifies three broad theoretical frameworks that propose different answers to the questions of "What is the nature of the relationship between people and objects?" (1992):

1. Biological Perspective

2. Individual-centered Perspective

3. Social Constructionist Perspective

Before a deeper reflection on the social constructionist perspective which will form the theoretical strand of our study together with the semiological perspective, we will briefly review the other two perspectives and discuss their limitations in providing an account on the role played by objects in the construction, preservation and expression of identities.

3.3.1 Biological Perspective

From the biological perspective, the relationship between people and the objects they own are conceptualized as the consequence of a biological based, 'acquisitive

instinct' (Dittmar 1992, 42). That is to say, people's desire to own objects is instinctual, thus it is natural rather than learned and socio-cultural. Dittmar argues that for the acquisitive instinct explanation to be valid, two central claims would have to be convincing

1. Human possessive behavior and general forms it takes should be universal.
2. There should be a continuity between human and animal possessive behavior.

Apart from the inadequacy of evidences to support these claims, biological perspective is insufficient also, and more importantly, for the reason that it offers very little insight in terms of the meanings objects acquire and the functions they have with respect to identity construction and expression.

3.3.2 Individual-centered Perspective

Individual-centered perspective focuses on the meanings and functions of objects at an intra-individual level and the roles they play at an interpersonal level as definers and regulators of relationship (Dittmar 1992). Studies adopting this perspective argue that objects one owns are seen as integral parts of the self, as 'self-extensions', together with other categories of extended self: body parts, vital organs, internal processes, ideas and experiences, and those persons and places to which one feels attached (Belk 1988). As Belk suggests, the assertion that we regard the object we own as parts of ourselves dates back to William James' conception that:

The Empirical Self of each of us is all that he is tempted to call by the name of *me*. But it is clear that between what a man calls *me* and what he simply calls *mine* the line is difficult to draw. We feel and act about certain things that are ours very much as we feel and act about ourselves [emphasis mine] (James 1890, 291).

Informed by previous discussions on instrumental-symbolic duality, we can identify two main forms by which objects can extend self (Belk 1988; Dittmar 1992):

- **Instrumental extension:** Objects in our possession can literally extend self by allowing us to do things of which we would otherwise be incapable. In this aspect,

they extend our selves by giving us the capability to exert control over the environment

- **Symbolic extension:** Objects can also symbolically extend self when we (and others) believe that we can be a different person than we would be without them.

Through conceptualizing objects as integral parts of the extended self, individual-centered perspective acknowledges their symbolic role in the construction, preservation and expression of identities. However, since it focuses predominantly on the intra-individual or interpersonal levels of study, this perspective neglects to pay sufficient attention to the influence of socially shared meaning systems on the process of identity construction and expression through object (Dittmar 1992).

3.3.3 Social Constructionist Perspective

Social constructionist perspective shares with individual-centered perspective the assumption that objects one owns are regarded as parts of the self. However, in this perspective, main emphasis is on the proposition that “meanings of material possessions as self-extensions are socially shared and constituted” (Dittmar 1992, 64). This proposition is based on the general idea that all knowledge has social origins and a social nature, which is central to social constructionist perspective. According to this perspective, our individual knowledge and consciousness is permeated, maintained and reproduced by means of socially shared meaning systems: “common underlying symbolic order of rules, beliefs and understanding” (Dittmar 1992, 69).

Dittmar states that social constructionism is not a theoretical framework by itself, rather it constitutes a meta-theory that offers a general perspective on how to look at social reality. For the application of this perspective to the study of the relationship between objects and identity, she draws heavily on symbolic interactionism, which is a body of thought significantly influenced the development of social constructionist perspective. In Chapter 1, we introduced the central arguments of symbolic interactionism concerning the notion of identity, which can be summarized as follows:

- a sense of identity is constructed and maintained by the individual's internalization of how she/he is seen by others.
- this is only possible in the context of “socially shared meaning systems where self, others and objects in the environment can be designated and represented symbolically” (Dittmar 1992, 75).

Although, from many perspectives, language is usually considered as the primary form of socially shared meaning systems, Dittmar argues that at least three important systems of socially shared symbols can be identified:

- language
- non-verbal communication
- objects

Together with the aforementioned changes in the notion of identity in contemporary societies, more and more important portion of the symbolic social reality becomes constituted and structured by meanings of objects. This means that, objects constitute a crucial part of our shared frameworks or maps of meaning through which we make sense of ourselves, others and the world, formulate and communicate ideas and meanings about them. Dittmar notes that a significant part of the meanings provided by the symbolic dimensions of objects refers to various aspects of the owner's identity (1992, 79). Based on the social constructionist perspective in general, and on symbolic interactionism in particular, she puts forward a symbolic-communicational model of the relationship between object and identity. In the next section, we will briefly discuss this model which will form one of the basic theoretical frameworks of our study.

Symbolic-communicational Model of Objects and Identity

In symbolic-communicational model, objects are conceptualized as ‘symbolic mediators of identity’. That is to say, people communicate aspects of their identity through the socially shared symbolic meanings of objects they own (Dittmar 1992, 88). The relationship between objects one owns and his/her identity can be

schematized according to symbolic-communicational model as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

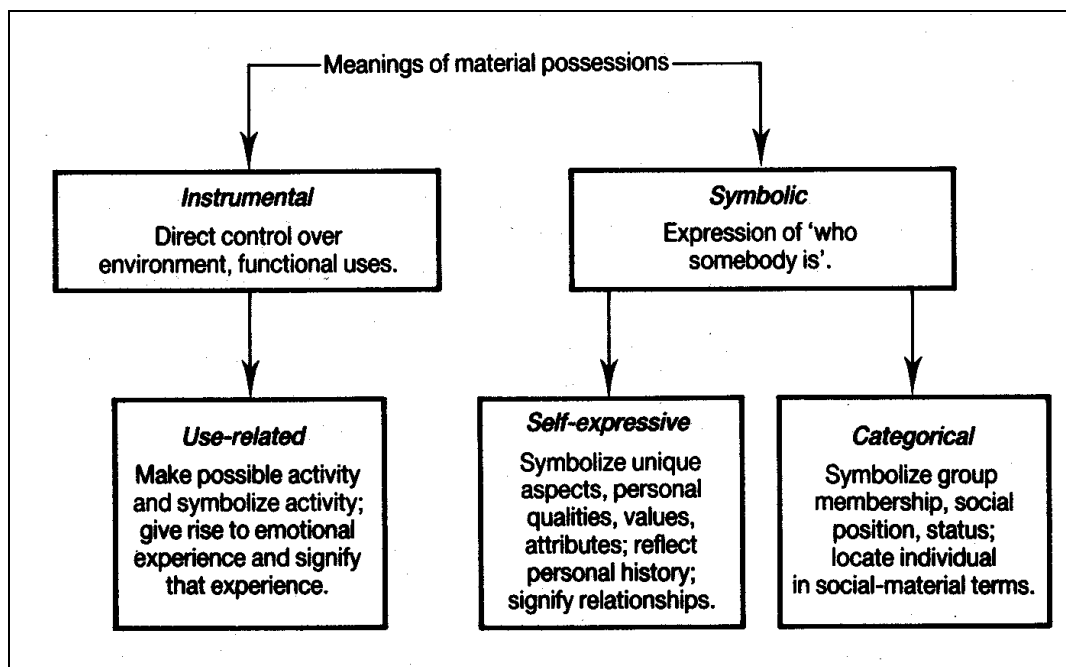


Figure 3.1 Symbolic-communicational model of the relationship between identity and objects (Source: Dittmar 1992, 89).

This figure also clarifies and schematizes some main dimensions of the discussions we put forward in previous sections. In the scheme, based on instrumental-symbolic duality, two main aspects of identity related meanings of objects were identified. Referring to functional use and exerting direct control over environment, instrumental side gives rise to use-related meanings. While objects make possible a variety of activities, they also symbolize that owner is capable, in control, and free to engage in these activities (Dittmar 1992). The symbolic meanings associated with the activity are transferred to the object and to its owner who engages in the activity. Object can also give rise to more emotional experiences and symbolize that emotional state and related experience. Dittmar gives the example of listening to different kinds of music which makes hi-fi equipment a means for relaxation, comfort or mood change, and also a symbol of these emotional states.

On the other hand, **symbolic** side of the scheme refers more directly to the meanings of objects as expressions of ‘who somebody is’. Symbolic roles of objects as expressions of identity are further subdivided into self-expressive and categorical ones pointing to the duality of individual and social, or of differentiation and integration. Referring to ‘personal identity’, **self-expressive** meanings concern symbolization of unique aspects, personal qualities, values and attitudes. Objects fulfill self-expressive functions also through objectifying personal history, present concerns and future aspirations; and symbolizing personal relationships. **Categorical** meanings, symbolizing affiliation to a particular group or social category, are related with ‘social identity’. Objects serve as concrete means to express one’s social standing, wealth or status which locate her in social-material terms. Dittmar states that objects we possess can signify “the broad social categories we belong to (such as class or gender), as well as the smaller groups or subcultures we identify with” (1992, 89).

Conceptualizing objects as ‘symbolic mediators of identity’ can imply two main arguments:

- Objects, as concrete evidences, are mediators in the internal process of construction and preservation of one’s identity.
- People express aspects of their identity to others and make inference about the identity of others by the mediation of instrumental and symbolic meanings of objects.

However, due to the social nature of self-definition - that is to say individuals assign meanings to themselves through the same process that they assign meaning to others - these two propositions are strongly interwoven. One constructs her identity through internalization of how she is seen by others. Since others make inference about her identity on the basis of the meanings of objects she owns, this will also significantly affect her own sense of identity. Thus, through the socially shared meanings of objects, people communicate aspects of their identity not only to others, but also to themselves (Dittmar 1992, 75). The main arguments of symbolic-communicational model can be summarized in five interdependent propositions as illustrated in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Summary of the propositions of symbolic-communicational model, Modified (Source: Dittmar 1992, 90-2).

Proposition 1:	The meanings of possessions as symbols of identity are socially shared and individuals gradually internalize them in interaction with other people and from social institutions.
Proposition 2:	Other people respond to an individual in terms of the material possessions that surround her or him. Thus, an individual's evaluation of meaning assigned by others to self is influenced by the possessions owned.
Proposition 3:	The implication of the Propositions 1 and 2 taken together is that a person comes to take the perspective of the objects they own to gain a view of who they are through the symbolic meanings of their possessions.
Proposition 4:	People can understand and evaluate others in terms of their material possessions. In this way, the identity of other people becomes visible in objectified form, as well as one's own.
Proposition 5:	Meanings of material objects are established through social processes. The socially constituted and socially shared meanings of possessions as symbols of identity reflect social power relationships.

We should underline certain important points in these arguments. First of all, symbolic-communicational model departs from the usual assumption (largely prevalent in the field of consumer research and advertising) that objects one owns are mere responses, “in the sense that individuals choose a constellation of material symbols that is consistent with an already developed and static set of attitudes, values and beliefs” (Dittmar 1992, 91). Rather, from this perspective, objects are constitutive and integral components of identity that have active roles in its construction, preservation and transformation. As argued by Solomon, objects serve as ‘social stimuli’ in the sense that they influence the process of identity construction from the outside in (1983). He states that objects are used to

communicate identity to others, after they are used by their owners to define who they are to themselves.

Secondly, it is argued in *Proposition 3* in Table 3.2 that while we internalize the socially shared meanings of objects, we start to evaluate our identity on the basis of the meanings of our material possessions, without requiring the physical presence of other people (Dittmar 1992). Here, it is important to emphasize that in the process of evaluating ourselves, we consider objects in ‘complementary sets or constellations’, rather than as a single object in isolation (Kleine, Kleine and Kernan, 1993; Belk 1988; Dittmar 1992). According to Kleine, Kleine and Kernan, a specific object contributes to the total sense of identity as part of a cluster of objects that complement one another, by how it reinforces or disturbs the sense of identity created by the total ensemble of object one owns.

Finally, we should note that symbolic-communicational model acknowledges the fact that socially shared meanings of objects as symbols of identity are continuously produced, reproduced and represented not only in direct social interaction but also through social institutions - such as schools or mass media. According to Dittmar, amongst the variety of available shared representations, some are more prevalent and dominant than others (1992). Thus, although socially shared meanings of objects are appropriated, reproduced and transformed by individuals in the processes of possession and consumption, certain social institutions have dominance in the production and reproduction of these meanings. We will have a more detailed discussion on this point later.

3.3.4 Semiological Perspective

While conceptualizing objects as ‘symbolic mediators of identity’, symbolic-communicational model based on social constructionist perspective acknowledges that identity related meanings of objects form socially shared meaning systems, by the mediation of which people construct and communicate aspects of their identity. However, rather than these meaning systems and their structure, symbolic-communicational model focuses on the relationship between a certain object or a

cluster of objects and the identity of their owner. Although this model provides us with a useful framework for understanding this relationship, we should locate the object and its identity related meanings within a larger system of meanings in order to make the analysis complete.

At this point, a distinction made by Roland Barthes can be illuminating for our discussion. In his essay *Semantics of the Object*, while Barthes states his aim as offering an account on “the way in which objects can signify in the contemporary world”, he emphasizes the difference between ‘signification’ and ‘communication’ as follows:

...to signify means that objects carry not only information, in which case they would communicate, but also constitute **structured systems of signs**, i.e., essentially systems of differences, of oppositions and of contrasts [emphasis mine] (1994, 180).

Based on this definition, we can say that although symbolic-communicational model deals with how objects communicate aspects of their owner’s identity, it fails to comprehend how it signifies within a structured system of signs. In order to analyze this system, which he calls the “system of objects-as-signs”, Barthes adopts a semiological perspective and extends it into the field of objects in his studies (1994, 182; 1993).

“The study of signs and the way they work” was initiated at the beginning of the twentieth century mainly by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American Philosopher Charles Saunders Peirce (Fiske 1990, Berger 1991). This area of study was named ‘semiology’ by Saussure and ‘semiotics’ by Peirce, who commenced their studies unaware of each other at that time. Barthes conception of object as sign is mainly based on works of Saussure who is also the founder of the structuralist perspective. According to this perspective, all cultural forms can be identified as systems of signification that are structured as language. For structuralist semioticians, “what matters most are the underlying structures and rules of a semiotic system as a whole rather than specific performances or practices which are merely instances of its use” (Chandler 1994). This idea was later

problematized by poststructuralists who argued that there are “no fundamental 'deep structures' underlying forms in an external world” and socio-semioticians who were concerned with the use of signs in specific socio-cultural contexts rather than internal relations of them within structured systems (Chandler 1994). Nevertheless, we can say that Saussure’s theory of signs has been highly influential in the development of contemporary semiotics both through its adaptations and its criticisms.

A sign, in the most general sense, can be defined as “something physical, perceivable by our senses; it refers to something other than itself; and depends upon a recognition by its users that it is a sign” (Fiske 1990, 41). Saussure identifies it as consisting of a 'signifier' which is the “sign’s image as we perceive it”, and the 'signified' which is “the mental concept to which it refers” (Fiske 1990, 44). According to him, a sign gains meaning in its relationships with the other sign in a system of signification. These relationships are structured in two intersecting axes, namely paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes.

Paradigmatic axis, which is the axis of selection and substitution, refers to a set of signs from which the one to be used in a specific context is selected (Fiske 1990, 56). This set is determined by characteristics shared by all its members: they can fulfill same function and they are “structurally replaceable” within a given context (Chandler 1994). However, each unit should be significantly different from others in the paradigm and its meaning is derived from this difference. On the other hand, syntagmatic axis refers to possible ways of combining signs selected from different paradigms. For instance, a sentence is a syntagm of words which are chosen from grammatical paradigms of nouns or verbs. There are implicit or explicit rules and conventions that organize the combination of signs in the syntagmatic axis. In language, these are called syntax or grammar.

Syntagms and paradigms form the structural context within which signs make sense (Chandler 1994). Accordingly, a structural analysis of a sign should include two kinds of relationship by which the meaning of a sign is determined:

1. its relationship with other signs with which it is combined on the syntagmatic axis,
2. its difference from others signs which are not selected on the paradigmatic axis.

Gottdiener states that this kind of structural analysis could be applied to “all aspects of culture, such as fashion, architecture, cuisine and so on”, since these are also structured as language (1995, 8). Elaborating Saussure’s arguments, Barthes extends syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis into various systems of signification some examples of which can be seen in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis of various systems of signification, Modified (Source: Barthes 1968, 63).

	Paradigm	Syntagm
Garment System	Set of pieces, parts or details which cannot be worn at the same time on the same part of the body, and whose variations correspond to a change in the meaning of the clothing: toque - bonnet - hood, etc.	Juxtaposition in the same type of dress of different elements: skirt - blouse - jacket.
Food System	Sets of foodstuff which have affinities or differences, within which one chooses a dish in view of a certain meaning: the types of entrée, roast or sweet.	Real sequences of dishes chosen during a meal: this is the menu.
	A restaurant ‘menu’ actualizes both planes: the horizontal reading of the entrées, for instance, corresponds to the system (paradigm); the vertical reading of the menu corresponds to the syntagm.	
Furniture System	Set of the ‘stylistic’ varieties of a single piece of furniture: a bed.	Juxtaposition of the different pieces of furniture in the same space: bed - wardrobe - table, etc.
Architecture System	Variations in style of a single element in a building: various types of roof, balcony, hall, etc.	Sequence of the details at the level of the whole building.

Barthes states that, on the syntagmatic axis, the organization of objects - whether these are real objects organized in a space or their images brought together within the context of an advertisement - is not as complicated as in language. They are linked by a particular form of connection that is 'parataxis', which is "the pure and simple juxtaposition of elements" (Barthes 1994, 187). Barthes gives the following example of advertisement image:

Here is the man who reads in the evening: there are in this image four or five signifying objects which combine to put across a single total meaning, that of relaxation, of repose: there is the lamp, there is the comfort of the heavy wool sweater, there is the leather armchair, there is the newspaper; the newspaper is not a book; it is not so serious, it is a diversion...(1994, 187).

In this image, the meaning of 'relaxation' is tried to be created by a simple juxtaposition of certain objects. Each object gains its specific meaning by its relationship with other objects within this syntagm. In this example, Barthes also refers to the paradigmatic axis, mentioning that the newspaper contributes to the total meaning of 'relaxation' through its difference from a book, which may carry the connotation of "doing something serious".

Barthes' conception of object as a part of "system of objects-as-signs" was adopted and carried to an extreme by Jean Baudrillard who argues that, in the contemporary world, we consume signs rather than objects. In his book *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, Baudrillard states that sign-object no longer gains its meaning in its symbolic relationship with the subject or its functional relationship to the world (1981). It gains its meaning "in its differential relation" to other objects located within a hierarchical code of significations (Baudrillard 1981, 67). The object becomes a sign-object when it is released from all its functional, commercial and symbolic determinations. It is released from functional logic of use value, economic logic of exchange value and logic of symbolic exchange to assume sign-value operating within the logic of difference and status (see Table 3.4.).

