

# Chapter 13

## Racism and Classism in Mexican Advertising

### An Exhibition of Visual Messaging

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**Abstract** This paper explores how Mexico's population has been faced with the polemics of class and race. This division continues today through the Mexican ruling class's appropriation of advertising. I am interested in the functions and systems in place that allow this to propagate and how meaning is being reproduced unperceived by the audience. My thesis question asks, *What are the visual representations of the power relationships in Mexico's political economy as reflected through the appropriation of advertising?* To answer this question, I perform a semiotic analysis of branded advertising messages created by the companies Bimbo, Palacio de Hierro and FEMSA, owned by the Mexican ruling families Servitje, Baillares and Garza respectively. Each television commercial is examined for signs, cultural codes, gestures, gaze and word tracks. These signs are decoded, and the conclusion is expressed through "An Exhibition of Visual Messaging", designed to inform the Mexican public of how messages are constructed and received, empowering the viewer to interpret and challenge the meaning behind the communications they are receiving through the metamedia.

#### 1.1 Introduction

Classist and racist discourse is occurring in various parts of the world and particularly in Mexico. I argue that strategies that reinforce segregation, classist, and racist ideologies exist within Mexico's society, and these themes continue today through various forms, specifically media. I am interested in the functions and systems in place that allow the classist and racist discourse to propagate and how meaning is being reproduced unperceived by the audience. This project and its

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research sheds new light on the profession of advertising practitioners and scholars because advertising is often looked upon negatively in communication studies. Arguably, there is a broad spectrum of literature, such as Marx and Engels (“The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas” 2006: 9), Fuchs (“Dallas Smythe Today—The Audience commodity...” 2005) and the Frankfurt School’s Adorno and Horkheimer (“Dialectic of Enlightenment” 2002: 94–136), that would regard advertising as a weapon of corporations, used to convince the public to consume commodities, and also to become an “audience commodity”, as Smythe states (1977). However, I would like to demonstrate that advertising tools and techniques can be employed for the human good by creating messages that counter Western corporate communications and encourage local culture. This will be achieved through publishing this thesis project and informing the Mexican public of how messages are constructed and received, thereby empowering the viewer to interpret and challenge the meaning behind the communications that they are receiving through the metamedia.

Another contribution will be to help promote the study of advertising theory in Canada and Mexico. This project will strengthen the mutual understanding between these two approaches by using my own experience as a practising art director and scholar in Canada and Mexico. A final contribution will include approaching the mass media to publish my findings and holding an exhibition directed towards the general public, advertising practitioners and academics in communication studies.

Through performing semiotic research and expressing the results in a contemporary visual representation, my thesis project explores the *visual representations of the power relationships in Mexico’s political economy as expressed in advertising* and how these relationships can be resisted.

### *Theoretical component*

Five hundred years ago, the ruling class in Mexico categorized its inhabitants into racial categories, with ‘indigenous’ being the lowest and ‘Spanish-born’ the highest. This was reflected in the *pinturas de castas* that I will be discussing later on in this chapter. After the Spanish colonization, the races began to mix, creating a new Mexican-born group named *Mestizos*. These categorizations of Mexican citizens are reflected in the advertising messages produced inside Mexico’s national boundaries and are financed by the ruling class. *Semiotic theory* and *critical race theory* applied to my research focuses “[...] on the discourse and images that create, maintain, and transform cultural relations of meaning and power as racial phenomena” (Lindlof 2011: 63).

During my research into the subject of race in Mexico, I discovered that racial categories have been an important theme in Mexican history. However, since 1907, the government has not officially classified its citizens on the basis of race; instead, it asks Mexicans to self-identify (Lizcano Fernández 2005) through language such as indigenous dialects.

The idea that white skin was an imported concept in Mexico that arrived through the colonialism of the Spanish is not true, as “[...] the preference for lighter skin

existed worldwide before colonization amongst the Aztecs and in early Arab cultures too, as symbols of higher social class and as symbols of youth and virginity” (Hussain 2010: 19).

One widely-believed myth regarding a white god is attributed to when the Aztec emperor Montezuma welcomed the Spanish conqueror Cortez into Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City. The Aztecs believed that the god Quetzalcoatl would return as a pale-skinned bearded god-king, and Montezuma believed that Cortez was Quetzalcoatl, riding “[...] on the backs of animals resembling deer” (León-Portilla 1992: 3–11). Not all scholars agree with the Aztec legends about white gods, speculating that they were myths created by the Franciscan Monks after the conquest to help the Aztecs understand why they were defeated (Townsend 2003: 659–687).

Cortez had a slave named Malinche, who could speak Mayan and Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs. She translated for him, and they became lovers. Malinche is known as the mother of modern Mexico because of her union with Cortez, which signified the mixing of European and Indigenous bloods (Fig. 13.1). This union created the racial and cultural category of ‘Mestizo’, which represents 83% of the Mexican population (CIA 2015).

Fig. 13.1 Cortez y la Malinche (1926) Painter: José Clemente Orozco



During the early 17th century, after the Spanish had the local population under their control, they began to classify the citizens into “castas” (categories), a hierarchical system of racial classification. It placed the ‘Spanish-born’ at the top, giving them the most rights, and the indigenous at the bottom. “Castas” were “[...] the product of the mixing of Spanish with Crioles, Indigenous, Mestizos and Blacks” (INAH 2009). In the 18th century, this classification was represented through paintings: “las pinturas de castas” (paintings of castes). Each painting depicts a couple and their offspring, demonstrating skin colour, clothing and customs. These paintings also represent “[...] the pyramid structure based on race, where the Spanish-born had all the political power” (INAH 2009). These constructed images favoured the native-born Spanish, as demonstrated in Fig. 13.2, where the figures are presented in a dignified manner, which is very different than the image of the mixed-race couple depicting an “Indigenous” male fighting a “mulatta” who has a child tied to her back (Fig. 13.3).

