

# Media Analysis Fundamentals

## Medium is the Message

It is impossible to separate media from their power structure; super powerful multinational companies produce the majority of media. Media messages tend to reflect the values and ideology of their producers and distributors. Whereas art can generally be viewed on its own terms (in relation to the author/creator), commercial media should be viewed in the context of power, economics and the inherent value in the belief in technology.

## Media Reflect and Direct

Communication is a complex relationship between producer and audience. Rarely is there a unidirectional (or syringe model) trajectory of any message. Society's values are both reflected and directed by media. This does not mean there is an equal power relationship.

## Media are Fantasies

Highly trained technicians and artists construct media. Although we tend to believe video and photography accurately represent reality, they are recreations that involve editorial decisions. Media should never be confused with reality.

## Media are a Map

Just as art produced by ancient cultures inform us of the values and perceptions of the art's producer, media have a similar capacity to inform us of the belief systems of their producers. Media as maps allow us to understand the territory of values and beliefs related to the cultural, spiritual and/or economic system that created the media.

## **Media are Comprised of a System of Symbols**

Symbols are signs of cultural understanding that enable us to understand media messages. Brands, logos and text convey specific messages that are interpreted according to individual belief systems, education and domestication. Brands, logos and text generally differentiate graphic design from pure art.

## **Mass Media Put a Human Face on Abstract Legal Entities**

Media translate abstract legal entities, such as corporations, into symbolic worlds. We begin to identify models, actors and spokespeople as real people within the symbolic world of media-generated realities. People such as the Verizon man are merely characters in a story told by the media. They are not real.

## **The Symbolic World of Advertising is the Dream Life of Corporations**

Rarely do commercials represent the aspirations and desires of real people, but rather project desires and ideals of body types, attitudes and beliefs upon artificial entities who solely represent the producers of media.

## **Products Have Magical Powers That Influence Human Emotions**

Because our system of mass media is driven by the commercial imperative to entice product sales, "brands" and products become the most highly prized parts of media messages. They have the power to grant love, happiness and esteem. Their lack is nearly always portrayed as a cause of misery. Human relations are almost always secondary products.