Table 3.4 Table demonstrating Baudrillard’s logics of use value, exchange value, symbolic exchange and sign value, Modified (Source: Timur 2002, 74).

	Logic of	Logic of	Status of the Object
Functional Logic of Use Value	Practical Operations	Utility	Instrument
Economic Logic of Exchange Value	Equivalence	Market	Commodity
Logic of Symbolic Exchange	Ambivalence	Gift	Symbol
Logic of Sign Value	Difference	Status	Sign

According to Baudrillard, in the contemporary world, object “is nothing but the different types of relations and significations that converge, contradict themselves, and twist around it” (1981, 63). It is nothing but a sign. Rather than consuming objects as such, people manipulate them as signs that signify their difference from others and their affiliation to a particular social group or category (Baudrillard 1998). While the meaning of the object arises only within a system of differences, this system is employed by people to construct and communicate aspects of their identity that is also based on the logic of differentiation and integration.

Baudrillard’s conception of sign-object is closely linked to the postmodern notion of identity as a free play of signs. Borrowing from Kellner, we have previously argued that postmodern individual sees identity as a role-play and an image construction, as a play of freely chosen, multiple and shifting identities mediated mainly by appearances, images and objects (Kellner 1992). These mediating objects are sign-objects that are detached from all their material determinants as well as from any fixed meaning or reference, as argued by poststructuralist and postmodern perspectives.

On the other hand, approaching the subject matter from a socio-semiotic perspective, Gottdiener sees Baudrillard’s argument about sign-object as a “radical reductionism” (Gottdiener 1995, 178; Timur 2002, 75). According to him, although

“the interplay of sign value” dominates the cultural logic of postmodernity, this process still depends on the manipulation of ‘real’ material objects in the context of everyday life. As he argues:

The process by which cultural hegemony is expressed as the reduction of all objects to sign value does not eliminate either the practices of daily life, which are based on use value, or the system of capital accumulation, which relies on exchange value. Rather, cultural hegemony is characterized best by the way use values and exchange values are exploited by the postmodern culture of consumption which privileges the image over substance (Gottdiener 1995, 48-49).

According to Gottdiener, in the contemporary world, object is not reduced to a mere sign value. Rather, sign function becomes more and more dominating and exploiting all other functions of the object (Gottdiener 1995). Adopting this perspective in our study, we consider object both as an object of use having a material relationship with its owner within the context of everyday life and also as a sign-object within a system of signification structured by the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes.

Conceptualizing object as sign and exploring its meanings within a system of signification brings the basic assumption that object refers to something other than its materiality. In this study, we are particularly interested in object meanings that refer to some aspects of owner’s personal or social identity. When talking about symbolic-communicational model, we have mentioned that a specific object contributes to the total sense of identity of its owner not in isolation, but as a part of complementary sets of objects s/he owns. Informed by the semiological perspective, we can say that, these ‘complementary sets or constellations’ form the syntagm within which the identity related meaning of each object is determined in its relationship with others. A specific watch together with a certain mobile phone and a certain brand of car identifies its owner as a certain sort of person. Moreover, that watch gains its specific meaning and contributes to the owner’s identity by its difference from the other watches within the same paradigm, which are not chosen.

As we discussed before, symbolic-communicational model provides us with a useful framework for understanding the relationship between the meaning of the object and the identity of its owner. We also argued that, this relationship is partly determined by that object's relation with other objects owned and its difference from the objects that are not owned. In other words, the object gains its identity related meanings through its place within a system of signification. Consequently, while exploring the role of objects in the construction, preservation and communication of one's identity, we should also look from a semiological perspective and locate identity related meanings of objects within a larger system of objects-as-signs.

3.4 From Objects to Designed Products

We have previously identified the relationship between people and objects as a process by which objects assume meanings and people construct their identities. Now, it is time to locate this relationship within the dynamics of contemporary societies, which are referred as postindustrial or mass consumer societies, the societies of the media or the societies of the spectacle, to emphasize their diverse aspects. According to Jameson, contemporary societies are socially and culturally dominated by the social order of late capitalism (1983). Baudrillard identifies this dominant social order as the one in which consumption has become the general social logic and relations turned out to be more with and through objects rather than other people (1981).

In the contemporary societies of pervasive commodification and image production, consumption has become the dominant form of relationship between people and objects, which are produced, distributed and consumed in masses. Our object of study is constituted by these objects that are designed and advertised within the dynamics of industrial production and mass consumption. We will refer to them as 'designed products' or 'products' interchangeably, in order to differentiate them from the more general category of objects.

When particularly exploring the relationship between the consumer - as the subject of mass consumer society - and designed product, we can identify two diverging perspectives forming the main poles of the debate. The first one is the 'production of consumption' perspective which is mainly based on the works of Frankfurt School theorists, mostly Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse (Du Gay et al. 1997). In their essay *Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, Adorno and Horkheimer depict a situation in which commodity logic pervaded into all realms of society and culture (1989). According to them, through the techniques of 'culture industry', culture products are produced and distributed increasingly drawing on the methods of industrial manufacturing such as extensive division of labor, standardization and rationalization. Culture industry produces various forms of culture products - movies, radio and television shows, popular music, and obviously designed products - tailored for the consumption of the masses and "to a great extent determines the nature of that consumption" (Adorno 1991, 85).

From the 'production of consumption' perspective, the relationship between the consumer and designed products is under the ideological control, domination and manipulation of the 'culture industry' and the logic of capitalist production. Culture industry designs products, images, consumers, their needs, desires and identities as a coherent system. People are deceived masses and helpless victims that passively consume what is offered to them. Their needs and desires are created and manipulated by producers, with the assistance of advertising and marketing (Du Gay et al. 1997). Meanings that a product can acquire are totally determined by industry. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, (pseudo)differentiation of products is rather a matter of classifying, organizing and labeling consumers, namely providing a range of products and associated identities that is broad enough to incorporate each and every consumer (1989). In their effort to construct and express their identities through designed products, consumers put on identities which are objectified in those products through mechanisms of design and mediated by means of advertising.

On the other pole of the debate, against this rather pessimistic account offered by 'production of consumption' perspective, we can put theorists seeing potentials of

appropriation and resistance in consumption, such as Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton. According to them, “despite the fact that so many objects are mass produced today, it is still possible to achieve some unique expression by careful selection and combination of items” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 94). Offering a parallel account and borrowing from Michel de Certeau, Du Gay et al. argue that:

Meanings attached to - or coded into - objects in the act of their initial production are never automatically folded into the psychic life of those at whom they are aimed. Meaning...is also produced by consumers through the use to which they put those objects in the practice of everyday lives. So while the ‘elements’ used may be determined in the sphere of production, how those are used – to what ends and with what effects - cannot be so easily pre-established (103).

Against the perspective that sees all meanings a product can acquire as determined by production, this view emphasizes the symbolic meanings that can be constructed at the point of interaction between the product and the consumer. Accordingly, consumers are active agents who can play a crucial role in creating their unique and ‘authentic’ identities through the activity of ‘bricolage’: “self-consciously mixing and matching any disparate elements that may be to hand” (Du Gay et al. 1997, 104). Through choosing certain products and bringing them together in certain ways, they can form a cluster of possession that uniquely reflects their identity. From this perspective, consumption is a process by which a consumer can appropriate products, symbolically work on them, negotiate and transform their meanings, and sometimes ascribe them with new meanings that can resist the intention of the producers.

This kind of symbolic resistance is pervasively seen in the practices of subcultural groups. In his book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige argues that subcultural groups resist the dominant culture and its meaning categories by means of style, through appropriating products as “signifiers in an active process of constructing oppositional identities” (Hebdige 1979; Du Gay et al. 1997, 103). He gives the example of punk subculture which appropriated ‘humble’ items such as safety pins and transformed them into symbols of group identity and

‘belongingness’ through denying their socially shared meanings as ‘banal’ everyday items.

However, when carried to its extremes, this perspective that sees a resistance potential in consumption through negotiation and transformation of product meanings can lead to an account of consumption as “inherently democratic and implicitly ‘subversive’” (Du Gay et al. 1997, 104). This account will carry the assumption that consumers are ‘self-conscious cultural experts’ whose knowledge in consumer culture gives them the ‘freedom’ to use designed products to become what they want to be and transgress established social categories (Du Gay et al. 1997, 104). In this view, freedom to choose from a wide range of products is equated with freedom to choose, construct and express one’s identity. This is a promise frequently exploited by the discourse of advertising: ‘become what you want to be’, or more charmingly ‘become what you really are’, of course, by the mediation of this specific product.

Du Gay et al. argue that this perspective disregards certain crucial points concerning mass consumer society. It leaves no room for questions of “the very different capacities available to people to access consumer goods and services, and of the constraints differently operating on the ability of individuals and groups to effectively make an object achieve a meaning radically different from that encoded in it by its producer” (Du Gay et al. 1997, 105). Most importantly, it disregards the inequality of power between producers and consumers, that is to say producers dominate socially shared meanings of products. Producers inscribe products with dominant meanings through the mediation of design, advertising, fashion system, and mass media. Moreover, they incorporate deviant and resisting meanings created by consumers, by exploiting their commodified, distorted and ‘overthrown’ forms in new products and their representations (Hebdige 1979). As Hebdige states, safety pins, which were once appropriated by punks as symbols of their group identity, can become jewelled accessories of fashionable clothing and appear on the pages of the women’s magazine *Cosmopolitan*.

Informed by these two extreme poles of the debate, and acknowledging their appropriateness for certain contexts and particular products, in this study, we are adopting the view that product meanings are constructed, reproduced, negotiated, and transformed at all stages of the product life cycle. Hebdige determines three main moments that a product passes through its life cycle (1988, 80):

- **design / production,**
- **mediation:** advertising, marketing, promotion, the construction of images and markets, the conditioning of public response,
- **consumption / use.**

According to him, for a comprehensive analysis, all these three moments and the transformation of the product as it passes through them should be embraced. He argues that if excessive prominence is given to one of these - like it is done in the aforementioned perspectives - that moment starts to be seen as the determining instance which dictates the meaning of a product in every other context. If the determining instance is regarded as production, then the result is the aphorism “masses consuming in masses”; for mediation it becomes “desire is a function of the advertising image”; and if consumption is taken as determining, the aphorism is “people remaining human and authentic, untouched by the appeal of either images or objects” (Hebdige 1988, 81). None of these models is sufficient by itself. All kinds of meanings that are generated as the object passes through these interrelated moments of production/design, mediation and consumption/use should be taken into consideration for a complete analysis (Hebdige 1988, 81).

In this study, we aim to explore the identity related meanings created through the processes of design and advertising. Thus, we will mainly focus on the moments of production and mediation. However, we also acknowledge the fact that these moments do not dictate the whole range of meanings that the product can acquire through its life cycle. Consumers can appropriate certain products, confer alternative meanings upon them and associate them with certain identities at the moment of consumption. We also acknowledge the possibility of a more ‘authentic’ relationship between the consumer and the designed product, and very personal meanings can be invested in the product as a result of this relationship.

Moreover, although the meanings of objects as symbols of identity are socially shared and certain institutions dominate these meanings; in the final analysis, they are realized at the subjective level, at the moment of individual experience of the consumer with the product or its representation.

On the other hand, we also acknowledge that although all three moments have certain roles in the construction of identity related meanings of products, they are rarely equal in terms of power. Even though production and mediation moments do not dictate all the meanings of products as symbols of identity, they dominate these meanings. Thus, product design and advertising, as the main agents in these moments, play central roles in the process of ascribing products with dominant meanings and associating them with certain identities.

CHAPTER 4

PRODUCT IDENTITY AND DESIGN

4.1 Product Design and Advertising as Agents of Meaning Transfer

While constructing product meanings and associating them with certain identities, design and advertising work as part of a more extensive system through which product meanings are ‘industrially’ manufactured at all points of production and mediation. Andrew Wernick terms this process of “industrial manufacture of meaning” as ‘artificial semiosis’, implicitly differentiating it from a more ‘authentic’ process of meaning creation by the consumer (1991, 15). According to him, artificial semiosis, in other words ‘commodity imaging’, takes two main forms. On one hand, we have ‘promotional sign’ created not only through advertising but also through other sign systems - such as branding, packaging, displays, supportive media - that are exterior to the product and systematically manufacture meanings around it. On the other hand, we see ‘commodity-sign’, constituted by the product itself together with all the meanings ascribed to it. It functions both as an object-to-be-sold and as a carrier of promotional message: advertiser of itself and of others associated with it through links such as brand or style (Wernick 1991).

Commodity-sign is produced by the integrated efforts of design and advertising. Design is not only a form giving but also a meaning giving activity. While shaping product’s materiality, it also takes part in shaping meanings that the product will carry, which will together form the ‘commodity-sign’. On the other hand, advertising appropriates this ‘commodity-sign’ - both the formal qualities of the product and the meanings ascribed to it by design - and locates it within the context of advertisement message. As Wernick states, “Advertising transfers meanings on to a product from the outside, through repeated imagistic associations. Through

design, on the other hand, that same signification is stamped on to its materiality (1991, 15).”

Offering a parallel account, McCracken conceptualizes product design and advertising as two important agents of meaning transfer to products (1988; 1986). He locates this process within a theoretical framework in which he examines the movement of product meanings. According to McCracken, cultural meanings are constantly in transit, flowing continually between several sites of the social world (1986). He identifies three main locations in which cultural meanings reside: the culturally constituted world, consumer goods (products) and the individual consumer; and two points of meaning transfer: world to goods and goods to individual. This framework can be summarized as in Figure 4.1.

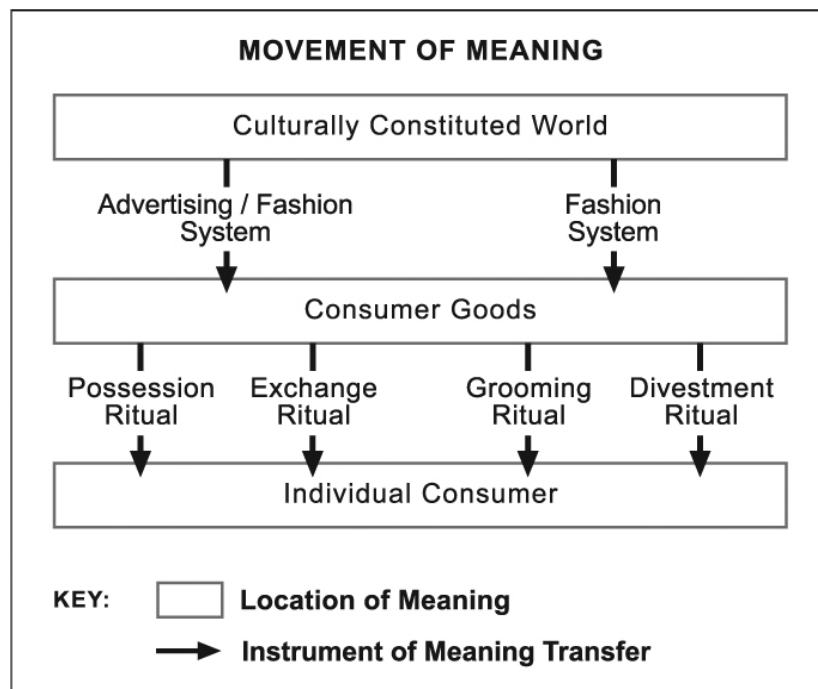


Figure 4.1 Structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods (Source: McCracken 1986, 72).

Culturally constituted world is the original location of all cultural meanings. According to McCracken, culture constitutes the ‘phenomenal’ world both as the

'lens' through which the individual sees the world, which determines how it will be "apprehended and assimilated"; and as the 'blueprint' which coordinates how the world will be shaped by human activity (1986, 72). Culture is structured by socially shared meaning systems which consist of cultural categories and cultural principles. Cultural categories are the main distinctions that are used by a culture to divide up and organize the phenomenal world, like the distinctions of race, gender, class, age, and occupation which refer to categories of social identity. Cultural principles are "the ideas or values that determine how cultural phenomena are organized, evaluated, and construed" (McCracken 1986, 73). They are the organizing ideas according to which cultural categories are constructed.

According to McCracken's framework, at the first point of meaning transfer, cultural meanings are 'unhooked' from the culturally constituted world and transferred to consumer goods by means of advertising and the fashion system. When advertising brings the products and "a representation of the culturally constituted world together within the frame of a particular advertisement", it calls the consumer to attribute the meanings that reside in that representation to the product (McCracken 1986, 74). Fashion system, on the other hand, serves to systematically transfer these meanings to the product through a more complicated process by various agents. According to McCracken, these agents exist in two main categories:

1. **product designers** who try to 'convince' the consumer - by the medium of the product's materiality - that the product possesses certain meanings,
2. **fashion journalists**, and **social observers** including journalists, academics and market researchers who study, document and disseminate new social developments.

In the process of meaning transfer, while these agents objectify cultural meanings in the products, they also confirm and reproduce the dominant cultural categories and cultural principles of the society. As McCracken argues:

Goods substantiate both categories and principles and therefore enter into the culturally constituted world as both the object and

objectification of this world..., goods are both the creations and the creators of the culturally constituted world (1986, 74).

Since personal and social identities are structured by these cultural categories and principles, through this process, they are also objectified in the products in order to be transferred to individual consumers at the second point of meaning transfer.

At the second point of transfer, certain 'consumer rituals' serve to transfer the meanings that are now resident in products to the individual consumer. McCracken identifies four types of rituals by which consumers extract meanings contained in products (1986). While certain products are presented to others as gifts by means of 'exchange rituals', the meanings that reside in those gifts are also tried to be transferred to the receiver. Through 'possession rituals' such as personalizing or displaying products, the consumer claims product as his/her own possession. By this way, s/he also claims the possession of the meanings that are ascribed to the product. 'Grooming rituals' are used to draw meaning out of products on a repeated basis, especially when they are of a perishable nature. Certain amount of time, energy and patience should be invested into products in order to heighten and extract their meaningful properties. For instance, when we devote some amount of time to clean, polish and maintain our automobile, we also polish and maintain the meanings ascribed to it by product design and advertising as a fetish object or as an 'object of desire'. Finally, 'divestment rituals' are used to "erase the meanings associated with the previous owner" when the product is taken from someone else, and to empty the meaning invested in the product by the owner when it will be given away (McCracken 1986, 80).