In the early 1800s, Charles Darwin travelled to South America and encountered the indigenous in Tierra del Fuego, describing them as “[...] the most abject and miserable creatures he had ever encountered [...]” (Carrillo Trueba 2009: 27). This same “[...] repulsion at the indigenous peoples was echoed by the elite Mexicans who were considered white” (Carrillo Trueba 2009: 27). At the end of the



Fig. 13.2 “Spanish and Spanish have Spanish child”. Oil on Canvas 18th Century. Museo Nacional de Historia en Chapultepec. (INAH. RF-341-15)



Fig. 13.3 “Indigenous and Mulatta have a throwback child” Oil on canvas. 18th Century. Museo Nacional de Historia en Chapultepec. (INAH. RF-341-15)

19th century, the concept of improving the human race through genetics, based on the theory of evolution, emerged; it was called ‘eugenics’. In 1931, the *Ateneo de Ciencias y Artes, y la Sociedad Mexicana de Eugenesia para el Mejoramiento de la Raza* (Academy of Sciences, and Arts and the Mexican Society of Eugenics for the Betterment of the Race) was created (Carrillo Trueba 2009: 27); it was “[...] made up of doctors that discussed and created measures to improve the population” (Carrillo Trueba 2009: 27). One of its main proposals was to whiten the Mexican population. This was to be done through the “[...] immigration of white people and not Chinese or Blacks” (Carrillo Trueba 2009: 48–49) and by convincing the new immigrants to move to indigenous areas of Mexico (Carrillo Trueba 2009: 42–44).

The concept of lighter skin superiority continues to the present day, where, I argue, that in popular culture that the “social segregation” of the races and classes is reflected on national television. The majority of actors have a ‘*tez clara*’ (clear complexion), apart from some typical characters, such as the maid in soap operas and actors in some government ads aimed at the general population (Carrillo Trueba 2009: 58). A government study by CONAPRED (National Coalition to Prevent Discrimination) was published in the Mexico City newspaper MIRA! on August 3, 2015, with a headline stating, “Mexicans are closet racists” (MIRA). Featured in the article is an interview with Sonia Rios Freije, Adjunct Director of CONAPRED,



that was accompanied by various facts from their latest study: “4 out of 10 Mexicans felt they were treated differently because of their skin colour; [...] 55% admit that in Mexico you can be insulted for the colour of your skin; [...] and 20% are not satisfied with their own skin colour” (CONAPRED 2010; MIRA 2015).

A person, however, can have darker skin and be considered high class in Mexico. Having a clear complexion does not automatically give a person “class.” There is a popular saying, “*guerro del rancho*”, which means a “white person from the country”, or in other words, a white person without class. When the Europeans first came to Mexico, they discovered that the Aztecs had a very stratified society with noblemen at the top, and after the Spanish conquest, Cortez agreed to keep the Aztec social structure with the nobles above the peasants. As New Spain became more independent from Spain, the Spanish-born in New Spain did not just look at race to decide a person’s status in society. As Bakewell explains, “Broadly speaking, Spaniards in the Indies in the sixteenth century arranged themselves socially less and less by Iberian criteria or rank, and increasingly by new American standards. [...] simple wealth gained from using America’s human and natural resources soon became a strong influence on social standing” (160–163). After living in Mexico for over 25 years, I am of the opinion that a person could have darker skin and be considered high class either because they were from Aztec nobility or if they are very wealthy. This stratified society still exists today, with the majority of the country’s business class having lighter skin, in part because of the “castas” system. However, in politics, the indigenous population has been represented by Benito Juarez, who was elected to the highest level in 1861. He was the first Indigenous President of Mexico, born of the Zapoteco peoples in Oaxaca State. Mexico’s has a complicated history is reflected in its mixing of class and race and the founding national myth that Mexico is a ‘Mestizo’ society, a mixture of indigenous and European blood lines.

When discussing capitalism and how it gained control of Mexico’s political economy, Adam David Morton, describes it as a “[...] passive revolution [...], which is a [...] ruptural moment in the history of modern state formation in which capitalist development is instituted and/or expanded” (2011: 239), and this results in a post-colonial state whose development creates an uneven society and favours the ruling class. Morton also observes that the ruling families aided in the rise of capitalism in Mexico through keeping the racial and socioeconomic-based class levels, reinforcing the castas system and taking advantage of the workers. In *Revolution and State in Modern Mexico: The Political Economy of Uneven Development*, Morton refers to the Gramscian concept called ‘passive revolution’. He describes a passive revolution as “[...] a technique of statecraft that an emergent bourgeois class may deploy by drawing in subaltern social classes while establishing a new state on the basis of the constitution of capitalism. It is in this second sense that the outcome of the Mexican Revolution can be referred to as a period of passive revolution” (Morton 2011: 39). The Mexican revolution established the bourgeoisie as the dominant class; capitalist accumulation increased, giving them more resources and control (Morton 2011: 46–47). This created an environment where the bourgeoisie became very powerful and used its power to influence the

country's population, as well as cultural and social values. This hegemony was achieved after the revolution, when the capitalist class established institutions that had a cross-class or corporatist character, such as state-sponsored unions and peasant organizations based on a clear class hierarchy under the control of the mostly light-skinned ruling class.

Cultural hegemony was developed in Mexico through specific families belonging to the ruling classes that held power through privately-owned corporations, and "[...] the conditions of hegemony were limited to privileged groups based on a central core of dominant classes" (Morton 2011: 125). The three families I am focusing on in this paper benefited from the Mexican revolution and the capitalist class it created, and took advantage of their position to control the 'subaltern social classes' through mass media communication, and more specifically through their usage of advertising messages.