While this theoretical framework offered by McCracken is away from comprehending all the complexities of the process, it provides a basic model that can be detailed by concentrating on certain point in the trajectory of meaning transfer. In the rest of this study, we will mainly focus on the point of meaning transfer to products, specifically on the roles of product design (in the rest of Chapter 4) and advertising (in Chapter 5) as the agents of this process (Figure 4.2).

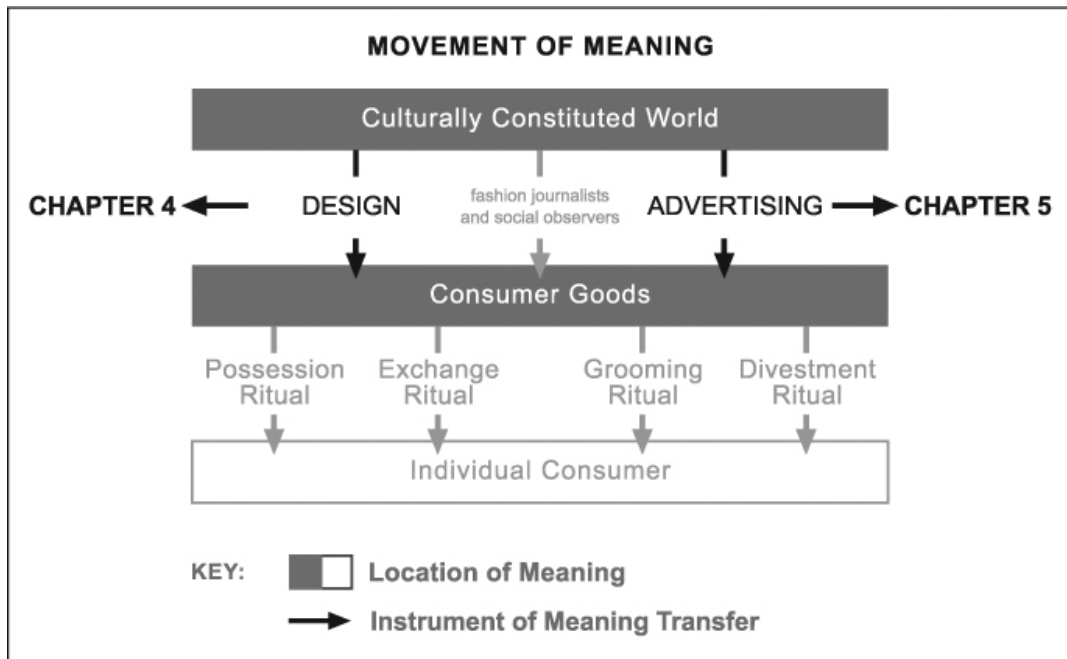


Figure 4.2 Revised version of structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods (Source: McCracken 1986, 72).

4.2 What is Product Identity?

In understanding the concept of ‘product identity’, a good starting point would be the key terms and dimensions derived from our previous discussion on identity in a more general sense. The notion of identity in the context of designed product can be handled in terms of ‘differentiation’ and ‘integration’ dimensions. We can identify product identity as a unique balance between differentiation from other products through individual features and characteristics on the one hand, and integration with certain groups of products according to various parameters on the other.

Pointing rather to the integration dimension, Kurtuluş states that product identity is constructed by several overlapping elements and their interaction (1999). He discusses these elements in three basic layers:

1. national and cultural
2. corporate and brand
3. designer or design team

National and cultural layer concerns national dynamics of design-production-consumption, historical and cultural context of products, effects of political, economical and technological environment. At the layer of corporation, corporate culture, structure and strategy, technological capabilities and production techniques and particularly brand identity is considered. Final layer is formed by the identity of the designer or the design team inscribed onto the product both through their design approach and as a signature.

In addition to these layers and interwoven with them, we can consider product category as constructing the primary identity of a product. Style, which can stem from any of the aforementioned layers as well as others, forms another important dimension in defining product identity. However, what is central in the context of our study is the dimension of product identity that is associated with the identity of the ‘would-be-consumer’: i.e. the identity of the product as ‘a product that is preferred and consumed by certain sort of people’. In the next section, we will examine the ways in which these associations are constructed through product design.

4.3 Design as a Process of Constructing ‘Product Identity’

4.3.1 Semantic Profiling

According to Athavankar, identity of a product is embedded in the product form as a set of visual clues and features (1997; 1990). In a visual encounter with the product, these visual clues “trigger mental search that inevitably activates a class of similar examples that we have earlier coded, structured and labeled with a lexical term” (Athavankar 1990, d2). For instance, in order to recognize a new product as a ‘telephone’, we should make a connection with an already formed mental concept labeled as ‘telephone’. This process of accessing the meaning of a new input through assimilating it in a more general form is called ‘categorization’. Through activating the ‘links’ to already formed notions of object categories and abstract concepts, visual clues enable us to recognize the product identity and access its meanings.

Athavankar identifies these clues as ‘visual semantic devices’ since they serve semantic functions (1990, d3). Designers utilize visual semantic devices in order to construct the identity of the product and communicate certain meanings. As Athavankar argues:

To ‘design the appearance of an object’ or to ‘create visual statement’ is to carefully build a system of links that are then decoded by the observer. In design, this is achieved by borrowing and gently transforming the visual clues and attributes from external sources – and hoping that the meaning will be transferred by these links. (1997, 71)

Product identity is created by this system of links, which connect product to external sources and transfer meanings from them by means of borrowed semantic devices. These links can be broadly classified in two categories as primary links and secondary links.

Primary Links

Athavankar states that our mental concepts about products always appear to be nested and structured based on classification and hierarchical relations (1990). In order to understand the taxonomic relationship between products, he finds it useful to spatialize its structure as illustrated in Figure 4.3.

In this example, superordinate level, which consists of the category of wood working tools, is partitioned into lower layer concepts at the basic level. Each of the basic level concepts of object categories - plane, saw, hammer - are further partitioned into subordinate level concepts, which are composed of specific real world examples. In this hierarchically arranged “three-tier tree structure”, a real world example of fret saw must reflect all ‘fretsawness’, ‘sawness and ‘woodtoolness’ through its form (Athavankar 1990, d16). A product may belong to two superordinate categories. This can be read in the lexical label used to refer to it. Athavankar gives the example of ‘photo studio light’, which declares simultaneous membership to the superordinate categories of ‘focused lighting devices’ and ‘photo-studio equipment’ at the same time.

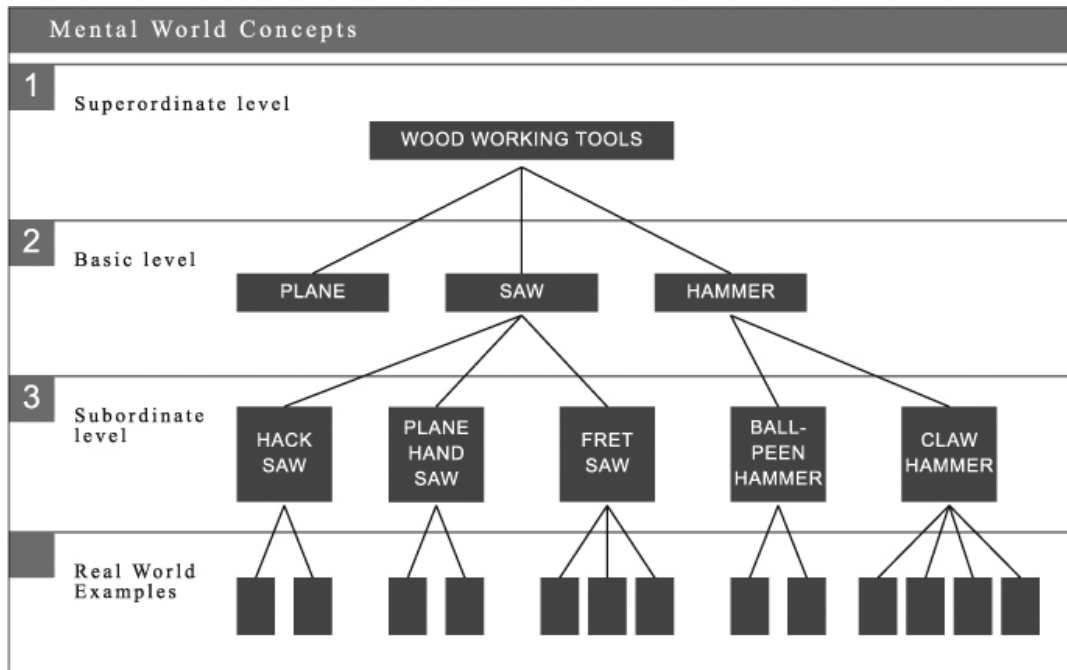


Figure 4.3 Taxonomic structure of nested human concepts; Modified (Source: Athavankar 1990, d17)

Primary links connect a product to its initial object category as well as to superordinate level concepts. To construct a product identity that claims belongingness to a certain product category, designer borrows semantic devices from other real world examples of that product category as well as from the visual clues that are already associated with the whole superordinate semantic space.

Secondary Links

While primary links ensure that the product is recognized as belonging to its principal object category and its superordinate, most products - especially the ones designed for contemporary competitive market - present a compound semantic statement which communicates more than their primary category identity (Athavankar 1990). In addition to instrumental considerations, the need to differentiate a product from many others in the market requires high degree of responsiveness to factors such as consumer identity, attitude, social class, demands of the environment or specific occasions. This responsiveness, which is particularly

central in personal products, requires the product form to carry visual clues that establish secondary links with multiple concepts outside the primary category. Athavankar states that a product gains its unique identity through the compound visual statement constructed by “a system of primary links that reveal the category identity and of secondary links that reveal the symbolic values” (Athavankar 1990, d29).

Secondary links connect the product to a certain culture, period, style, consumer identity, environment, activity, or brand through employing visual clues associated with these and “consciously assimilating them with the expression of primary categories” (Athavankar 1990, d24). For instance, the form of a ‘sports shoe’ should communicate connections with the mental concept of ‘shoeness’ as well as ‘sports thingness’. Athavankar states that this should not be a superficial imposition of visual clues associated with ‘sports thingness’ upon primary category of ‘shoes’. The product form will obviously be influenced by the functional requirements of sports activity through flexible body, non-slip texture and softer soles. However, certain visual clues can also be incorporated into design as ‘non-functional’ devices; or more appropriately their main function can be to communicate links with the category of ‘sports things’ (Athavankar 1990). The mental concept of ‘sports thingness’ can be represented as a superordinate category organized in a taxonomic structure consisting of ‘sport shoes’ as well as other sports related products, sports gear and game equipment. To communicate a connection with ‘sports thingness’, besides the existing examples of ‘sport shoes’, designer can borrow semantic devices from other sports related products and typical visual clues associated with the general concept of ‘sports thingness’, such as “colour lines, bands, checks, stripes, netting, borders, patches, bold stitch marks, colour monograms, large buttons, zips, stripes laces, soft surfaces, bold stickers or a pallet of colours” (Athavankar 1990, d25).

Secondary links can connect products not only to other products but to abstract concepts such as ‘professionalness’ as well. In addition to the links within the taxonomic structure of product concepts, links “extending to other spaces outside” can be seen as sources of semantic devices (Athavankar 1990, d23). Although

Athavankar does not give a clear-cut definition of what he refers by “links extending to other spaces outside”, this concept can be interpreted in the light of the aforementioned idea of ‘culturally constituted world’.

As we discussed before, culturally constituted world is structured by systems of socially shared meanings in which we locate not only products but also ourselves, others, places, events, abstract concepts and so on. In the process of designing a product with a certain identity and conferring certain meanings upon it, visual clues can be borrowed from concrete phenomena, such as other products, images, events, activities or people that are positioned within these socially shared meaning systems. Furthermore, based on the same meaning systems, certain abstract concepts can be visually interpreted by the designer and incorporated into product form as visual clues. Athavankar exemplifies the latter strategy by the usage of waves as a pattern on a telephone device based on the widely shared interpretation of the concept ‘communication’ as waves transmitted through air (Athavankar 1990, d26).

Athavankar’s arguments regarding the designer’s intentional control of visual clues in order to construct the identity of the product and communicate certain meanings can be summarized as follows:

1. The concept as a linguistic expression
2. Identify visual clues which manifest the concept
 - a. Through products, events, activities, OR
 - b. Through visual interpretation of the concept,
3. Select potential visual clues
4. Assimilate them with product form
5. Effects
 - a. Adds a new dimension to the current way of looking at the category
 - b. Product acquires its individual identity

(Athavankar 1990, d26)

If we extend the taxonomic structure offered by Athavankar in a way that will incorporate sources of visual clues other than products - such as people, events,

activities, images and abstract concepts -, we can spatialize the whole ‘semantic networks’ of the product which will embrace the complex system of links and multiple layers of product meanings. According to Du Gay et al., a product’s ‘semantic networks’ are constructed by all the meanings associated with it (1997). Each meaning brings its own network of meanings through which the product meaning expands. To illustrate the notion of ‘semantic networks’, Du Gay et al. gives the example of the Sony Walkman and the networks of meanings that surround it, which can be spatialized as in Figure 4.4.

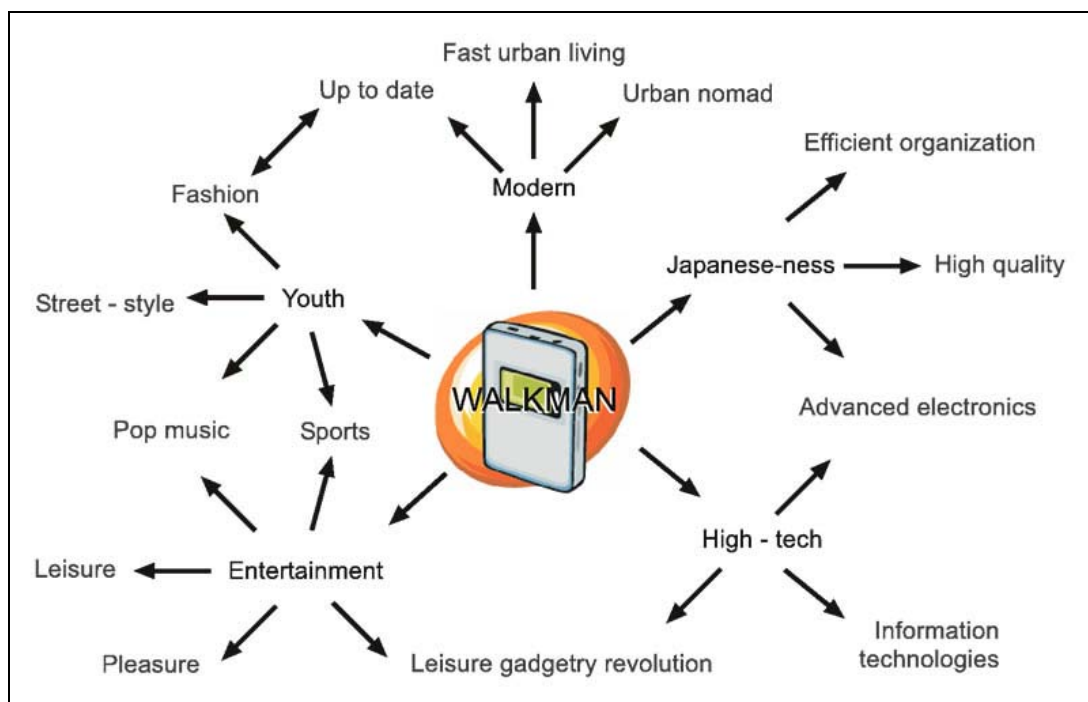


Figure 4.4 Semantic networks of the Sony Walkman.

‘Semantic networks’ of a product provide the consumer with a framework to decode multiple layers of meanings accumulated around the product. On the other hand, from the designer’s perspective, these networks point to potential sources from which visual clues and concepts can be borrowed.

What is particularly essential for our study is the part of the product's 'semantic networks' which connects it with certain consumer/user identities. Together with many others, this connection is provided by the semantic devices that are transferred through secondary links. As exemplified by Athavankar, an 'executive briefcase' is differentiated from other products in the primary category of 'briefcases' through utilizing semantic devices that link it to the notion of 'things preferred and consumed by executives' (1997). To reflect this notion,

1. visual clues can be borrowed from other products that are directly associated with 'executive identity', such as business suits, ties, laptops, leather armchairs,
2. people, events, activities, images or abstract concepts - such as high quality, elegance, prestige, and status - that are included in the 'semantic networks' of 'executive identity' can be utilized as sources of visual clues:
 - a. through borrowing from existing product examples associated with these,
 - b. by means of a direct visual interpretation of the abstract concepts by the designer.

4.3.2 Lifestyling the Product

While associating a product with certain user groups and identities through employing visual clues appropriated from their 'semantic networks', designer also constructs part of the product identity as 'a product that is preferred and consumed by certain sort of people'. At the same time, s/he addresses the 'would-be-consumer' of the product as a certain sort of person. By this way, an identification between the consumer and the product is tried to be created. While advertising is a more powerful, pervasive and explicit agent in this process, we cannot ignore the role of design in inscribing products with certain meanings with which the consumer will identify.

According to Du Gay et al., by means of 'visual look' and 'tactile feel' shaped by design process, the product communicates with the consumer about the identity of itself and of its 'would-be-consumer' (Du Gay et al. 1997, 65). Du Gay et al. consider 'lifestyling' as an important means by which identification between the consumer and the product is tried to be constructed. Besides the central role of

advertising in this process, product design contributes to lifestyling of the product in many ways. 'Lifestyling' is the process of "tailoring or customizing a product to the lifestyles of a particular niche or target market segment" (Du Gay et al. 1997, 66). In this process, lifestyle and identity differences form the basic criterion for market segmentation, and product design is tailored according to instrumental and symbolic considerations regarding these segments.

In order to demonstrate the process of lifestyling, Du Gay et al. explore the expanding variety of available models of Sony Walkman since the initial production of the first model. Although the Walkman was originally designed for and targeted to the group of 'mobile, young music listeners', later it was realized that it had an appeal for much more diverse consumer groups (Du Gay et al. 1997, 66). As an initial response, Sony changed its advertising and marketing strategy in a way that will embrace various lifestyles and identities. Later, these lifestyles and identities were carried to the design of the product by producing different models for different consumer markets. Du Gay et al. state that Walkman is now available in more than seven hundred version: "solar-powered, waterproof, and attachable to a sweatband (for racquet sports); they come designed specifically for skiing, jogging or camping; they can come with a clock and/or a radio; they are even available in gold!" (see Figure 4.5) (Du Gay et al. 1997, 67)



Figure 4.5. Various models of the Sony Walkman.

‘My First Sony’, a product range which is specifically aimed at young children, is a good example of Sony’s ‘lifestyling’ projects (Figure 4.6). In the process of designing for the ‘My First Sony’ range, designers tried to ‘translate’ the original adult model of Sony Walkman into a product suitable for children both in technical and cultural sense (Du Gay et al. 1997). For instance, technically, they utilized more durable materials to provide high quality and made sharp edges more round to avoid injuries. On the other hand, their design decisions were also effected by certain cultural considerations. They wanted to communicate an identity other than a toy, that of ‘a high quality electronic product adapted specially for kids’ (Harvey 1988). In order to communicate this identity, they borrowed semantic devices from various sources.

Certain visual clues from the original adult models of Walkman, especially from the one that communicate high quality and durability are carried to the new product. At the same time, in order to create an association with the identity of young children and appeal to this market, certain semantic devices, such as brighter primary colours, were borrowed from other products aimed at young children. By this way, ‘My First Sony’ Walkman both maintained its identity as a Sony Walkman and at the same time created association with its target market through communicating ‘child thingness’.



Figure 4.6 'My First Sony' Walkman and other products in the range.

CHAPTER 5

ADVERTISING AND IDENTITY

5.1 Basic Advertising Formats: A Historical Overview

In their book *Social Communication in Advertising*, Leiss et al. provide a comprehensive historical account of the changes in the predominant representations of person-product relationships in advertising (Leiss et al. 1988). Based on a combined semiological/content analysis of print ads in the twentieth century, they identify four main types of communicative formats which dominate certain historical periods but which are not limited to them:

1. The Product Information Format
2. The Product Image Format
3. The Personalized Format
4. The Lifestyle Format

5.1.1 The Product Information Format

In the product information format, which had been prevalent until 1920s, the product itself forms the main focus of the ad together with an emphasis on its utility and effectiveness in performing certain tasks. Leiss et al. state that the central question of the product information ad is “What does this product do?” which points to a person-product relationships based on utility (1988, 232). Usually the brand name and an image of the package are used with a text that explains the characteristics, benefits, effectiveness, price or construction of the product. Little or no explicit reference is made to the user or the context of use. Figure 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate two examples of the product information format. While the former mainly relies on text to inform the user, the later utilizes certain images to support the text in illustrating product feature and benefits.

- FOR ALL KINDS OF LEATHER -

REGAL SHOE DRESSING

Russet and Black Leather Paste not necessary

We have manufactured and retailed shoes for a quarter of a century and are cleaning and polishing thousands of pairs of shoes daily in our stores. We know the value of a good dressing also the harmful effects of poor polish. After 25 years experience we have produced the REGAL DRESSING which is guaranteed by us the BEST Dressing made.

TRAVELERS' PACKAGE
- A NEW AND DISTINCT IDEA -
May be sent safely through the mails or carried by travelers without danger of breaking. Price 15 cents large size 30 cents. Sent postpaid to any address in U.S. on receipt of price.

GLASS BOTTLES (not available) Price 10c large size 25¢.

FOR SALE ONLY IN REGAL SHOE STORES.



CLEANS · PRESERVES · POLISHES
MEN'S · WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S SHOES.

Send postal for illustrated book Care of Shoes and Fall Shoe Catalog.

L.C. BLISS & CO.
MAIL ORDER DEPT.
111 SUMMIT ST. BOSTON, MASS.

A car that Bores through the air... that Floats over bumps as if they weren't there. Get ready for the most surprising Ride of your Life!

NE... A BROUGH ROAD Time... next week. You're driving along as your old car begins to shiver the bumps. Had enough for you... pity the passengers... you apologize... can't be helped. Really a bore... you pull over. A strange car is by. You catch sight of the man in the back it is possible... he was reading a newspaper! It was an AIRFLOW DeSoto. Today, every-thing that it will be like. We cannot tell the complete story, but a few of the an-ec-dotes are here made public in advance.

The Motor Car must Catch Up
What about an air-flow car? Manufacturers have toyed with the idea... a radiator here... a fan there, but that is not true aero-dynamic design. Look what happens when the typical car of today speeds through the air...


At 60 miles an hour, it actually uses one half of its engine power fighting wind-resistance! Why has no company produced a scientifically shaped car? For one thing, it requires a tremendous investment... for research and for manufacturing. Moreover... it means a complete departure from all the traditional ideas of automobile design. DeSoto has undertaken to pioneer the way because it means the unequalled smooth and engineering facilities of Chrysler Motors. It believes that the public will not merely accept, but will enthusiastically welcome a car that is more modern, more comfortable... and safer than any low-priced car ever built.

Conquering the Air
The first problem that the pioneers of flying solved was... wind-resistance. The more could overcome it, the lighter they could their planes... the less power they would require. They studied the shapes of the fastest birds, fish, airplanes, condors... also the famous... the Gannet... the blue whale.


Study of aero-dynamic design became a fact. Today, aircraft builders have learned how "flow" every inch of a plane's surface. You the motorist. Speeds better than 300 miles an hour to coast in ten hours!

Ships, Trains Follow Suit
Only we have awakened to the fact that what would above planes apply to other forms of transport. And... they have slipped. Trans-fer models. They're building new air-flow designs throughout the world!

Five Years of Research
Work on the new AIRFLOW DeSoto began five years ago. Wind-tunnels, similar to those used by Governments and Aeronautical Laboratories were installed. Scores of models were made... thousands of drawings... then more than twelve months of grinding went into the secret models that could be found. And now it is ready... a new kind of motor car... that will start a new era in the history of road travel.


Most Sensational Ride in Thirty Years!
The diagram above shows the seating arrangement in the car of today. The back seats are directly


Ride Three in Front... in Comfort
No more "crowding up" in the front seat. The new DeSoto has a special seat. Its front seat is eight inches wider. Plenty of room for three. Yet the car seat takes up no more room on the highway!


Make a Date with a Dealer
More people will want to ride in the AIRFLOW DeSoto than in any other new car for years. Be one of the first.

COMING THE *AIRFLOW DE SOTO

Figure 5.1 (left) Advertisement of Regal Shoe Dressing (Source: Leiss et al. 1988, 281).

Figure 5.2 (right) Advertisement of The Airflow de Soto (Source: Leiss et al. 1988, 192).

5.1.2 The Product Image Format

After 1920s, a general shift in the emphasis of ads, from ‘what the product do’ to ‘what the product can mean for the consumer’ is seen. In the product image format dominant in this period, while the product preserves its centrality, its utilitarian aspects start to be subordinated by symbolic qualities referring to themes such as “status, family, health, white magic, and social authority” (Leiss et al. 1988, 279). According to Leiss et al., product is associated with certain abstract values and ideas by being situated within a symbolic context signified by “a natural or social setting such as a landscape, the workplace, the household, a cluster of artifacts of daily life, a historical moment, or a recognizable tradition or a myth” (1988, 190) (see Figure 5.3, 5.4). The central question becomes “What does it mean to use this product?”.

In the product image ad, the relationship between people and products starts to be depicted explicitly and utility is emphasized as a point of value creation replacing the product valued on its own rights. However, rather than as an actual consumer, the person is usually portrayed as a symbol of an abstract product quality or of general consumer satisfaction.



Figure 5.3 (left) Advertisement of Packard Cars (Source: Leiss et al. 1988, 195).

Figure 5.4 (right) Advertisement of Kool Cigarettes (Source: Leiss et al. 1988, 196).

5.1.3 The Personalized Format

According to Leiss et al., the personalized format dominates the scene in ads between the 1950s and 1960s (1988). In this format, the emphasis is on social interaction and the emotional relationship with the product. People are portrayed less as symbols of abstract qualities and more in explicit and direct relationship with products. The main focus of this relationship is “social admiration, pride of ownership, anxiety about lack of use, or satisfaction in consumption. People form

emotional connections with products based on “love, anxiety, pride, belonging or friendship” just like they do with other people (Leiss et al. 1988, 200). Thus, the meaning that connects the person to the product is ‘affective’ rather than utilitarian (as in the product information format) or associative (as in the product image format).



Figure 5.5 (left) Advertisement of Nice 'n Easy Haircolor (Source: Leiss et al. 1988, 206).

Figure 5.6 (right) Advertisement of Midol Medicine (Source: <http://www.adflip.com>).

“What emotional reactions are consumers supposed to experience in consumption” or “How can I become happy through consumption” become the key question addressed in the personalized ads (Leiss et al. 1988, 233). Main themes are personal testimony of emotional experience with the product and being satisfied

(see Figure 5.5); self-transformation through the consumption of the product (see Figure 5.6); product directly participating in social relationships, making them possible or complete; product 'personified' by being given human characteristics .

5.1.4 The Lifestyle Format

The period after 1960's is defined by Leiss et al. as the period of lifestyle ads aimed at highly segmented markets. Lifestyle ads portray a more balanced relationship between the person, the product and the setting through combining certain aspects of the product image and personalized formats. The product is now displayed within a social context, integrated into the scene of a social activity or a consumption style (see Figure 5.7). As Leiss et al. argue, "people, products and settings of consumption are 'harmonized' around a unified impression." without an emphasis on the act of consumption (1988, 210). The activity, mostly a leisure activity such as "entertaining, going out, holidaying, relaxing" or the consumption style provides the cue for relating the person, product and social setting (1988, 210). The concern is shifted from individual satisfaction to consumption in an appropriate setting and occasion as a member of a social group:

The product has become a totem, a representation of a clan or group that we recognize by its activities and its members' shared enjoyment of the product. The response to consumption seems to be less concerned with the nature of satisfaction than with its social meaning - the way it integrates the individual into a consumption tribe. (Leiss et al. 1988, 234)

In these ads, the central questions are "Who is the person I become in the process of consumption?", "Who are the other consumers like me?", "What does the product mean in terms of the type of person I am and how I relate to others?" (Leiss et al. 1988, 234).



Figure 5.7 Advertisement of J&B.

In all of the formats defined above, and more explicitly in the last three, we can identify a reference to meanings conferred upon products and associations with certain aspects of consumer's identity. While in the product information ad, use-related meanings stemming from instrumental aspects are central; after this period, we see an increasing emphasis on symbolic meanings. When moving towards lifestyle ads, we can also see a shift in the focus from personal identity to social identity. According to Leiss et al., in lifestyle ads, rather than the personality and characteristics of the person such as "friendly, warm, intelligent", his relationship to the group or social context such as "class, status, race, ethnicity, role relations, group membership" is at the focus (1988, 210).

Although basic advertising formats are defined by Leiss et al. in order to outline the dominant representations in certain historical periods, as we mentioned before, they are not limited to advertising practices of those periods. They can also provide us with a basic framework to approach contemporary advertisements, which are usually more complex and combined versions of original formats.

5.2 Advertising as an Agent of Meaning Transfer

Based on McCracken's framework on the movement of cultural meanings, we have previously identified advertising as one of the main agents of meaning transfer from culturally constituted world to products. At this point, we will have a detailed look in the methods utilized by advertising in order to transfer certain meanings to products and associate them with certain identities. According to McCracken, the mechanism of advertising works basically through bringing the product and a certain representation of the culturally constituted world together (1986). Meaning transfer is achieved when an association is created between these two elements and when the 'consumer/viewer' starts to endow the product with the meanings that have previously resided in those representations.

While the second element, the representation of the culturally constituted world, is to a great extent under the control and manipulation of the advertiser, the first element, the designed product, is less controllable. The product enters the context of the ad with its formal qualities and in certain colors, with certain labels and packaging which are previously determined in the process of design. Together with all these properties, it also brings with itself the meanings inscribed into its materiality by design. In order to create an association, the advertiser should employ some kind of representation of the product in the ad. Rather than a photograph, this representation can be in the form of an illustration that will highlight certain qualities and meanings while concealing others. Certainly, the advertiser can also decide not to use a visual image of the product. Even in this case, for the ad to fulfill its function, the product should somehow be represented - as a name, as a label and/or a brand - together with certain associations. However, in this study, we are specifically interested in the ads in which the product is

represented visually, thus certain product qualities and meanings are explicitly taken over from the design process.

According to McCracken, the process of transferring certain meanings to a product by means of bringing it together with a representation of the culturally constituted world consists of a series of choices (1986). Although this process is more complex than a linear path of successive decisions, for the sake of analysis, it can be summarized as follows:

1. Identifying the properties and meanings that are sought for the product,
 2. Determining where these properties and meanings reside in the culturally constituted world,
 3. Deciding how to represent the selected elements of culturally constituted world,
 4. Deciding how to represent the product in its highly 'contrived' context.
- (McCracken 1986).

Identifying the properties and meanings that are sought for the product

As the initial decision, the meanings that are wanted to be transferred upon the product should be identified with sufficient clarity. This is the moment where the interaction of product design and advertising in the construction of meanings becomes most apparent. As we discussed above, the product comes into the context of advertising together with certain meanings inscribed into its materiality by the design process. Advertiser usually tries to reinforce and emphasize these meanings through transferring very similar meanings from the culturally constituted world. While certain meanings carried by the designed product are underlined, certain other may be concealed in order to increase the clarity of the message. Sometimes, totally new sets of meanings are decided to be transferred upon the product. Moreover, rather than product design, it is usually the mechanisms of advertising that constructs explicit links with certain identities and lifestyles.

However, in any of the above cases, when the product is located within the context of advertising message, the meanings that are desired to be conferred upon the product become clearer and more dense. As Roland Barthes remarks in his article *The Rhetoric of the Image*:

..it is certain attributes of the product which *a priori* form the signifieds of the advertising message and these signifieds must be transmitted as clearly as possible...in advertising these signs are replete, formed with a view of the best possible reading: the advertising image is frank, or at least emphatic (1985, 22).

This also makes advertising a productive medium to read the meanings that the producer and the designer try to confer upon the product and the identities they try to associate with it.

Determining where these properties and meanings reside in the culturally constituted world

Secondly, the advertiser should determine the elements of culturally constituted world that can evoke the desired meanings in the advertisement. McCracken defines this process as follows:

The (creative) director (of the advertising agency) must choose from among alternatives that have been created by the network of cultural categories and principles that constitute a culture's world. The chosen alternatives will reflect those categories and principles that a director decides most closely approximate the meaning that the client seeks for the product (1986, 75).

As Leiss et al. argue in the more specific context of the product image format, these elements can be natural or social settings, a cluster of artifacts of daily life, a historical or a mythical moment and so on (1988). What are particularly interesting for our study are the examples in which

- other designed products,
- people portrayed as ideal consumers of the product, or
- certain lifestyle settings are brought together with the product in order to transfer their meanings.

For instance, the ad in Figures 5.8 portrays the advertised product with certain other products without any contextual information. Meanings that are supposed to be associated with the watch and the bag – for example being stylish and elegant - are tried to be transferred to the mobile phone. Certain visual clues, and mainly

color, are used to facilitate this transfer. The notion of style is emphasized by the slogan: “Having a style is a matter of taste...”.



Figure 5.8 Advertisement of Siemens CF62 Mobile Phone.

In the examples in Figures 5.9 and 5.10, the products are portrayed together with their ‘ideal’ consumers. However, rather than being in an actual scene of usage, both of the women seem to display themselves together with their mobile phones. The texts are referring to the ideas of having a style and expressing it: “Make a difference with your style” and “Be gorgeous with your style”. All the meanings that are associated with portrayed women - with their style and identity - are tried to be transferred to products. At the same time, these products are promising to

transfer these meanings to their ‘would-be-consumer’. These ads tell their viewer what sort of identity she can acquire by the mediation of the product advertised and call her to identify with portrayed women. The ads in Figures 5.11 and 5.12, which we will analyze in Chapter 6 in more details, try to do a similar thing, this time, in the lifestyle format. Rather than a single consumer with a style, these ads portray the product together with a group of consumers engaging in a certain activity in a social context. The emphasis is now shifted from personal identity and style to social identity and lifestyle.



Figure 5.9 (left) Advertisement of Nokia 8310 Mobile Phone.



Figure 5.10 (right) Advertisement of Sony Ericsson Z600 Mobile Phone.

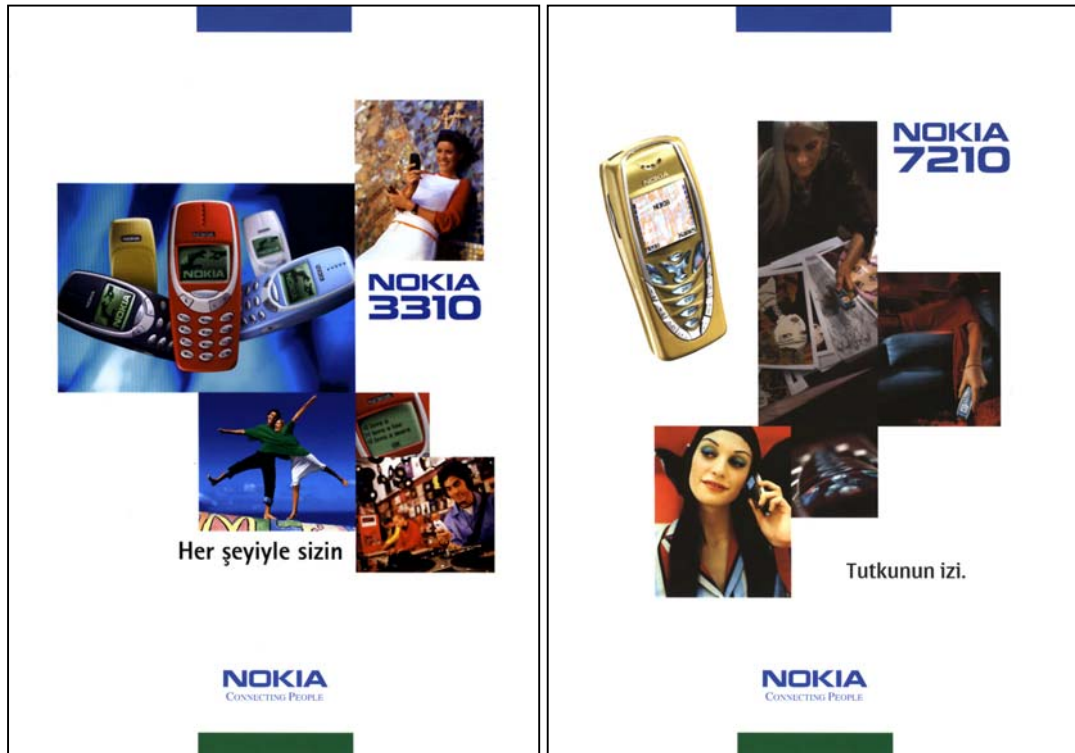


Figure 5.11 (left) Advertisement of Nokia 3310 Mobile Phone.

Figure 5.12 (right) Advertisement of Nokia 7210 Mobile Phone.