### *The Families*

In 1904, Juan Servitje Torrellardona immigrated to Mexico from the Catalan area of Spain. He worked in a Mexico City bakery called *La Flor De Mexico*. In 1926, he opened a business called El Molino. In 1936, Lorenzo, his oldest son, took over control of the business after he died. In 1945, Lorenzo and his family decided to industrialise the bread industry in Mexico and create a factory under the brand name of *Pan Bimbo*. Lorenzo said in an interview in 2006 that the secret to their success was "[...] to go to bed early, then wake up early, never stop working and to advertise [...]" (Patterson 2007: 254). In Forbes Magazine's annual survey of the richest billionaires in the world, Daniel Servitje is listed as number 310, and the corporation Bimbo is listed as the world's largest bread maker (Forbes 2012). In 1996, Lorenzo senior and his brother Roberto were behind the creation of the organization *A Favor De lo Mejor*, whose objective was to "[...] restrict the hours of exhibition of scenes of sex and violence on TV [...]" (Patterson 2007: 244). This was in reaction to the daytime talk show *Cristina* (on the Televisa network) that discussed current social issues such as teenage pregnancy and sex. They also tried to stop Madonna from performing in Mexico in 1993 because she supposedly "[...] masturbated on stage [...]" (Patterson 2007: 243–244). This organization was designed to remind Mexicans about family values. This is an example of cultural hegemony, with a ruling family trying to impose its morals onto a society by stopping public discussions on abortion, sexual education and condom use in Mexican mass media. Since the formation of modern Mexico, the blending of state and religion is not allowed. However, the Servitje family used its influence and bullied media outlets by threatening to pull their advertising from supposedly 'immoral' TV shows such as *Big Brother* and attempted to impose Catholic business views by controlling the way the media and advertising messages were constructed.

Eugenio Garza Lagüera is from a prominent Spanish family directly descended from Marcos Alonso de la Garza y Del Arcon, who ruled a part of Mexico on behalf of the Spanish royal family after 1596. Eugenio Garza Lagüera's grandfather,

Isaac Garza Garza, was one of the founders of the Cuauhtémoc Brewery in 1890, which later became Cervezceria Cuauhtémoc Montezuma. Eugenio's father, Eugenio Garza Sada, was one of the founders of the private University *TEC de Monterrey* and President of FEMSA (Fomento Económico Mexicano, S.A.B. de C. V), which is currently the largest bottler of Coca Cola in the world. Eugenio Garza Lagüera ran the company until his death in 2008, and now his widow Eva Gonda Rivera runs FEMSA along with members of the family (Forbes Femsa). In 2010, FEMSA sold its beer making operations to Heineken in exchange for a "[...] 12.5% stake in Heineken and 14.9% stake in its parent firm Heineken Holding" (BBC). The Garza Lagüera family still has a major say in beer operations in Mexico and influences Heineken globally because one of the daughters, Eva Maria Garza Laguera Gonda, is married to the current CEO of FEMSA, Jose Antonio Fernandez Carbajal (Forbes FEMSA). One of the beers in this company's holdings is Tecate, which has broadcast very controversial advertising in Mexico. One recent campaign offended the CNDH (The National Commission of Human Rights) with a billboard that portrayed three women at a bar with the headline "Buffet. It's easy to be a man. Tecate Beer, for you". The outdoor advertisements were taken down by the bottler only after a public outcry (CIMA) (TECATE) (Fig. 13.4). The current television ad "Choro" has also caused controversy; in 2014, it won a Publivivoras award, which was granted by an organization that recognizes the worst advertising campaigns promoting sexual violence, misogyny and stereotypes. (CNN) (Choro). I will perform a semiotic analysis of this commercial later on in this paper.

Alberto Bailleres Gonzalez's family is Mexico's third richest family, worth over \$8.5 billion, as it owns one of the world's largest silver mines and the luxury department store chain Palacio de Hierro (Forbes 2015). In 1946, Raul decided to open a private university in Mexico called the *Instituto Tecnológica de Autonomas de Mexico* (I.T.A.M) because, in the words of its current Dean, one of the main Mexican public universities, UNAM, "[...] radicalized its graduates with



Fig. 13.4 Billboard exhibited in Mexico. Title "Buffet. It is easy being a man." Product: Tecate beer



Marxist-Leninist theories [...]” (Patterson: 131). This worried Raul Bailleres, who considered that “[...] the Mexican business class needed to be formed technically, taught by economists that excelled in finances” (Patterson 2007: 131). Alberto has been described as a man with many passions, including architecture, design and advertising. He was personally involved in the store’s advertising campaigns and selected the “[...] aspirational concept for Palacio de Hierro: am totally Palacio [...]”; the campaign has always consisted of “[...] beautiful blonde white women [...]” (Patterson 125) since its inception to the present day.

As mentioned earlier, cultural hegemony in the Gramscian sense occurs when the ruling class influences the value system of a society so that the ruling class view is accepted as the norm by the rest of the society (Gramsci “Selections from the Prison Notebooks” 1971, “Prison Notebooks” 1992). This hegemony is currently being performed in Mexico through the ruling classes’ unconscious persuasion of communications. The bourgeoisie maintain the cultural hegemony the Aztecs started and the Europeans built upon over 500 years ago, and today’s society accepts the continued existence of a class system. Mexico’s social and cultural values are influenced by the ruling families’ powerful connections and ties: The Servitje family created an organization to impose family values and bullied media companies to accept the family’s communications agenda; the Garza family created its own university, TEC de Monterrey, and paid for and approved misogynistic beer advertising that reduces the female to an object; and the Bailleres family has created its own anti-Marxist private university, ITAM, and imposed their personal social values by approving a long-running advertising campaign that promotes the white ideal lifestyle and reinforces the class structure.

### *Mass Control*

Contemporary theorists such as semiologist Roland Barthes argue that social groups tend to regard as ‘natural’ whatever bestows privilege and power upon themselves. In *Mythologies*, Barthes analyzes semiotically how the bourgeois manipulate popular culture in their favour; he saw myth as serving the ideological interests of the bourgeoisie. In Barthes’ book *S/Z*, he declares, “Bourgeois ideology turns culture into nature” (Barthes 1974: 206). He proposes that myths are an ideological way of creating acceptance through naturalization. They are designed to make ideological, social and cultural values seem perfectly natural. The advertising messages broadcast by brands can also be considered tools that allow the bourgeoisie to manipulate their myths into masquerading as truth by creating messages that contain codes or ‘signs’ that are broadcast to consumers. Through repetition, these myths can become accepted as truths, as in the case of religious conversion, which occurred in various parts of the globe, including Mexico, with the integration of new religious beliefs into the original mythic structures. After 500 years of colonial ideology and religion, many Mexicans are constantly faced with images and text placing lighter-skinned humans in positions of power. For example, lighter-skinned European saints replaced darker-skinned Aztec gods. The Catholic Church eliminated all evidence of the Aztec goddess Tonantzin (Aztec mother earth)

and replaced her with the Virgin de Guadalupe. The Aztecs had built a temple dedicated to Tonantzin on a hill in Mexico City. After arriving in Mexico City, the Spanish destroyed the temple, and according to legend, the Virgin de Guadalupe appeared. To this day, the Mexicans still refer to the Virgin as Tonantzin. I propose that this myth was designed to bring the Catholic religion closer to the Mexican people and convert them to Catholicism (Figs. 13.5 and 13.6).

In his book *Propaganda*, Edward Bernays states that in order to have a democracy, the masses need to be controlled. He explores the psychology behind manipulating masses and the ability to use symbolic action and propaganda to influence politics, effect social change, and lobby for gender and racial equality. By keeping the masses distracted by frivolous events and relatively unimportant needs, consumers will not interfere with the activities of what he called ‘the important few’ (1927: 4). He called this scientific technique of opinion-moulding “the engineering of consent” and wrote a book on it by the same name in 1955. I argue that through the lens of Bernay’s writings, the ruling families’ current appropriation of advertising messaging is a tool to maintain power, because mass media can be manipulated to broadcast social and cultural values to the masses to reinforce perceived concepts already instilled in the Aztec society and later built upon by the Mexican society created after the Spanish conquest.

The concept of ‘the gaze’ provides another means of manipulating the masses through mass media. It was first written about by feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey in the 1970s in her article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, which discusses the “male gaze” and how the female body was objectified through the

Fig. 13.5 Tonantzin 2006 by Carl Jones. Digital ink and paint on canvas



Fig. 13.6 Virgin de Guadalupe. Oil on material. Created around 1531



medium of film because of male dominance in the movie industry (1975: 6–18). In the late 18th century, Jeremy Bentham designed the panopticon, a circular prison with a control tower in the middle; this allowed for more effective visual surveillance of the inmates, giving the guards more power, control and knowledge over the prisoners because of the ‘panoptic gaze’ the architecture offered them. In his book *Discipline and Punishment* (1975), Foucault relates the panoptic gaze to power relationships through knowledge and visibility. In *Practices of Looking*, Sturken and Cartwright state, “The gaze is integral to systems of power and ideas about knowledge” (2009: 103). In today’s technologically-dominant world, the gaze creates a power dynamic where the consumer—in the quest for knowledge—allows electronic devices, such as a television, to deliver signs—in the form of entertainment—that feed the capitalist system’s need for commodities. I think of the television as being a panopticon that spreads information through a visual and audio medium to control the masses. Television has become one of the devices appropriated by the ruling classes globally to disseminate information to consumers,

who then reciprocate by purchasing advertised branded products, thereby giving money to companies that are owned by the ruling class, who then create new brands to sell to the consumer. The signs used in the messaging not only reflect, but also construct, social and cultural values (Shaheed 2014: 14).

### *Signs*

Semiotics is an important area of study, and its theories can be applied to communication. One of the fathers of semiotics is Swiss French, Fernand de Saussure, who in the late c1800 thought that communication systems, particularly natural languages were not there to simply classify things as part of a reality, but they had a social aspect, reflected in the way they were structured. He stated that signs were comprised of two elements: the signifier and the signified. The signifier carried the message and the signified was communicated, however, he considered that the sign was completely discretionary, and that there was not necessarily a connection between the sign and its meaning. With many media channels broadcasting over 5000 messages a day to the typical urban consumer (Walker-Smith 2006), the studies and observations of theorist Roland Barthes are very important when applied to messaging that is broadcast through mass media. Barthes' application of the Saussurian model of 'signifier + signified = sign' to advertising can bring insights such as 'myth creation' into symbolic messaging applied to global brands, such as Marlboro, that are instrumental in exporting capitalism to non-Western nation states through globalization (Barthes "*Mythologies*" 1972: 115). The cowboy myth for Marlboro cigarettes is created through positive signs that have been removed from their original context, such as the Amerindian genocide. A sign can consist of symbols, words, images, or sounds and "[...] is used in semiotics to encompass anything that stands for something other than itself" (Danesi "*Encyclopaedia of Media and Communication*" 2013: 590). Barthes notes that semiological signs "appear [...] as soon as there is a society, every usage is converted into a sign of itself" and this is because of "semantization" (1972 "Elements of Semiology" p. 41). Where society assigns a meaning to an object, and that particular meaning can be changed or re-interpreted through constructed advertising messages. Semiotics allows academics and professionals to "[...] compare and contrast objects from two different semiotic systems—language and imagery—and make a valid, useful analysis" (Harrison 2003: 48). Advertising research companies such as Marketing Semiotics Inc., based in Chicago, apply semiotic analysis to global brands such as American Express, McDonald's and Kraft Foods, so that they can successfully position their products in the marketplace.