Deciding how to represent the selected elements of culturally constituted world and the product

The advertiser should also decide how to represent both the product and the selected elements of the culturally constituted word. As mentioned before, the representation of product can be in the form of a photograph, an illustration or a technical drawing according to the meaning that wanted to be taken over from the design process. The product will also be represented from certain angles that will create the desired impression. Some close-up images of the details that are wanted to be emphasized can be used. In the representation of both the product and other elements, many other visual tools and conventions can be employed. However, a detailed discussion of these is out of the scope of this study.

5.3 Identities Mediated by Advertising

The idea of advertising as an agent transferring meanings upon products from external systems of meaning is a perspective adopted by many theorists. Judith Williamson is a key figure to this debate, with her comprehensive structural analysis of the mechanisms by which meaning is created in advertisements. Her analysis has a particular significance for our study, since she deals with these mechanisms in their relationship with the process of identity construction.

In her book *Decoding Advertisements*, Williamson explores the internal organization of signs within advertisements and their relationship with external systems of meaning (1978). According to her, ads provide a structure within which product is located at the intersection of two axes of meaning transfer. On the first axis, product gains meaning in its association with elements from already exist meaning systems. On the second one, it promises to transfer this meaning to its 'would-be-consumer': signifies its consumer as a particular kind of person. Although Williamson's account shows some similarities with McCracken's framework of movement of product meanings, she adopts a semiological perspective in which the emphasis is on the system of differences within which products and people are positioned by the mechanisms of advertising.

While exploring how the structure of advertisements functions in the process of meaning transfer, Williamson underlines three crucial points (1978). First of all, this process involves a correlation between the product and certain elements from the 'external world' whose significance will be transferred to the product. She states that this correlation is not made by a line of arguments or narratives, but by the 'formal structure' of ads. Spatial composition of the ad, visual arrangement of signifiers - "what is put next to what, how certain elements are framed" - facilitates the correlation and consequently the transfer of meaning (Rose 2001, 84). Williamson also singles out the use of color in ads as one of the most subtle ways of forming a connection. However, she argues that although the 'formal structure' of the ad provides the basis of correlation, the "transference of significance does not exist as completed in the ad" (1978, 19). This is the second point underlined by

Williamson: the meaning transfer requires the ‘consumer/viewer’ to make the connection. And as the final point, she states that rather than creating meaning at the first place, ads provide a structure within which already existing significance of the selected element is transferred to the product: “a system of meaning must already exist...and this system is exterior to the ad - which simply refers to it, using one of its components as a carrier of value” (Williamson 1978, 19). Williamson identifies these already existing systems from which meaning is transferred as ‘referent systems’.

According to Williamson, the main function of an ad is to differentiate a particular product from many others in the same category. This differentiation is tried to be achieved by providing the product with an identity, which is positioned within a system of differences. However, this system of differences is not originally created by the advertisement. Rather, in order to give the product its distinctive identity, the ad appropriates structured differences pre-existing in referent systems and employs them to create differences between products. In order to demonstrate this process, Williamson gives the example of two perfume ads, which are reproduced in Figures 5.13 and 5.14. In the first example, Catherine Deneuve’s face and the Chanel bottle are brought together within the visual organization of the ad. According to Williamson, by a simple juxtaposition of these elements, the meanings attached to Catherine Deneuve in the already existing systems of meaning are transferred to ‘Chanel No.5’. Williamson describes this process as follows:

The ad is using another already existing mythological language or sign system, and appropriating a relationship that exists in that system between signifier (Catherine Deneuve) and signified (glamour, beauty) to speak of its product in terms of the same relationship; so that the perfume can be substituted for Catherine Deneuve’s face and can also be made to signify glamour and beauty (1978, 25).

By means of this correlation, advertising translates the system of meaning that we already know (the referent system) to another system (the product’s system). As we discussed before, these systems are systems of differences within which the

meaning of one element depends on what it is not. Thus, Catherine Deneuve's image has a meaning to be transferred only by its place within this system of differences, in her difference from other celebrities: that she is not, for example, Margaux Hemingway whose image is used in the second ad. Similarly, the image of Margaux Hemingway signifies novelty, activity and youthfulness and transfers these meanings to 'Babe', only in its difference from typical feminine style signified by Catherine Deneuve and others like her.

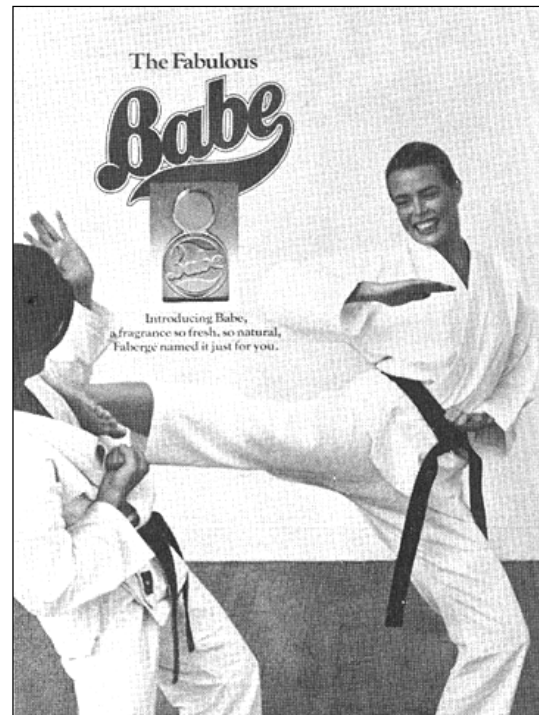


Figure 5.13 (left) Advertisement of Chanel No.5 (Source: Williamson 1978, 25).

Figure 5.14 (right) Advertisement of Babe (Source: Williamson 1978, 26).

Williamson states that advertising appropriates differences in referent systems through “a simple equation of parallel relations” such as: ‘Chanel No.5’ is not ‘Babe’ as Catherine Deneuve is not Margaux Hemingway, which can be represented as follows (Williamson 1978, 28).

Catherine Deneuve	≠	Margaux Hemingway
	↓	
Chanel No.5	≠	Babe

As we can see in this representation, the connection is initially made at the point of difference - at the 'is not' itself - and by parallel positioning of two systems of differences. However, Williamson argues that this connection, very soon, gains an independent status, at least appears to be so. By this way, the person and the product become interchangeable in terms of certain qualities and significations: Catherine Deneuve is equal to 'Chanel No.5' in term of glamour and beauty; and Margaux Hemingway is equal to 'Babe' in terms of novelty, activity and youthfulness.

Catherine Deneuve	≠	Margaux Hemingway
=		=
Chanel No.5	≠	Babe

As a result, although the initial logic of signification lies in differences, the connection between Catherine Deneuve and 'Chanel No.5' starts to appear as 'natural', as a fact which is only stated by the ad. In this process, while the meanings associated with Catherine Deneuve are transferred to 'Chanel No.5', 'Chanel No.5' gains its distinctive identity and is differentiated from 'Babe' and other products in the same product category.

Williamson states that, in the structure of the ad, the element from the referent system functions as an 'objective correlative' which already has a meaning and which acts as an intermediary in correlating that meaning and the product (1978). For instance, the face of Catherine Deneuve is employed as a correlative for glamour, beauty and elegance in the above example. 'Objective correlative' can be a celebrity as in this case. As we argued in the previous section, it can also be a person portrayed as the ideal consumer of the product, a lifestyle setting, an object or a cluster of objects. After the meaning of the correlative is transferred to the product, the product itself becomes the signifier. It becomes another correlative for that quality and meaning (Williamson 1978, 35).

According to Williamson, while the formal structure of the advertisement provides the ground, transference of meaning from the referent system to the product's system must still be made by somebody: by the 'consumer/viewer' for whom the 'objective correlative' has a meaning in the first place. That is to say, the meaning of the product is created at the point of interaction between the ad and the 'consumer/viewer', in other words the 'reader'. However, Williamson also emphasizes that "it is the structure of the advertisement itself which positions the reader such that he or she is aware of being addressed by the advertisement" and knows what kind of knowledge of the referent system is called for (Sinclair 1987, 49).

The advertisement addresses the reader by saying, "Hey, you – you know what Catherine Deneuve means, don't you? Well, this product means the same" (Williamson 1978, 44). Bringing Althusser's concept of 'interpellation' to the discussion, Williamson states that when we recognized that this hail was 'really' addresses to us, we also accept the subject position offered by the ad. Consequently, while creating meaning of a product in an advertisement, we are also created by the advertisement, or rather "we create ourselves in the advertisement" (Williamson 1978, 41). According to Williamson, we are created not only as subjects, but also as particular kinds of subjects in our relationship with the advertised product. She argues that:

Having initially derived its meaning from correlation with things or people - and it is very frequently people - which have a place in external systems or groups, a product is then made to give meaning back to us, and create a new system of groups (Williamson 1978, 45).

This is the second axis of meaning transfer, where product promises to transfer the meaning it has gained to its 'would-be-consumer'. It starts to signify its consumer as a particular kind of person. By this way, having been differentiated by its correlation with a person from the referent system, the product itself becomes the signifier of difference: "If you use Chanel No.5, you are signified as a different kind of person from someone who uses Babe" (Williamson 1978, 45).

At the intersection of two axes of meaning transfer, advertising creates meaning by associating differences between products with differences between people (Sinclair 1987). It sets up connections between certain products and certain kinds of consumers. We identify ourselves as the kind of person who will consume a certain product and differentiate ourselves from other people by this way. Williamson argues that this is a kind of ‘totemism’: “the use of difference between natural objects to differentiate between human groups” as defined by Lévi-Straus (Williamson 1978, 46). However, while Levi-Straus identifies ‘totemism’ as a relationship between two systems: one natural and the other cultural; products around which totemic groups are tried to be created are not naturally different. Rather, “their differences are given a natural status” by the mechanisms of advertising (Williamson 1978, 46). Williamson states that people do not “simply buy the product in order to become a part of the group it represents”: they must feel that they “already, naturally, belong to that group” and therefore they would buy the product (1978, 47). In this process, identification between the consumer and the product is tried to be created.

Forming an identification with a product, while the person differentiates herself from others, she also becomes integrated into a ‘totemic group’, which forms a part of her social identity. This ‘totemic group’ can be just gathered around a product and its significations – like the ‘Pepsi Generation’-, but it can also refer to broader social categories such as gender, nationality, subcultures and so on, by connections it make with referent systems. On the other hand, advertising must appeal to personal identity of the consumer as well. It must remind the person that she is special, that she is a unique individual subject with a distinctive identity. Indeed, ads work on the person’s desire for differentiation and integration at the same time: they “appeal to our specialness, yet submerge that in the totemic group of the product” (Williamson 1978, 48).

Offering a unique identity by means of the advertisement of a mass-produced product addressed to a mass of people is more complicated than offering integration with a totemic group. In order to appeal to the desire for differentiation, advertisements usually address their ‘would-be-consumer’ as already having

certain unique qualities which will be extended to the product in the act of consumption. By this way, the product will become a part of her personal identity, and more importantly become its material reflection. As Williamson states, advertising “tells us that we are unusual and special, and we must act accordingly and buy the unusual and special car” (Williamson 1978, 53).

An advertisement can address its ‘would-be-consumer’ as an individual with a consistent unique identity which will be reflected upon her choice of the product. It can also break down this individual into multiple identities which will be brought back together by the advertised product. As Williamson argues “the subject is deconstructed only to be rebuilt in a unity within the ad” (1978, 55). In this case, advertisement displays different aspects of the person’s identity all of which the product claims to represent.

Williamson’s account of the ways by which advertising endows products with certain meanings and associates them with certain identities offers some important points for our study. First of all, looking from a structural and semiological perspective, Williamson provides us with a detailed analysis of how signs are organized internally within advertisements and how they are organized externally in relation to more general systems of differences and pre-existing referent systems. While doing this, Williamson also acknowledges that meaning does not exist as completed within these structures but depends on the relationship between signs and ‘specific, concrete receivers’: ‘real’ subjects (Williamson 1978, 40).

Secondly, Williamson states that advertising gives the product its meaning by differentiating it from other products within a system of differences. According to Gillian Rose, this argument suggests an important methodological implication that “in order to analyze one (advertisement) image, or a few, it is necessary to look at the images they are constructed in contrast to, or in relation to” (2001, 87). Rose adds that how to identify these other advertisement images is a crucial question which was not explicitly answered by Williamson. However, she states that since advertising tries to create differences mainly between products which are similar, the ads for the other products within the same product category are first places to

look at (Rose 2001, 87). Williamson's comparison of two perfume advertisements, one for 'Chanel No.5' and the other for 'Babe', is a good example for this kind of analysis. Rose's argument will guide our selection of examples in the case study which we will present in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

A CASE STUDY ON MOBILE PHONES

Based on theoretical discussions in previous chapters and in order to demonstrate them with concrete examples, in this chapter we will present a case study on the selected product group: mobile phones. This will be an ‘instrumental case study’ rather than an ‘intrinsic’ one. Stake differentiates between two as, while in ‘intrinsic case study’ the main focus is on the case in its particularity and the aim is to gain better understanding of this specific case; in ‘instrumental case study’ the selected case is of secondary interest (1995). As Stake argues, “it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else” (1995, 437). In ‘instrumental case study’, a particular case is examined “mainly to provide insight into an issue” (Stake 1995, 437). However, we should especially note that the study we will present here does not aim to draw generalizations, which can also be the purpose of this type of case studies. Rather, our main aim is to illustrate and exemplify theoretical frameworks discussed throughout the thesis.

Our primary concern is the richness of the case for illustrative purposes rather than its potential for generalization. Consequently, we decided to work on an ‘extreme’ and ‘intense’ case that will explicitly and boldly manifest the properties and processes we have discussed so far (Creswell 1998, 119). Our selection of ‘mobile phones’ is based on several interrelated criteria, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Product differentiation is a prominent concern within this product category.
2. The mobile phone can be identified as a personal product.
3. There is an emphasis on ‘identity’ both as a design concern and as an important part of the advertising discourse for this product category.

Today's highly competitive market is full of products that are very similar in terms of technology and functionality. We have previously discussed that in this market, the need to differentiate a product among many others appears as an important concern for manufacturers. Industrial design and advertising are seen as important means by which this differentiation is created through the associations made with certain identities, cultures, periods and styles. Indeed, Williamson identifies the main function of advertising as differentiating a particular product from others in the same category by providing it with a distinctive identity. She also adds that this need is mostly prominent in the product categories where there is very little 'real' difference between products (1978, 24). Although there are more extreme examples for this kind of products such as "detergents, margarines, paper towels" as stated by Williamson, 'mobile phones' can also be identified as a product category in which differentiation is an essential concern. This concern is reflected in its design as well as in its advertisements. Consequently, we can see that rather than technological and functional properties that are similar in many models and brands, associations with certain consumer identity and lifestyles seem to determine design decisions and the discourse of advertisements in this product category.

Secondly and as a factor that increase the concern for product differentiation, the mobile phone can be defined as a personal product which requires high degree of responsiveness to factors such as consumer identities, attitudes and lifestyles. Moreover, it is a portable product that is carried together with the person most of the time and that can easily be displayed to others in many occasions. Hence, like the clothes we wear and the accessories we put on, the mobile phone we use becomes highly associated with our style and identity. Not only is it seen by us as a part of our identity and as its material expression, but this idea is commonly emphasized in its design and advertisements as well. This emphasis on 'identity', both as a design concern and as an advertising discourse, forms the third reason for our selection of mobile phones as the product category to be studied.

6.1 The Meanings of Mobile Phones as a Product Category

In the last decade, mobile phones have become indispensable personal devices of our everyday lives around which many of us restructured our daily routines and personal habits. According to Townsend, mobile phones have led to “fundamental transformations in individuals’ perceptions of self and the world, and consequently the way those individuals collectively construct that world” (2000, 85). He mentions that while the telephone was essentially a spatial technology allowing communication at a distance, the mobile phone has improved this communication capability by freeing it from a fixed location. Offering a parallel account, Geser identifies the main significance of the mobile phone as its capability of “empowering people to engage in communication, which is at the same time free from the constraints of physical proximity and spatial immobility” (2002).

The freedom that the mobile phone gives people by providing means to overcome spatial constraints seems to form an important part of its socially shared meanings as a product category. Based on symbolic-communicational model, these can be identified as use-related meanings stemming from the activities that the mobile phone makes possible (Dittmar 1992). While the mobile phone has provided mobility and connection to other people at the same time, it has also come to symbolize these activities and signify its owner as capable, in control, and free to engage in these activities. The commonly accepted name of the device, ‘mobile phone’, is an important reflection of these use-related meanings. According to Townsend, the change from the name ‘cellular phone’, which is derived from the “geometric structure of antenna grid that links these devices into terrestrial telephone system”, to the term ‘mobile phone’ shows an essential change in its cultural meanings (2000, 93). He argues that, this is also a change in the emphasis from the functionality and usefulness of the supporting infrastructure to the usefulness of device itself: its **‘mobility’**. The name ‘mobile phone’ reflects and reinforces the product’s identity as a mobile, tiny, smart device freeing people from spatial constraints. We can also read the same connotations in the Turkish term ‘cep telefonu’ which can be translated as ‘pocket phone’. On the one hand, this term points to the small size of the device, that it is lightweight and pocket-sized.

On the other, it points to its portability, that it can be carried in the pocket: it is a phone that can be used when mobile.

Another use-related meaning that dominates the identity of the mobile phone stems from its function as a communication device: as a device “connecting people” as put forward in the well known slogan of Nokia. Townsend states that an important promise of the mobile phone, which is most explicitly stated in its advertisements, is making it possible to keep in touch with your social network, sustain your ties with friends and family by eliminating spatial constraints (2000). Together with new technological developments, for instance with the introduction of mobile phones with digital cameras that allow people to take photographs or videos and send them to others immediately, this notion of ‘connectedness to other people’ gains an even bigger emphasis. New generation mobile phones promise to make it possible for their users to be in many different places at the same time, as exemplified by the advertisement in Figure 6.1. You can have a romantic dinner with a beautiful woman and at the same time enjoy a ‘manly entertainment’ with your friends. You “don’t miss any moment!”, as the text reads, if you have this certain model of mobile phone.

Of course, it is hard to isolate use-related meanings that are underlined in this advertisement from symbolic ones referring more directly to the identity of the ‘would-be-consumer’. These symbolic meanings include both categorical ones which point to social identity and self-expressive ones which point to personal identity. We can easily note that this advertisement positions and addresses the ‘consumer/viewer’ as a male. Moreover, it addresses him as a certain kind of man who, for instance, has many close friends and who can go out with a ‘beautiful’ woman.



Figure 6.1 Advertisement of Sony Ericsson T68i Mobile Phone.