In his book *Mythologies* one of the themes Barthes explores is how popular culture expressed through mass media contains messages that are composed of signs that can be appropriated and re-interpreted to construct myths that benefit the bourgeoisie society. I argue that Barthes exploration has inspired the new area of study called Visual social semiotics, which is defined by Jewitt and Oyama as covering "[...] the description of semiotic resources, what can be said and done

with images (and other visual means of communication) and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted” (Jewitt 2001: 136). It is important to note that advertising messages are created by communicators, and they have power and control over the signs and how they are combined to create unique messages that can change the original intent of the signs used. As Harrison states in her article “Visual Social Semiotics: Understanding How Still Images Make Meaning”, this manipulation of signs “can [...] therefore affect and even alter meanings” (Harrison 2003: 40). In semiotics, it is believed that people view the world through signs, and as Chandler points out, “[...] although things may exist independently of signs, we know them only through the mediation of signs. We see only what our sign systems allow us to see”. He explains further: “Semioticians argue that signs are related to the signified by social conventions in our use of various media that they seem ‘natural’, and it can be difficult for us to realise the conventional nature of such relationships” (2001: <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/>). I am using visual social semiotics as a tool to analyze television commercials, which are messages composed through combining visual and audio signs to construct a 30–60-s narrative.

### *Media Semiotics*

The sponsored messages that are produced and broadcast by the ruling families are texts composed of signs and codes, blended through the combination of words and images, and expressed in the most accessible mass medium—television—in order to affect Mexicans. Danesi states that “[...] brands are one of the most important modes of communication in the modern media environment” (Danesi “Brands” 2006: 3). In the book *Understanding Media Semiotics*, Danesi observes that television is a “social text” that creates a *cognitive compression effect* “where [...] viewers have little time to reflect on the topics, implications, and meanings contained in its messages ...TV images themselves do the thinking for the viewer” (Danesi 2002b: 145). Visuals and sounds together create a message in a television commercial, and because of the time restraints of 30 or 60 s, the images and audio are edited with precision to deliver a branded message in a short amount of time. Over time, “[...] people are affected by media images mainly because they reflect or reinforce already established trends within the culture” (2002: 151), and since the Mexican population has been receiving messages reflecting class structure and preferences for lighter skin, the advertising messages reinforce these social and cultural values. A television commercial is constructed through a collection of consecutive images that create a narrative. A television commercial controls the eye of the consumer, and it can be considered a way to control the gaze of the viewer in order to construct a specific narrative. This technique is similar to a mural painting, where the eye is directed towards various ‘scenes’ that together construct a narrative. This is also the case with commercials: The individual scenes tell a small story through the combination of signs and codes, and collectively, they tell a complete narrative that the consumer is expected to piece together. This method of presenting a narrative in the form of a mural is a visual technique appropriated by



the Mexican government who hired muralists such as Diego Rivera or Orozco to depict important moments in Mexican history that were broadcast to the public. Television controls the viewer's gaze and construction of the narrative, instead of allowing the viewer to manufacture the scenes in any order. A television commercial can be considered a gaze that is stitched together, or a sutured gaze, because the audience places itself into the message (Miller 1977) so that it can understand the narrative.

### *Advertising*

The ground-breaking 2014 United Nations (UN) report on the impact of advertising and marketing on cultural practices reveals some important observations on how paid communications can influence consumers' perceptions of themselves through the use of coded messages, composed of signs and symbols.

Advertising and marketing strategies have become more sophisticated and brands have developed their own identities. Using a combination of meanings, symbols and values and having unmatched outreach worldwide, they provide codified messages to people and have succeeded in becoming some of the reference points for people's perceptions about themselves, others and the world in general. (Shaheed 2014: 14)

The UN committee observes that, in economic systems like the free market, consumers of brands do not make their own choices, but "[...] *instead, they operate within a sociocultural, economic and political framework that shapes and limits how they think, feel and act in the contemporary marketplace. Advertising and marketing practices increasingly help to shape this framework*" (Shaheed 2014: 15). This UN report's findings demonstrate that advertising does control how the consumer moves within their sociocultural world and that marketers are aware of how brands can influence the consumers' thought processes.

Advertising messages are composed of words and images and are created for specific media broadcasting a visual message sometimes complemented by audio or image only. The manufactured communication that consumers read is a "visual language" that information-mapping pioneer Robert Horn describes as "[...] *the tight coupling of words, images, and shapes into a unified communication unit. 'Tight coupling' means that you cannot remove the words or the images or shapes from a piece of visual language without destroying or radically diminishing the meaning a reader can obtain from it*" (Horn 1999: 27). Advertising is created to deliver a specific brand message; however, there are other messages sent out by an advertisement to the consumer that the consumer does not consciously process.

## 1.2 The Study

In the following study, I am exploring how Mexican sign conventions are appropriated and re-arranged to create branded messages that benefit the three ruling families in Mexico, unbeknownst to the audience.

### *Setting*

The study was conducted within Mexico's capitalist economy. It analyzes branded messages that were first broadcast in 2014 on Mexican privately-owned networks such as Televisa and TV Azteca. The three brands selected each represent a company owned or part-owned by a ruling family based in Mexico. The advertisements were obtained from the *Circulo Creativo* (Creative Circle), the only organization that represents the creative knowledge workers in Mexico's advertising industry. I was president of this self-governed association during 2000–2001. Every year, a competition called *El Circulo de Oro* (Golden Circle) is held, where advertising and design agencies enter branded messages from various media to compete for gold, silver and bronze medals ([www.circuloactivo.com.mx](http://www.circuloactivo.com.mx)). This competition is held in order to select the most creative advertising messages broadcast within the borders of Mexico during a specific time period and to receive industry recognition from peers.