When we consider ‘mobile phones’ as a product category, ‘personalization’ is singled out as an important concept on the symbolic side of symbolic-communicational model. The mobile phone is a personal device; but more importantly it is a ‘**personalizable**’ device. Everyday, new ways and options for personalization, such as ring tones, graphics, games, software applications, and colorful faceplates, are introduced. By this way, manufacturers try to appeal to consumers’ desire for differentiation and uniqueness by preparing the ground for self-expressive meanings. They invite consumers to make their “mobile phone a personal statement” as asserted in Nokia’s web site. However, personalization of the product in the ways offered by product design and advertising is very different from more ‘authentic’ act of personalization initiated actively by the consumer. While ‘personalizable’ mobile phones appeal to the desire for self-expression, they also channel this desire to commodified means and exploit it for commercial ends.

Self-expressive meanings stemming from this kind of personalization are dominated by product design and advertising rather than being based on individual's subjective experience with the product.

On the instrumental side of symbolic-communicational model, in addition to the use-related meanings conferred upon 'mobile phones' as a product category, each model can gain more specific meanings based on its functional capabilities. On the symbolic side however, it is harder to find meanings that can be generalized to the whole product category. Symbolic meanings that more directly refer to the identity of the 'would-be-consumers' are more diverse, complex, and product specific and they are more often manipulated by manufacturers in order to create product differentiation. In the next section, to explore the ways product design and advertising endow products with these more specific meanings and associate them with certain identities, we will focus on certain models and their advertisements.

6.2 Product Specific Meanings and Identities

The first model we will examine here is 'Nokia 5100'. This model was introduced in 2003 as a new product to Nokia's 'active category'- also named as 'outdoor' segment - which was started by 'Nokia 5210' in 2002. In a press release, Nokia defines the models in this segment as "specifically designed for people with an active lifestyle" (see Appendix A). Anssi Vanjoki, Executive Vice President of Nokia Mobile Phones, introducing the 'outdoor' segment and its first model 'Nokia 5210' states that:

*The mobile phone market is evolving towards increasingly diverse user needs, reflecting various lifestyles and preferences of different individuals. With the Nokia 5210 we have created a concept which combines **a youthful and vibrant style** with **improved durability**. The design and color world have **been inspired by sports** and the features have been specified with focus on the needs of **active people**.*

'Nokia 5100' was presented as a new product to this segment combining the latest technological advances, improved durability and a boldly expressed design

concept. In another press release, Seppo Laukkanen, Vice President and Product Manager of Nokia Mobile Phones, states (see Appendix B):

*The Nokia 5100 phone is an evolutionary step towards bringing mobile communications into new surroundings and fulfilling the needs of **active consumers**. With its streamlined, **dynamic design** and **bold product concept**, the Nokia 5100 phone is driven by **balance between appearance and performance**. This phone will become a constant companion for **people who are truly passionate about their active lifestyles**.*

In both of the above statements, we can see a clear emphasis on lifestyles and addressing preferences of active consumers by means of product features and design. Youthful and vibrant style, durability, inspiration from sports, dynamic design, bold product concept, balance between appearance and performance are singled out as keywords defining both this product line and ‘Nokia 5100’. If we read between the lines, characteristics such as active lifestyle, youthfulness, appearance or fashion consciousness, interest in (passion for) extreme sports or outdoor sports can describe the targeted consumer. Mainly based on these keywords, ‘semantic networks’ of ‘Nokia 5100’ can be spatialized as in Figure 6.2.

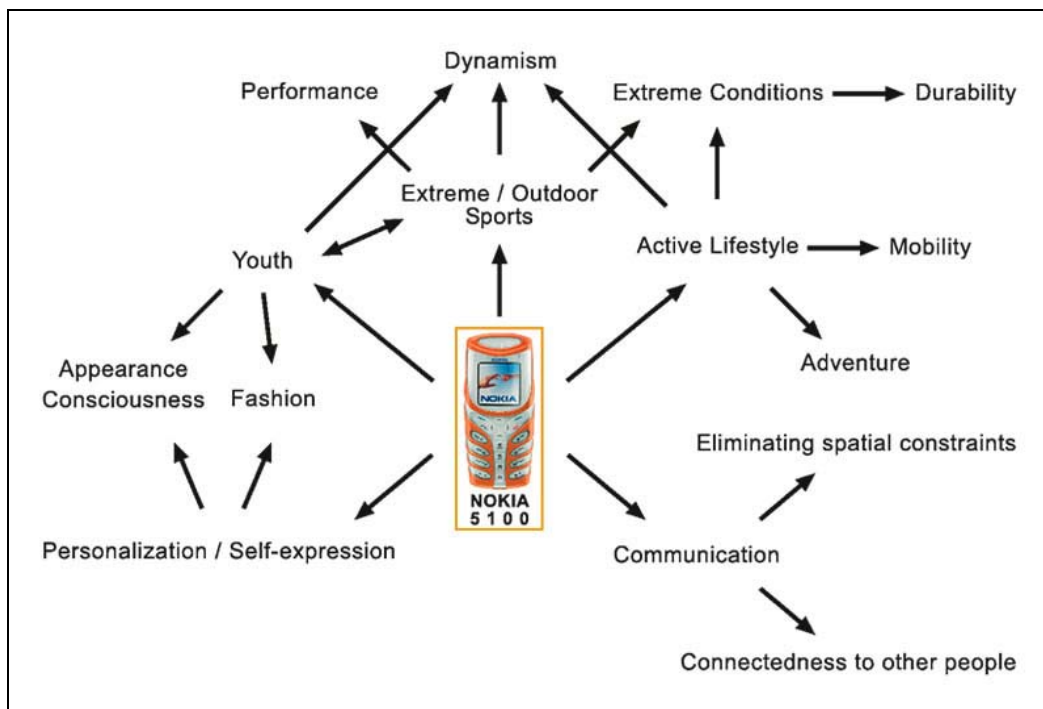


Figure 6.2 Semantic networks of Nokia 5100 Mobile Phone.

Most of the general meanings conferred upon mobile phones as a product category can be seen in the advertising materials of ‘Nokia 5100’, in a way customized to appeal to the targeted lifestyle. For instance, the concepts of ‘mobility’ and ‘connectedness to other people’ appear in the press release as “allowing users to stay connected as their adventures take them around the world”. We can also see the emphasis on ‘personalization’ that ‘Nokia 5100’ provides for its active, youthful and appearance-conscious consumer by changeable Xpress-on shells coming in various ‘sports-inspired’ colors, downloadable Java applications, polyphonic ring tones and full display color wallpapers.

As functional features supporting the needs of this consumer profile, ‘Nokia 5100’ offers an integrated flashlight, a built-in calorie counter, a handsfree speakerphone, a stereo FM radio, a sound meter, a thermometer, countdown timer and stopwatch. In press releases and brochures, it is stated that Xpress-on shell, with its “innovative construction and materials”, was designed for providing improved protection against splashes, dust, and bumps. It is added that “the rubbery surface and ergonomic shape enables a firm and reliable grip”. We can see the influence of these functional considerations in the design of ‘Nokia 5100’ (Figure 6.3).



Figure 6.3 Nokia 5100 Mobile Phone.

However, as we have discussed in Chapter 4 borrowing from Athavankar, in addition to functional considerations, the product form can also carry ‘non-functional’ visual clues which mainly serve to connect the product to certain object categories and to superordinate level concepts. As Athavankar states, the design of a product can be seen as a compound semantic statement of primary links connecting the product to the category identity and of secondary links connecting it to a certain culture, period, style, consumer identity, environment, activity, or brand (1990). Since our primary concern is product meanings regarding identity, we should explore the secondary links that connect ‘Nokia 5100’ to the identity of the (targeted) consumer.

In the case of ‘Nokia 5100’, the targeted consumer identity is closely related with certain activities and a lifestyle. In the most general sense, we can define this identity as ‘a person with an active lifestyle, interested in extreme sports or outdoor sports’. Based on our discussions in Chapter 4, we can say that in order to create associations with this identity and differentiate the product as ‘a mobile phone that is preferred and consumed by people with an active lifestyle who are interested in extreme sports or outdoor sports’:

1. visual clues can be borrowed from other products that are directly associated with this identity,
2. people, events, activities, images and abstract concepts that are included in the ‘semantic networks’ of this identity can be utilized as sources of visual clues:
 - a. through borrowing from existing product examples associated with these,
 - b. by means of a direct visual interpretation of the abstract concepts by the designer.

In exploring where those visual clues were appropriated from, ‘Nokia 5210’ which can be seen as the predecessor of ‘Nokia 5100’ in the ‘active category’ can be a good starting point (Figure 6.4).



Figure 6.4 Nokia 5210 Mobile Phone.

We can easily identify some semantic devices - such as available color alternatives (see Figures 6.5 and 6.6), textures, materials used, rubber inserts and certain formal qualities - that are borrowed from this earlier model in order to create a continuation in the 'active category' of Nokia. By creating links with this earlier model and the 'active category', these semantic devices also help consumers recognize the identity of 'Nokia 5100' as a product addressing active lifestyle.



Figure 6.5 Color alternatives for Nokia 5210 Mobile Phone.



Figure 6.6 Color alternatives for Nokia 5100 Mobile Phone.

In addition to this apparent link, we would also expect to find certain semantic devices that connect ‘Nokia 5100’ to products other than mobile phones that are associated with active lifestyle, extreme sports or outdoor sports. In order to find some examples of these products, we searched some shopping sites in the Internet with the keywords: ‘extreme sports’ and ‘outdoor sports’. Among the search results, we selected the products that most clearly manifest semantic devices which can be associated with ‘Nokia 5100’ in terms of formal qualities, color alternatives, materials and textures. We classified these examples under the general category of ‘outdoor sports things’ in Figure 6.7.

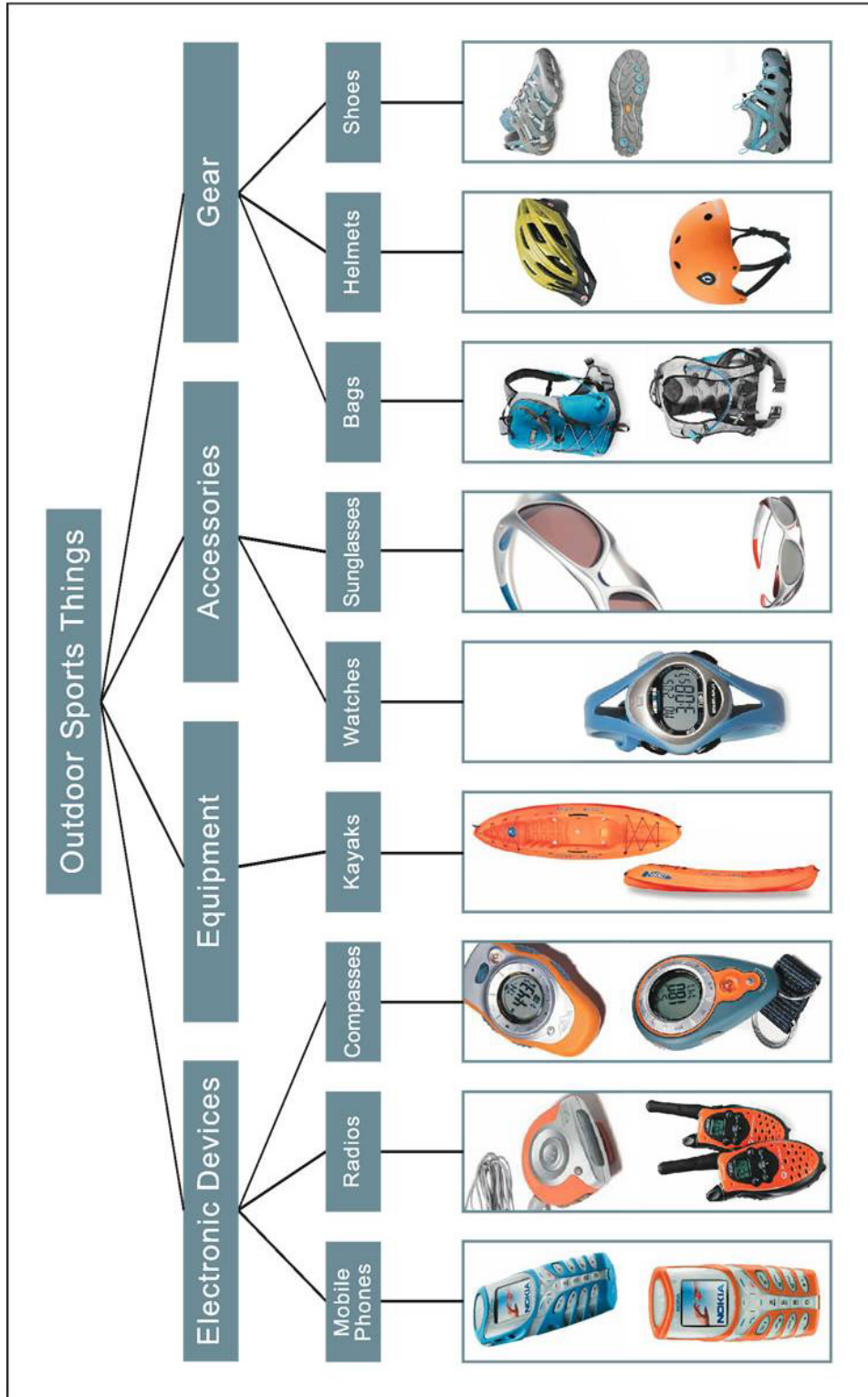


Figure 6.7 Outdoor Sports Things

'Nokia 5100' also provides us with a good example of 'lifestyling'. Active lifestyle forms the basis of developing this 'outdoor' segment. 'Nokia 5100' was tailored according to both instrumental and symbolic considerations regarding this lifestyle. By this way, while the product is differentiated from other mobile phones, the consumer is addressed as a certain sort of person: as a person with an active lifestyle. While product design contributes to this process by forming semantic links with other products associated with this lifestyle and with people, events, activities, images and abstract concepts that are included its 'semantic networks', the contribution of advertising is more direct and influential.

In Figure 6.8, we present two advertisements of 'Nokia 5100'. Both of them portray a person doing a sports activity. However, rather than giving the feeling of real activity snapshots, the images are abstracted by means of unusual camera angles, totally blue backgrounds and unrealistic shadows around the figures. By this way, rather than signifying 'a person exercising or playing volleyball', they seem to be reduced to signifiers of the general concept of 'activeness'. In Williamson's term, the 'objective correlative', the element from the referent system, is the young and energetic person with a fit body. Rather than showing product in use, both advertisements bring the image of the active person and 'Nokia 5100' together within a spatial composition. By means of the formal structure of these ads, the meanings that are associated with the portrayed person are tried to be transferred to the product. At the same time, 'Nokia 5100' promises to transfer meanings it has gained to its 'would-be-consumer' who is addressed as a 'young and energetic person with a fit body'. S/he is invited to be so with the slogan 'Show Your Performance'. These ads try to suggest an identity that is based on an active lifestyle and that is undifferentiated by gender.



Figure 6.8 Two advertisements of Nokia 5100 Mobile Phone.

The cover of the brochure designed for ‘Nokia 5100’ portrays an identity that is consistent with the one presented in the ads above. Similar meanings are tried to be transferred upon the product and to the ‘would-be-consumer’, this time in the lifestyle format (Figure 6.9). The same slogan is used with images that depict young and active people ‘showing their performances’. Both on the cover and inside the brochure, we can see ‘Nokia 5100’ integrated into activity scenes, together with people using the product and some other equipment and accessories such as kayaks, climbing ropes and hooks that are associated with outdoor sports (Figure 6.10). All these elements are unified around the concept of ‘activeness’.



Figure 6.9 Brochure cover of Nokia 5100 Mobile Phone.

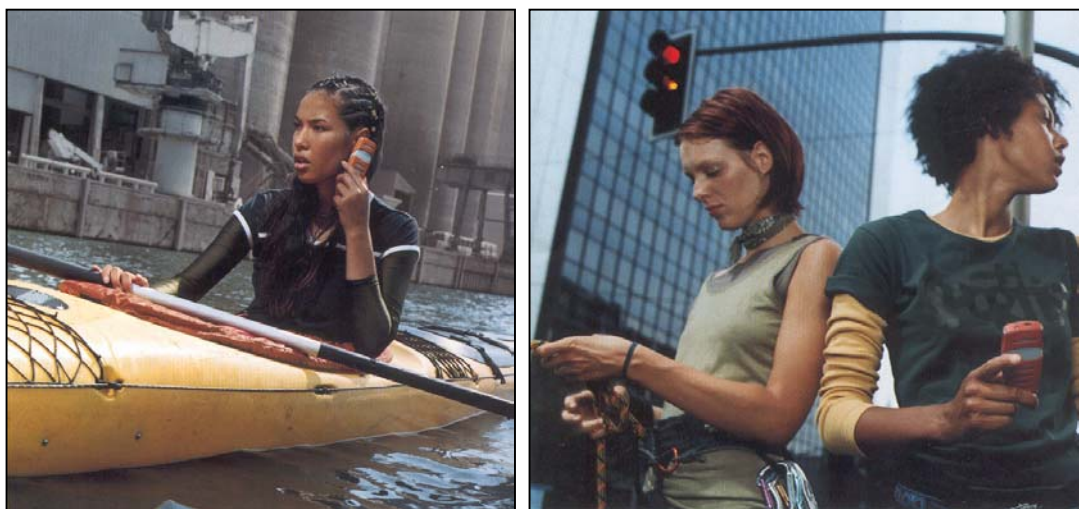


Figure 6.10 Two images from the brochure of Nokia 5100 Mobile Phone.

To this point, we have explored how product design and advertising confer certain meanings upon 'Nokia 5100' by associating it with certain products, people and lifestyle settings. However, as we discussed before, a product gains its meanings and unique identity also by its difference from other products in the system of objects-as-signs. Thus, our analysis is incomplete until we locate 'Nokia 5100' within a larger system of differences. The other products associated with active lifestyle, which we presented in Figures 6.7 and which are depicted in the above brochure, can be seen as elements that can be combined with 'Nokia 5100' on the syntagmatic axis in order to create the meaning of 'activeness'. On the other hand, we should also look at other mobile phones on the paradigmatic axis, from which 'Nokia 5100' is differentiated in order to gain its meanings.

In the following pages, we present three different brochure covers for three models of Nokia mobile phones. They are designed in a similar format with the brochure cover of 'Nokia 5100' presented in Figure 6.9. On each of the covers, we can identify similar elements: the mobile phone, its model, a slogan and certain images. These images depict lifestyle scenes composed of some other objects, certain settings, and people presented as ideal consumers of that mobile phone. These elements, which are selected from the referent systems as 'objective correlatives' of certain meanings, are tried to be associated with the mobile phone in order to transfer their meanings. By this way, these brochure series try to position each model in relation or in contrast to others. Bringing Williamson's arguments to the discussion, we can say that they try to create a system of differences of mobile phones by correlating them with system of differences of certain lifestyles.