### *Data Collection*

I approached the Creative Circle during May 2015 to obtain access to over 1400 advertising messages entered in the most recent *Circulo de Oro*, held in Acapulco in December of 2014. After reviewing all the entries, I selected three television commercials, each representing a branded commodity and owned by each of the three ruling families that I have chosen to examine in this paper. The current president of the *Circulo Creativo* Ivan Carrasco, Vice President Creative Director of Ogilvy and Mather Advertising, based in Mexico City, handed over this data.

### *Limited Data set*

Modified grounded theory, visual social semiotics and statistical strategies were involved to analyze the data. I started the investigation using methods discussed in *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* by Lindlof and Taylor.

- (1) I used the method of “open coding” through the “unrestricted coding of data” after categories were “built and then named” (Lindlof 2011: 250–251).
- (2) I created a “codebook”, which is “a tool for the development and evolution of a coding system and is an important means for documenting the codes and the procedures for applying them” (Lindlof 2011: 250–251). I constructed a codebook in the form of observational charts created for each commercial, while searching for emergent themes, so that I could develop, apply, revise and confirm a relevant coding structure. Each code is defined and illustrated with examples.

The three codebooks consist of one television commercial aired during the last year for one Mexican brand owned by each family. A visual social semiotic analysis of each commercial is performed by first creating categories based on skin colour, social class, gestures, text tracks and gaze.

**SKIN COLOUR:** For the coding of skin colour, the globally recognized *Fitzpatrick Phototyping Scale* was selected (Fitzpatrick 33–34). This scale

recognizes differences in skin colour rather than specific racial characteristics, which tend to be socially-constructed concepts (Sachdeva 2009). I would like to note that the Fitzpatrick chart is not perfect in its design, as it places white skin at the top of the scale and ends with black (Fig. 13.7).

According to the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) of the US government, 10% of the Mexican population is considered “mostly European”, 62% Mestizo (mixed European and Amerindian), 21% “predominantly Amerindian”, and 7% “Amerindian” (CIA 2015). For the purpose of this study, I am placing “Mestizo” and “predominantly Amerindian” together to represent the majority of the Mexican

Australian Government  
 Australian Radiation Protection  
 and Nuclear Safety Agency

## Fitzpatrick Skin Type

The most commonly used scheme to classify a person's skin type by their response to sun exposure in terms of the degree of burning and tanning was developed by Thomas B. Fitzpatrick\*, MD, PhD. Examples are given below.

\* Fitzpatrick, T.B. (1988) The validity and practicality of sun reactive skin types I through VI. Arch Dermatol 124; 869-871.

<p><b>Eye colour</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. Light colours</li> <li>1. Blue, gray or green</li> <li>2. Dark</li> <li>3. Brown</li> <li>4. Black</li> </ol>	<p><b>Do you turn brown?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. Never</li> <li>1. Seldom</li> <li>2. Sometimes</li> <li>3. Often</li> <li>4. Always</li> </ol>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">Score</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">0-6</td> <td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">Skin Type I</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Always burns, never tans (pale white skin)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">7-13</td> <td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">Skin Type II</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Always burns easily, tans minimally (white skin)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">14-20</td> <td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">Skin Type III</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Burns moderately, tans uniformly (light brown skin)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">21-27</td> <td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">Skin Type IV</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Burns minimally, always tans well (moderate brown skin)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">28-34</td> <td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">Skin Type V</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Rarely burns, tans profusely (dark brown skin)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">35+</td> <td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;">Skin Type VI</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Never burns (deeply pigmented dark brown to black skin)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Score		0-6	Skin Type I	Always burns, never tans (pale white skin)		7-13	Skin Type II	Always burns easily, tans minimally (white skin)		14-20	Skin Type III	Burns moderately, tans uniformly (light brown skin)		21-27	Skin Type IV	Burns minimally, always tans well (moderate brown skin)		28-34	Skin Type V	Rarely burns, tans profusely (dark brown skin)		35+	Skin Type VI	Never burns (deeply pigmented dark brown to black skin)		<p><b>Natural hair colour</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. Sandy red</li> <li>1. Blond</li> <li>2. Chestnut or dark blond</li> <li>3. Brown</li> <li>4. Black</li> </ol>	<p><b>How brown do you get?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. Never</li> <li>1. Light tan</li> <li>2. Medium tan</li> <li>3. Dark tan</li> <li>4. Deep dark</li> </ol>	
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35+	Skin Type VI																														
Never burns (deeply pigmented dark brown to black skin)																															
<p><b>Your skin colour (unexposed areas)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. Reddish</li> <li>1. Pale</li> <li>2. Beige or olive</li> <li>3. Brown</li> <li>4. Dark brown</li> </ol>	<p><b>Is your face sensitive to the sun?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. Very sensitive</li> <li>1. Sensitive</li> <li>2. Sometimes</li> <li>3. Resistant</li> <li>4. Never have a problem</li> </ol>																														
<p><b>Freckles (unexposed areas)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. Many</li> <li>1. Several</li> <li>2. Few</li> <li>3. Rare</li> <li>4. None</li> </ol>	<p><b>How often do you tan?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. Never</li> <li>1. Seldom</li> <li>2. Sometimes</li> <li>3. Often</li> <li>4. Always</li> </ol>																														
<p><b>If you stay in the sun too long?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. Painful blisters, peeling</li> <li>1. Mild blisters, peeling</li> <li>2. Burn, mild peeling</li> <li>3. Rare</li> <li>4. No burning</li> </ol>	<p><b>When was your last tan?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. +3 months ago</li> <li>1. 2-3 months ago</li> <li>2. 1-2 months ago</li> <li>3. Weeks ago</li> <li>4. Days</li> </ol>																														
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Images sourced from iStockphoto

\* The information published here is not intended to take the place of medical advice. Please seek advice from a qualified health care professional.