In the first example presented in Figure 6.11, we see 'Nokia 8910' with its 'sophisticated technology, minimalist elegance and clear lines' as described inside the brochure. It is for people "who want to live the quality". The slogan is 'Mysterious at First Sight'. This slogan as well as the adjectives 'sophisticated' and 'elegant' define the characteristic that are wanted to be transferred upon the mobile phone. They describe both 'Nokia 8910' and the people depicted in the images. This is also the identity that is promised to the 'would-be-consumer' by the mediation of the product.



Figure 6.11 Brochure cover of Nokia 8910 Mobile Phone.

The next cover is for 'Nokia 7210' whose design is defined inside the brochure as 'a style show' (Figure 6.12). The slogan is 'The Print of Passion'. Unusual organization of the keypad is articulated as a design element. In the images, people with their colorful make-ups and expressive styles, who are probably from colorful professions, are portrayed as ideal consumers of the phone. With its 'creative' design and expressive style, 'Nokia 7210' promises to reflect the colorful identity of its 'would-be-consumer'.

When we look at the third cover presented in Figure 6.13, we can infer that, like 'Nokia 5100', 'Nokia 3310' is targeted to young and active people. However, the meaning of 'activeness' and portrayed lifestyle is clearly different from what we have discussed for 'Nokia 5100'. The emphasis is on entertainment, hanging out with friends and enjoying life rather than on dynamism and outdoor sports. The addressed consumer can be identified as 'young people who likes to get entertained'. However, when we just look at the product design, it is hard to read these lifestyle considerations. At least, they are not as boldly manifested as they were in the previous examples. When we read this cover together with another advertisement of the same product (see Figure 6.14), we can see that the emphasis is rather on 'personalization' and product as a means of self-expression.

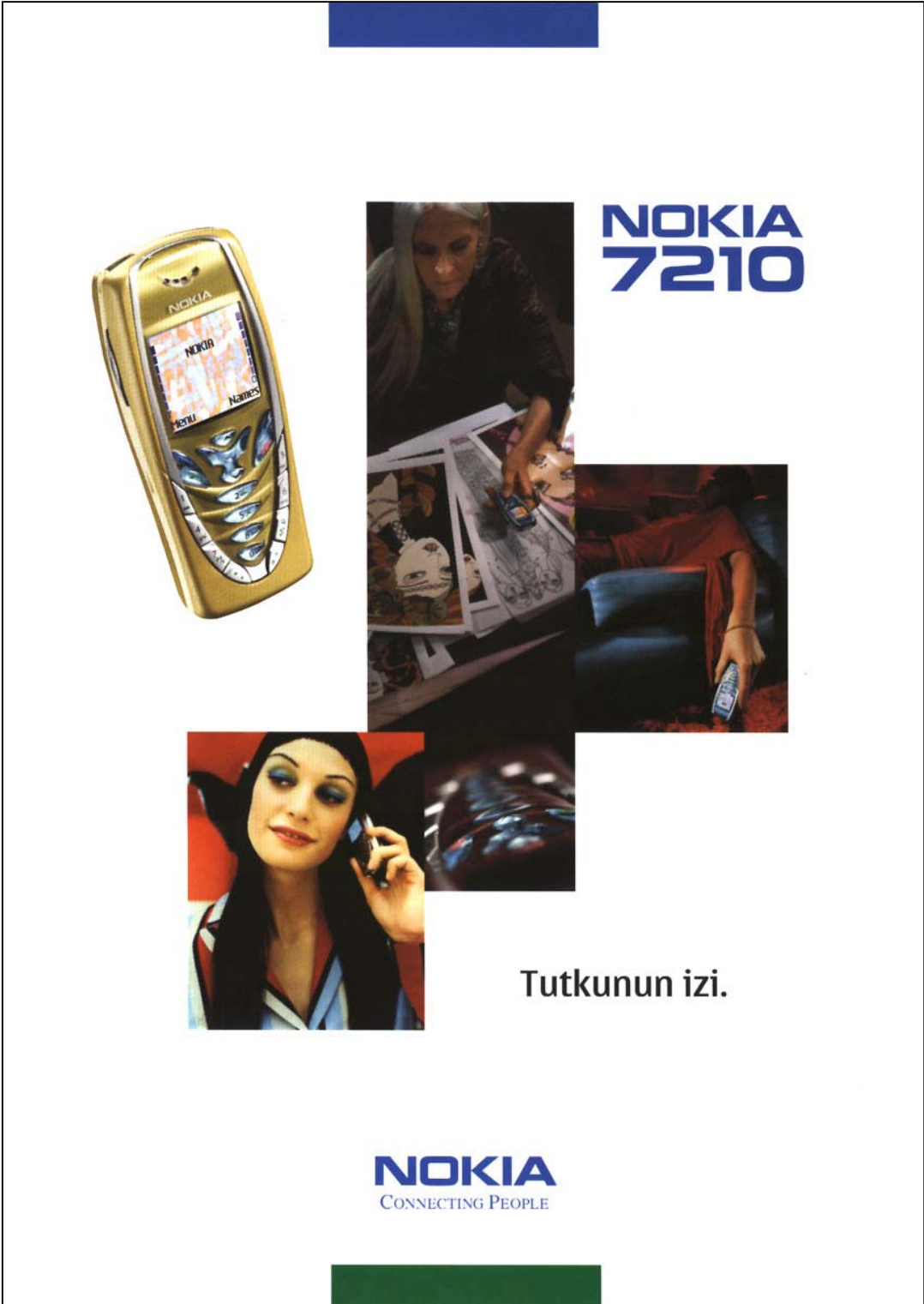


Figure 6.12 Brochure cover of Nokia 7210 Mobile Phone.

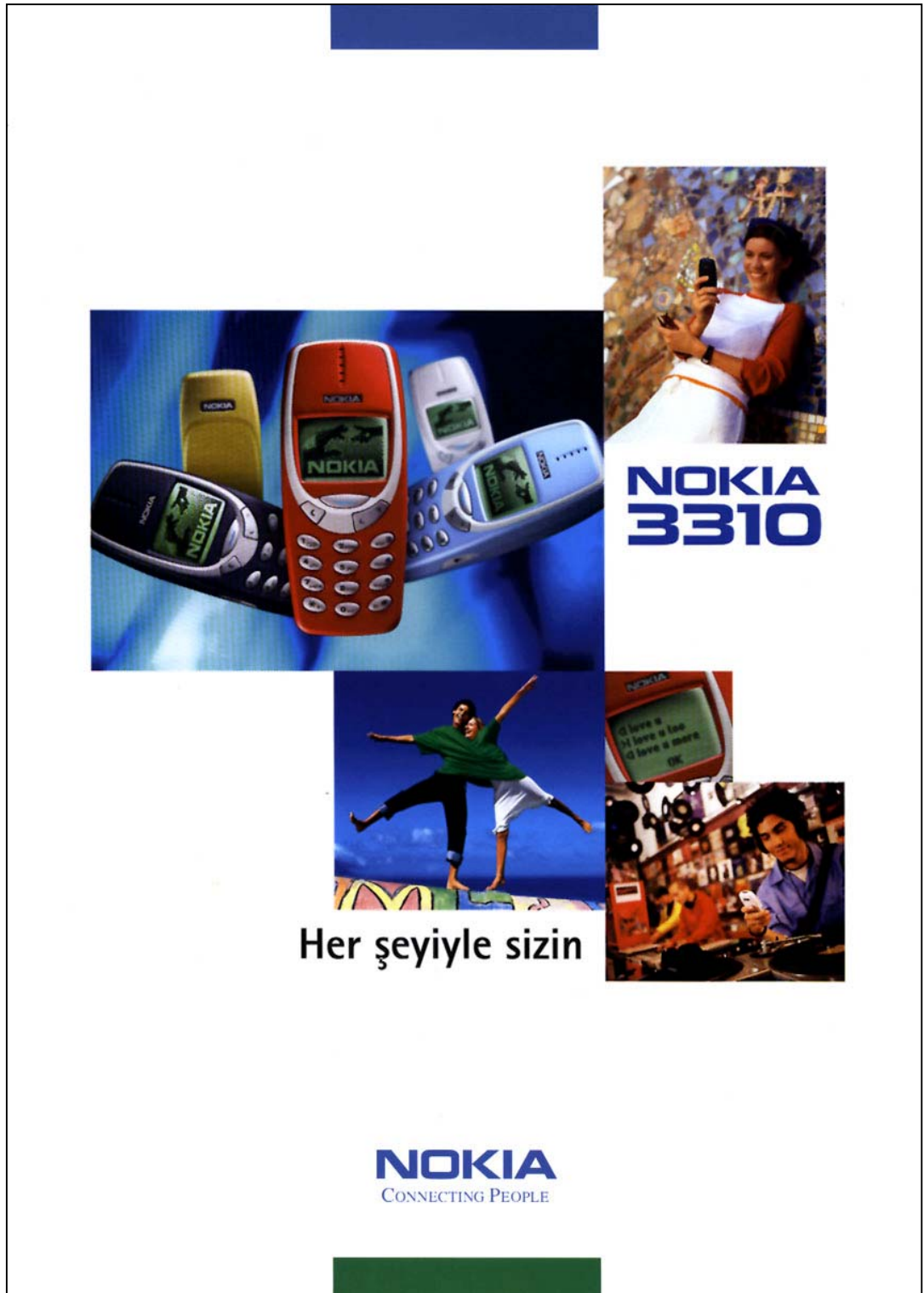


Figure 6.13 Brochure cover of Nokia 3310 Mobile Phone.

The slogan used both in the cover and the ad, ‘Truly Yours’, underlines that with its changeable cover, ring tones and screen graphics that can be designed by the consumer, you can feel that your ‘Nokia 3310’ is special to you and expresses your identity. In the ad, the product is depicted as part of a scene consisting of a translucent make-up bag full of make-up products, a lipstick and a key holder in the same silver gray with the mobile phone. This is a composition abstracted from any contextual information. These products that can obviously be defined as ‘woman’s things’ are used as ‘objective correlatives’ of ‘femininity’. In this example, we can clearly see how the ‘formal structure’ of the ad functions to correlate these products and ‘Nokia 3310’ in order to transfer the meaning of ‘femininity’ upon the product. Certain visual clues, mainly the gray color and the shiny finishing, are used to facilitate the correlation and consequently the transfer of meaning. The image of woman’s lips that is used as a graphic on the phone’s screen complements this correlation as a symbol of ‘femininity’ and also point to ‘personalizability’ of the model.



Figure 6.14 Advertisement of Nokia 3310 Mobile Phone.

This ad is also a good example for the case in which advertising tries to transfer new sets of meanings different from those apparent in the design of the product. It is hard to identify this model of mobile phone as a gendered product. This idea can be supported by the brochure cover, in which it is portrayed as a product targeted to young people without an emphasis on gender identity (see Figure 6.13).

Neutrality of 'Nokia 3310's design in term of gender identity becomes more apparent when we compare it with other mobile phones that can be defined as gendered by design. 'Samsung T500', which was released as the second phone in the "Queen" phone series of Samsung, is a good example in this context (see Figure 6.15).



Figure 6.15 Samsung T500 Mobile Phone.

This model is specifically targeted to female consumers. This was supported by certain menu features that are designed to attract women such as,

- Biorhythm, which gives date-specific information about user's physical, emotional and intellectual potential based on her birth date,
- Body fat index, which calculates the overweight amount according to height and gender,
- Calorie counter, which gives an estimate of number of calories which are wasted by certain activities,
- 'Pink schedule', which helps women to track their menstrual cycle and accordingly estimate pregnancy probability for a certain day.

Moreover, 'Samsung T500' offers an internal screen that can also function as a hand mirror and an external display decorated by imitation stones, which is the most articulated element in 'T500's design. In the overall design, we can identify several semantic devices that are utilized in order to connect the product to other precious objects associated with female identity. Mainly, the external display bordered by diamond like stones, silver insertion on the top side of the phone and on the external antenna, and the finishing used in the overall design serves as visual clues that form secondary links with jewelry, precious stones, pearl, women's evening watches and so on (see Figure 6.16).

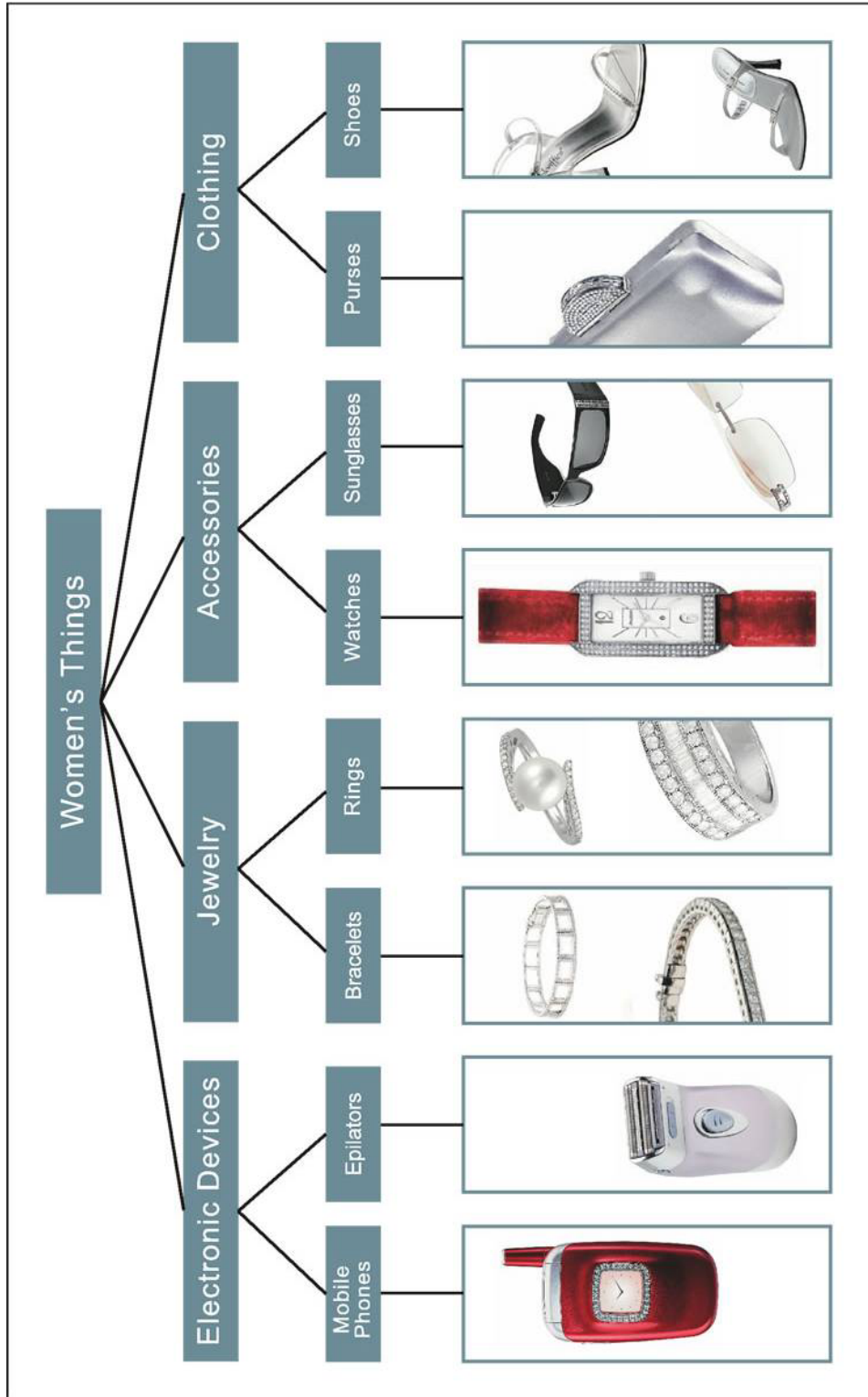


Figure 6.16 Women's Things

For this model, we can identify ‘femininity’ as the addressed social identity. Moreover, in terms of personal identity, she is a woman with unique aspects such as glamour, elegance and attractiveness which can more easily be read in the brochure covers presented in Figure 6.17.

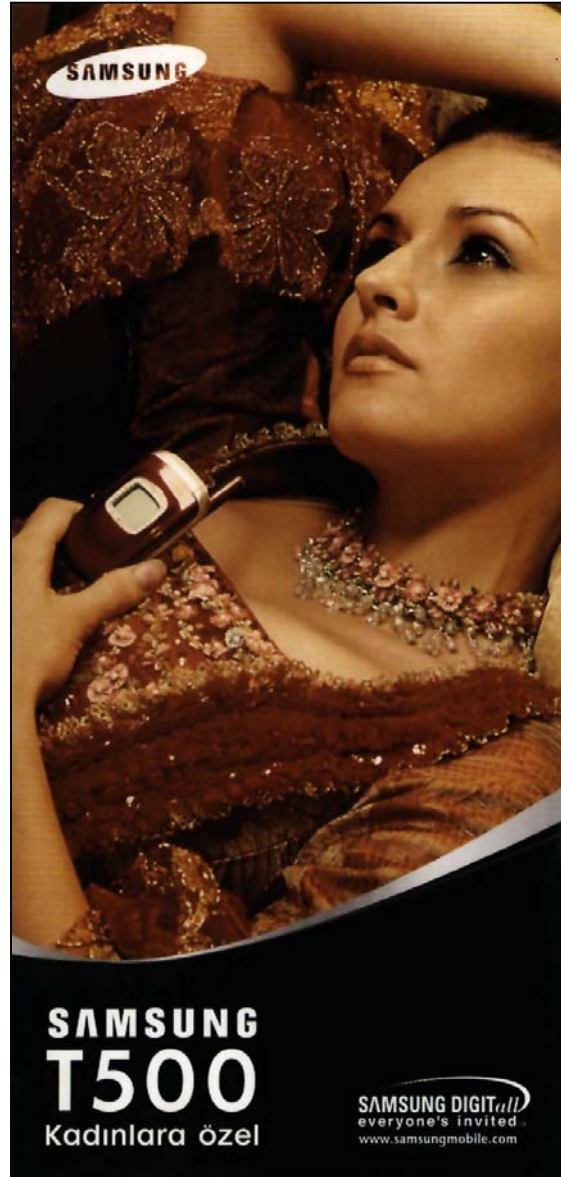


Figure 6.17 Brochure covers of Samsung T500 Mobile Phone.

Not surprisingly, the slogan is ‘special for women’. A glamorous woman dressed for an evening is portrayed together with her ‘T500’s. However, rather than being in an actual scene of usage or activity, she seems to display herself and her mobile

phone to the viewer. 'T500', with its wine red exterior and shining stones, perfectly fits with her dress and necklace in the same color. At the same time, all the meanings associated with this woman, her style and identity are transferred to 'T500's and to its 'would-be-consumer'.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, firstly, a brief overview of the theoretical discussions we presented throughout the study will be made. Then, based on this overview and the case study conducted in order to illustrate and exemplify these theoretical discussions, opportunities for further studies will be discussed.

7.1 Review

In this study, while investigating how the consumer - as the subject of mass consumer society - constructs, preserves and expresses his/her identity by means of 'designed products', we specifically focused on how product design and advertising mediate this process by conferring identity related meanings upon products. However, before commencing a detailed discussion on product design and advertising, in order to provide the basis for understanding this process, we tried to clarify the notion of identity in the second chapter and presented a general discussion on the nature and dynamics of the relationship between people and objects in the third chapter.

Addressing the question "what is identity?", the second chapter starts with an exploration of the notion of identity from various perspectives in essentialist, psychodynamic and sociological traditions. Based on how 'identity' is conceptualized in all these traditions, we identified four main axes on which the contemporary debates concerning identity are shaped as:

- Personal Identity - Social Identity
- Differentiation - Integration

- Sameness - Otherness
- Continuity - Fluidity

In this section, borrowing from Fearon, we defined personal identity, which also refers to differentiation, as a combination of characteristic attributes, beliefs, and principles of behavior that differentiate the individual in socially relevant ways (Fearon 1999, 11). On the other hand, social identity, which points to the integration pole, was defined as the individual's sense of belongingness to a particular group or social category.

Having explored the diverse ways and multiple perspectives by which identity was conceptualized, we concluded that identity seems to occupy a central place as a theoretical problem in various disciplines. As stated by Douglas Kellner, the notion of identity has gained this centrality only after modernity when it also became a personal problem (Kellner 1992). Based on this argument, in this section, we explored the origins of the problem of identity in contemporary societies. We argued that in traditional societies, identity was ascribed by birth. It was fixed, solid, stable, and was not subject to debate; consequently it was unproblematic. Modernity posed a change from ascribed identity to achieved identity, which is “more mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive, and subject to change and innovation” as argued by Kellner (1992, 141). However, Kellner also adds that identity in modernity was still substantial, limited and fixed when compared with postmodern identity, which becomes more and more fragmented, unstable, and fragile. Together with the changing notion of identity from traditional to modern and postmodern societies, objects have gained certain dominance as mediators in the process of construction, preservation and expression of identities. In the third chapter, we addressed the nature and dynamics of this mediation process in details.

Starting the third chapter with a general discussion on the subject-object problematic, we identified the relationship between people and objects as a process by which:

1. objects are assimilated both practically and intellectually: namely, appropriated for practical human ends, on the one hand; classified and endowed with certain meanings on the other,
2. people construct their subjectivity and sense of identity.

Based on these two interrelated forms of assimilation, in this section, we explored instrumental and symbolic aspects of objects with which people relate. However, we also added that although this classification was offered for the sake of analysis, ‘utility’ and ‘significance’ are always interwoven: this duality is never that sharp, clearly identifiable and distinguishable in real life contexts. Later in this chapter, an exploration of the ways in which people and objects are related revealed that a significant portion of this relationship is constituted by the aspects associated with the issue of identity.

In the third chapter, we also introduced symbolic-communicational model and semiological perspective, which we brought together in order to offer a comprehensive account of the process of identity construction, preservation and expression through objects. According to symbolic-communicational model, identity related meanings of objects form socially shared meaning systems, by the mediation of which people construct and communicate aspects of their identity. Focusing on the relationship between a certain object and the identity of its owner, symbolic-communicational model provided us with a detailed framework for understanding this relationship and meanings stemming from it.

In addition to this, we argued that an object gains its identity related meanings also in its relationship with other objects owned and its difference from the objects that are not owned. This requires us to locate the object within a system of significations. Adopting a semiological perspective, which deals with these meaning systems and their structure, we took object both as an ‘object of use’ having a material relationship with its owner within the context of everyday life and also as a sign-object within a system

of signification structured by the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes. Accordingly, in this study,

- we investigate the relationship between the use-related, self-expressive and categorical meanings of a specific object and the identity of its owner by means of symbolic-communicational model;
- looking from a semiological perspective, we also located the object and its identity related meanings within a larger system of objects-as-signs.

Having located the relationship between people and object within the dynamics of industrial production and mass consumption at the end of the third chapter, we started to deal with how product design and advertising mediate this relationship by conferring identity related meanings upon products from the fourth chapter onwards. Based on McCracken's framework of the movement of product meanings, we identified product design and advertising as two important agents that transfer meanings from the culturally constituted world to products. The remaining part of the fourth chapter was devoted to how product design constructs the dimensions of 'product identity' that are associated with the identity of the 'would-be-consumer'.

In the fifth chapter, we focused on the advertising side of the process. First of all, a concise historical overview of the changes in predominant representations of person-product relationships in advertisements is presented. Based on Leiss et al., the basic advertising formats were identified as :

- The Product Information Format
- The Product Image Format
- The Personalized Format
- The Lifestyle Format

(Leiss et al. 1988).

We argued that in all of these formats, and more explicitly in the last three, we can identify depictions of certain aspects of consumer's identity. Moreover, we can see a

shift in the focus from personal identity to social identity when we move towards lifestyle ads. Later in this chapter, we focused on the methods utilized by advertising in order to transfer certain meanings upon products and associate them with certain identities.

Finally, in the sixth chapter, we presented a case study on the product group of ‘mobile phones’. This case study aimed at illustrating theoretical frameworks discussed throughout the thesis and clarifying them with concrete examples. In this chapter, after a brief overview of the use-related and symbolic meanings of mobile phones as a product category, we focused on certain models and their advertisements. Rather than analyzing certain examples in isolation, we preferred to move from one example to another in order to map the system of differences within which they are positioned.

7.2 Conclusions, Shortcomings and Further Studies

In this thesis, we mainly investigated how product design and advertising confer identity related meanings upon products and associate them with certain consumer identities. Based on the critical review of the related literature and the case study, we can conclude that in the process of associating the product with certain consumer identities and addressing the ‘would-be-consumer’ as a certain sort of subject, the mechanism of advertising works in a more explicit way with its highly controllable tools of meaning transfer. As argued by McCracken, by bringing the product and a certain representation of the culturally constituted world together, advertising tries to create an association between these two elements (1986). By this way, the meanings that reside in the representation are tried to be transferred upon the product. This process consists of a series of choices which are summarized by McCracken as:

1. Identifying the properties and meanings that are sought for the product,
2. Determining where these properties and meanings reside in the culturally constituted world,

3. Deciding how to represent the selected elements of culturally constituted world,
4. Deciding how to represent the product in its highly ‘contrived’ context.

The interaction between product design and advertising in the construction of meanings becomes most apparent at the moment of identifying the properties and meanings that are sought for the product. The product comes into the context of advertising together with certain meanings inscribed into its materiality by product design. Advertising can reinforce and emphasize some of these meanings, conceal certain others, or transfer totally new sets of meanings and it usually constructs more explicit links with certain identities and lifestyles.

Williamson offers an account parallel with McCracken’s. However, adopting a semiological perspective, she deals with the process of meaning transfer within the context of system of differences. She argues that the main function of an advertisement is to differentiate a particular product from others. In this process, differences in systems of meaning that we already know (referent systems) are appropriated by the advertisement in order to create differences between products. She identifies two axes along which meanings are transferred within the ad. On the first axis, the meaning is transferred from certain elements of the referent system to the product. On the second axis, the product promises to transfer the meanings it has gained to its ‘would-be-consumer’. It starts to signify its consumer as a particular kind of person.

Borrowing from Williamson, we argued that advertising creates meanings by associating the differences between products with the differences between people. Setting up connections between certain products and certain kinds of consumers, it tries to create identification. By this way, it addresses the ‘consumer/viewer’ as a certain sort of person and as a person who would consume that product.

On the other hand, product design contributes to this process by forming semantic links with other products associated with this identity and with people, events,

activities, images and abstract concepts that are included in its ‘semantic networks’. As we stated in the fourth chapter based on Athavankar’s arguments, product design constructs the identity of the product and communicate certain meanings by providing certain visual clues that activate ‘links’ to external sources and transfer meanings from them (Athavankar 1990). While primary links connect the product to a principal object category and its superordinate; secondary links associate it with a certain culture, period, style, environment, activity, brand, an abstract concept, and of course, with certain consumer identities. Primary and secondary links point to potential sources from which visual clues and concepts can be borrowed by the designer. They also form the framework by which the consumer decodes these visual clues and meanings conferred upon the product.

Broadening the framework offered by Athavankar and bringing the concept of ‘semantic networks’ to the argument, in the fourth chapter, we argued that in order to create associations with certain consumer identities and to differentiate the product as ‘a product that is preferred and consumed by certain sort of people’:

1. visual clues can be borrowed from other products that are directly associated with these identities,
2. people, events, activities, images and abstract concepts that are included in the ‘semantic networks’ of these identities can be utilized as sources of visual clues:
 - a. through borrowing from existing product examples associated with these,
 - b. by means of a direct visual interpretation of the abstract concepts by the designer.

While associating the product with a certain user identity by employing visual clues appropriated from their ‘semantic networks’, the designer also addresses the ‘would-be-consumer’ as a certain sort of person and tries to create identification between the consumer and the product. Borrowing from Du Gay et al., we identified ‘lifestyling’ - tailoring a product according to instrumental and symbolic considerations of a certain target market segment defined by lifestyle and identity differences - as an important

means by which this identification is constructed (Du Gay et al. 1997). We also stated that the contribution of advertising to the process of ‘lifestyling’ is more direct and influential.

While product design and advertising transfer meanings from already established meaning systems - from the culturally constituted world as defined by McCracken - upon products, these products also become parts of these meaning systems and at the same time objectify their categories and principles. By this way, product design and advertising serve to confirm and reproduce the dominant notions of personal and social identities which are structured by those categories. As McCracken argues, categories that refer to certain social identities through distinctions such as race, gender, class, age, and occupation can be represented and substantiated through a set of material distinctions by means of products (1986). In the example of ‘executive briefcase’ given in the fourth chapter, while certain meanings are transferred upon the product by the connections made with other products and concepts within the ‘semantic networks’ of ‘executive identity’, the notion of ‘executive identity’ that is dominant in the society is also confirmed and reproduced together with all the meanings accumulated around it. Consequently, besides making the product communicate with the user/consumer, this process fulfills two main functions:

- An **ideological function** by objectifying, reproducing and maintaining dominant notions of certain identities,
- A **commercial function** by manipulating product meanings and identity associations for commercial ends.

In this study, although we acknowledged that product meanings are constructed, reproduced, negotiated, and transformed at all stages of the product life cycle including consumption, we particularly investigated the meanings that are tried to be conferred upon products at the moments of production and mediation - more specifically, by design and advertising. However, for a complete analysis, we should also look at the consumer’s side of the process and to the moment of consumption/use. Such a study

would focus on how consumers appropriate, negotiate, manipulate meanings and identities suggested by product design and advertising. It can investigate how the identity related meanings of products are transformed after they come into people's everyday lives. This can be done by having a more detailed look at the second point of meaning transfer defined by McCracken, where consumers extract meanings that reside in products. As another study based on McCracken's framework of movement of meanings, the interaction of design and advertising with other agents of meaning transfer - such as media and fashion - can be examined. As another opportunity for research that can complement this study, an empirical study can be conducted to see the relative effect of product design and advertising in conferring identity related meanings upon products as perceived by the consumer.

In the case study, we selected 'mobile phones' as a product category based on its richness for illustrative purposes. We also selected specific product examples and advertisements that will most explicitly and boldly exemplify our points. This selection procedure can be seen as a shortcoming of our study. In order to overcome this, the case study can be extended in a way covering other product categories that manifest different properties than mobile phones. These can be the product categories in which there is less need for product differentiation or for which 'identity' is not emphasized as a design concern and as an important part of the advertising discourse.

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APPENDIX A

PRESS RELEASE FOR NOKIA 5210

November 19, 2001

Nokia unveils a new active category for mobile phones

Funky design and improved durability characterize the Nokia 5210

Nokia today introduced a new active category to its product portfolio with the Nokia 5210. Specifically designed for people with an active lifestyle the Nokia 5210 represents a totally new concept with innovative materials, wearability options and improved durability. Shipments are scheduled to begin in the 1st quarter, 2002.

"The mobile phone market is evolving towards increasingly diverse user needs, reflecting various lifestyles and preferences of different individuals. With the Nokia 5210 we have created a concept which combines a youthful and vibrant style with improved durability. The design and color world have been inspired by sports and the features have been specified with focus on the needs of active people", said Anssi Vanjoki, Executive Vice President, Nokia Mobile Phones.

In the Nokia 5210 the materials, construction and locking solution with user changeable top and bottom shells provide protection against water splashes and dust. The ergonomic design together with its combination of soft and hard materials gives a convenient and reliable grip. The Nokia 5210 is small, light and easy to carry with you as it offers several wearability options with its new multifunctional carrying straps.

The extensive set of features for the Nokia 5210 include an in-built stopwatch for timing, recording splits or lap times, a countdown timer with restart option and

interval timer for exercise cycles. A fun feature in the Nokia 5210 is the thermometer, which provides a means to measure the approximate temperature of your surroundings.

The phone can be personalized with full display Profile Logos with profile graphics and animations including a digital clock or for example with the rhythmic vibra and backlight alert. The picture editor in the Nokia 5210 can be used to create, edit and save picture messages and clip-arts as well as edit pictures already existing in the phone. The Nokia 5210 also offers effective calendar management including a two-week calendar view, up to 100 calendar notes and a training note folder with predefined training icons.

The digital services available from Club Nokia include ringing tones and graphics, downloadable profiles, animated profile logos, downloadable game packs and high score sending as well as possibility to make personal library for own content.

The phone includes the following additional features:

Pastel orange screen backlight

Timed profiles

Automatic keyguard lock and security code

- Silent/reject for incoming call
- Advanced messaging (chat, SMS templates and smileys, concatenated SMS, multiple note sending)
- Ringing tone for SMS alert
- 10 voice tags, call and answer also via headset
- 5 games (Space Impact II, Snake II, Bumper, Bantumi and Pairs II)
- Infrared applications (PC - phone data link, phone to phone communication)
- EGSM 900/1800
- A WAP1.1 browser for the Internet with WAP push
- Talktime: up to 3hrs 50 min
- Standby time: up to 170 hrs
- Dimensions: 92 g, 83 cc, 105,5 mm

Nokia is the world leader in mobile communications. Backed by its experience, innovation, user-friendliness and secure solutions, the company has become the leading supplier of mobile phones and a leading supplier of mobile, fixed and IP networks. By adding mobility to the Internet Nokia creates new opportunities for companies and further enriches the daily lives of people. Nokia is a broadly held company with listings on six major exchanges.

Further information:

Nokia Mobile Phones
Communications
Tel. +358 7180 08000
www.nokia.com

Pictures of the Nokia 5210 are available at
http://www.nokia.com/press/nps_photo_archive/1,3009,hot_topics,00.html

source: http://press.nokia.com/PR/200111/840891_5.html

APPENDIX B

PRESS RELEASE FOR NOKIA 5100

November 04, 2002

Nokia introduces a world-phone to its active category

Nokia 5100 phone offers dynamic design and new fun features

Nokia today introduced a new product to its active category, the Nokia 5100 phone. Reflecting today's trends in bold yet functional active lifestyle attire, the Nokia 5100 combines wearability and durability with tri-band functionality (EGSM 900/GSM 1800/1900), allowing users to stay connected as their adventures take them around the world. The Nokia 5100 phone also includes the latest technological advances, such as a full color display, Java™ technology and multimedia messaging (MMS) functionality, wrapped in a modern design created to inspire people with an active leisure lifestyle. Shipments are scheduled to begin globally in the 1st quarter 2003.

“The Nokia 5100 phone is an evolutionary step towards bringing mobile communications into new surroundings and fulfilling the needs of active consumers. With its streamlined, dynamic design and bold product concept, the Nokia 5100 phone is driven by balance between appearance and performance”, said Seppo Laukkanen, Vice President, Product Management, Nokia Mobile Phones. “This phone will become a constant companion for people who are truly passionate about their active lifestyles.”

With its innovative construction, materials and user changeable top and bottom Xpress-on™ shells, the Nokia 5100 phone provides improved protection against splashes, dust and bumps. The rubbery surface and ergonomic shape enables a firm

and reliable grip and the well-proportioned keys and a versatile 4-way scroll allow fast and easy navigation via the high-resolution color display.

A unique integrated flashlight makes the Nokia 5100 phone an indispensable part of the active user's toolkit. The built-in calorie counter*** gives the user an estimate of calories burned during different activities which can then be saved in the calendar for convenient tracking. Other features are an integrated loudspeaker enabling the phone to be used as a handsfree speakerphone**, a stereo FM radio, automatic volume control to compensate for background noise and a sound meter*** revealing the estimated noise level of the surroundings. A thermometer***, countdown timer and stopwatch are also part of the extensive feature set of the Nokia 5100 phone.

The Nokia 5100 phone can be further personalized with downloadable Java applications, polyphonic (MIDI) ring tones and full display color wallpapers. MMS enhances the existing text messaging service to compatible MMS-enabled phones* by adding graphics and sound and the new, easy-to-carry Nokia Camera Headset enriches the MMS messaging experience by allowing users to instantly snap and share their experiences and activities with friends around the world.

The technology features of the Nokia 5100 include GPRS, offering high transmission rates and opportunities for new services like games and web-based services as well as support of WAP 1.2.1 and MMS.

The digital services available from Club Nokia include polyphonic (MIDI) ring tones, colorful wallpapers and logos as well as downloadable Java games.

The Nokia 5100 weighs 104 g and has a talk time of up to 2 - 5 hours and a standby time of up to 150 - 300 hours.

Nokia is the world leader in mobile communications. Backed by its experience, innovation, user-friendliness and reliable solutions, the company has become the leading supplier of mobile phones and a leading supplier of mobile, fixed

broadband and IP networks. By adding mobility to the Internet Nokia creates new opportunities for companies and further enriches the daily lives of people. Nokia is a broadly held company with listings on six major exchanges.

Further information:

Nokia Mobile Phones

Communications

Tel. +358 7180 08000

www.nokia.com

Pictures of the Nokia 5100 phone are available at www.nokia.com/press

* Please note that the MMS related services are dependent on the network as well as on the compatibility of the devices used and the content formats supported.

**Note: the headset must be used as an antenna when listening to the FM radio via the handsfree speaker.

***Note: the thermometer, calorie counter and sound meter in the Nokia 5100 phone give approximate values only and they should not be used for professional purposes.

Source: <http://www.nokiausa.com/about/newsroom/article/1,1046,767,00.html>