Fig. 13.7 Fitzpatrick phototyping scale. Produced by Australian Government. Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency. <http://www.arpana.gov.au/pubs/RadiationProtection/FitzpatrickSkinType.pdf>. (Fitzpatrick 1975)

population, which totals 83%. This is a view supported by anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla who, in *Mexico Profundo*, proposed the idea that the remaining Amerindian communities—the ‘de-indianized’ rural Mestizos and large areas of the urban poor—make up a *Mexico Profundo*, where their lives and culture are based in the Mesoamerican civilization (Bonfil). It is important to note that the CIA report mentions that “Mexico does not collect census data on ethnicity [...]” (2015). Using those statistics, I am assuming that “European” is Fitzpatrick Type I and II and that “Mestizo, and predominantly Amerindian” is Fitzpatrick Type III and IV (Table 13.1).

According to the 2012 Hernandez-Zarate medical study of skin cancer patients, the majority of the Mexican population moves between Fitzpatrick Type III and IV, with 44% of population being between Fitzpatrick Type III and 34% being Type IV, for a total of 78%. In the dermatological study (Hernández-Zárate et al. 2012: 33–34) and in the CIA ethnic study, they would be classified as “Mestizo & Predominantly Amerindian”, with a total of 83% of the Mexican population. The number in the dermatological study is 78%, and the CIA ethnic study is 83%—they are similar enough to justify the percentages of non-white, mixed-blood peoples in the Mexican population.

**SOCIAL CLASS:** Due to Mexico’s history, I have created a code that deals with class and class structure. Class is another form of dividing and classifying Mexican citizens. This division had been performed by the Aztecs in Tenochtitlan, and then by the Spanish. Cultural codes such as social class are projected by the accumulation of signs that are constructed to present a collective message of “having class”, which is achieved through the purchase of branded commodities like watches, clothing, shoes, furniture and cars. This collection of signs gives agency to the subject in the manufacture of their identity. In this codebook, I am observing codes and signs to analyze how individuals construct their identity to reflect their class. In advertising, when a commercial is designed to appeal to a specific target group, the ‘social economic classes’ are reflected in levels such as A and A+, which are the top 1% of the population; B and B+ are middle to upper middle class; C and C+ are lower middle class; D is low class; and E represents the poorest consumers. The socioeconomic classes are categorized by the Mexican government according to the information collected and classified by the *National Institute of Statistics and*

Table 13.1 Chart presenting the results of the Hernández-Zárate et al. (2012), Fitzpatrick Scale and CIA racial breakdown of Mexican population (2015)

Racial skin types in dermatology study Hernández-Zárate	Fitzpatrick scale	CIA definitions	CIA Mexican population (%)
N/A	Type I and II	“Mostly European”	10
44 and 34%	Type III and IV	“Mestizo,” “Predominantly Amerindian”	83
N/A	Type IV	“Amerindian”	7

*Geography* (INEGI) (INEGI 2009) and are based on 13 variables: (1) education level of head of household, (2) number of rooms, (3) number of bathrooms with shower (4) type of floor, (5) number of light bulbs, (6) car, (7) boiler or water heater, (8) automatic washing machine, (9) videocassette player, (10) toaster, (11) electric vacuum, (12) microwave, and (13) personal computer.

GESTURES and body language can be considered a cultural code and reflect thought, emotions and attitudes that are spoken and unspoken by actors. The codes for the gestures presented in the commercials are designed to examine how body language and the use of signs in the form of props accentuate the gestures and assist in presenting the narrative.

TEXT TRACKS such as words, music, and audio are heard or read in the branded television commercial. Text tracks can represent signs and cultural codes, such as

- social status, conflicts, problems and solutions, and advance the narrative. Word patterns can be observed in both written and oral formats, and audio patterns can be heard through music and sound cues.

GAZE: Signs can be implied through eye movement, eye direction and camera angles. The camera can substitute for the viewer's gaze and broadcast signs as to how the content should be seen. The camera also takes the place of a fourth wall, the wall that is never seen on the screen. The actual gaze of the actors in the commercial can give clues to cultural codes and give meaning to a narrative.

- (3) A "syntagmatic analysis" was performed to expose the semiotic messaging broadcast to the Mexican public. "Syntagmatic analysis" involves analysis of a text by "studying its structure and the relationships between its parts" (Chandler) in order to discover the representational metafunction behind the manufactured image. According to Harrison in *Visual social semiotics: Understanding how images make meaning*, the representational metafunction is "[...] about the people, places, and objects within an image—the represented participants—and answers the question 'What is the picture about?'" (Harrison 2003: 55). I will bring together my conclusions from the five codes of skin type, social class, gesture, text tracks, and gaze to analyze the pictures or scenes that compose the television commercial.

### 1.3 Results and Analysis

#### *Advertisement 1*

Company: Bimbo  
 Name of family that owns company: Servitje  
 Client: Barcel  
 Advertising Agency: Publicis Mexico



Product: "Runners" Chip snack

Title: Monsters

Length: 27 s

Medium: Television

Year created and exposed on paid media: 2014

Link to commercial: <https://vimeo.com/136048999> (password is: Mexico)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PPJXzBuMw4>

Actors: Four main actors in commercial.

### *Company*

Barcel is a sub division of "Grupo Bimbo, the world's largest bread maker, which had 2009 revenues of US\$8.6 billion" (Forbes 2012). Barcel makes salty snacks directed at the general market. Its main competition is Frito-Lay, owned by the American corporation Pepsi-Co. I have worked on advertising for both Bimbo and Pepsi-Co.

Fig. 13.8 (A) 1 Male,  
 approx. 15 years of age  
 (Fig. 13.8)



Fig. 13.9 (B) 1 Male,  
 approx. 14 years of age  
 (Fig. 13.9)



Fig. 13.10 (C) 1 female,  
approx. 15 years of age  
(Fig. 13.10)



Fig. 13.11 (D) 1 adult male,  
approx. 35 years of age  
(Fig. 13.11)



### *Narrative*

Commercial starts with 3 teenage students in front of high school eating Runners brand snack chips. A large car from the late 20th century arrives and parks in front of them. The students tell him not to park there because they are saving it for someone. A 35-year-old man steps out of the car. Cut to a close-up of the 3 students, now wearing crash helmets. A 'Runners' monster truck drives into the frame, smashes into the car, crushing it. The man falls to the ground in shock. Cut to 10 people cheering, holding a sign that says "Adrenalin". Cut to wide shot of monster truck in a stadium; its wheels are spitting out "Runners" chips towards camera and 2 Runners-branded packages appear.



Fig. 13.12 (E) 10 supporting actors (5 females and 5 males), ranging from 18 to 65 years of age (Fig. 13.12)

Fig. 13.13 (F) Driver of Monster Truck (Fig. 13.13)



### *Skin classification in television commercial*

#### *Decoding the skin types*

In this commercial, 10 actors move between Fitzpatrick Type I and Type II, representing 66.67% of the actors in the commercial. However, in the actual demographics the “Europeans” or Skin Type I and II make up 10% of the Mexican population. Only 5 actors representing 33.33% of the people in the commercial are in the Fitzpatrick scale of III and IV, representing the typical ranges of “Mestizo, predominantly Amerindian” skin colour. However, in the real-life demographics, Types III and IV make up 80% of the Mexican population. There are no

Table 13.2 Code: skin type

Skin type descriptive Fitzpatrick scale	Definition	Examples
Type I	Always burns, never tans(pale white skin)	Actors E (2 background actors)
Type II	Always burns easily, tans minimally (white skin)	Actors A, C, D and E (4 background actors)
Type III	Burns moderately, tans uniformly (light brown skin)	Actors B, D, and E (3 background actors)
Type IV	Burns minimally, always tans well (moderate brown skin)	E (1 background actor)
Type V	Rarely burns, tans profusely (dark brown skin)	
Type VI	Never burns (deeply pigmented dark brown to black skin)	

“Amerindian” skin types in the commercial, so 7% of the population are not portrayed. The commercial does not represent the majority of the skin Types III and IV of the Mexican population (Table 13.2).

### *Class description in advertising*

#### *Decoding the class signs*

The group of student actors—A, B, C—are wearing clothing that is currently popular with their age group in Mexico City suburbs, and it appears that they are from class levels C+, B, and B+. They are wearing the latest student fashions and student C (girl) has expensive accessories, including a plaid bag and large Beats by Dr Dre branded headphones that attach to a cell phone. These class-coded accessories would place her in the upper middle class. The crowd, E, wears clothing that represent current fashion trends indicating they are from mid-class levels. The car driver, D, is wearing items that represent the signs of being from a lower class level. He has accessories that consist of a gold necklace and bracelet—items that people from the upper levels would consider flashy and tacky. Under his top, he is wearing a “wife beater” shirt. The mullet hairstyle is a throwback to the 1970s and is out of fashion. His clothing is not coordinated, and the fact he is wearing long socks with shoes and shorts further classify the car driver as a “naco”, which is a term used in Mexico to classify people who are from less-educated the lower classes, and they would be classified as level D. Age differences between the car driver and teenagers are also emphasised through the clothing styles between the car driver—who wears clothing that was popular last century—and the students, who sport current fashion trends and technology. The helmets that the students put on after confronting the driver, is the same brand of helmet that the monster truck driver wears as he crushes the “naco” driver’s car. The monster truck is an expensive contemporary vehicle whose driver wears a futuristic black helmet, which contrasts against the cheaper, old-fashioned car and driver, further emphasizing differences between the two

classes. The black helmet can be perceived as protection from an accident, or a way of blocking sound or sight from entering (Table 13.3).

My analysis is that the helmet represents protection for the bourgeoisie middle classes against the lower class “nacos”, and the only way to obtain that protection is by buying the snack Runners that is distributed by the monster truck. The commercial contains signs and codes that reinforce socioeconomic class differences and demonstrates the need for the bourgeoisie to be protected from the lower classes, implying that they can protect themselves through consumption.

Table 13.3 Code: social class

Class descriptive	Definition	Example
Clothing	Attire worn by actor	Actor A Red t-shirt with straight leg faded blue jeans Actor B Stripped t-shirt covered by short-sleeved shirt with blue army camouflage design, straight leg faded grey pants Actor C Long-sleeved sweatshirt; cut-off jean shorts Actor D ‘Wife beater’ shirt covered by a white short sleeved Hawaiian shirt; Long wide light green sport shorts; long white knee sports socks; regular shoes with bright laces Actors E 10 background actors wearing spring-like clothing featuring blue, light green and light browns colours Actor F Black gloves and black leather top
Accessories	Props held or possessed by actor(s) in ad	Actors A, B and C have Runners packages in their hands. At the 10th second of the commercial black cycle helmets (similar to the helmets Daft Punk wear) appear on heads Actor C Plaid shoulder bag; Beats by Dr. Dre type headphones Actor D Gold chain around neck; gold bracelet on left wrist; 1980s pale yellow cardoor has been modified to open as luxury car Delorean; rabbit foot dangles off rearview mirror Actor D Black Helmet
Hairstyle	Hairstyle and facial hair	Actor A and B have hair cut around ears in contemporary style Actor C has long shoulder length hair Actor D has an exaggerated mullet hairstyle with excessive length at back Actor D has a moustache and is unshaven



*Gestures/body language descriptive of each actors 'performance' in advertising*  
*Decoding the gesture signs*

The actor D uses aggressive physical gestures negatively throughout the commercial to communicate with the students. He raises his arms in a challenge when he is told not to park in the 'saved' space. He also uses his arms and turns his body to 'magically' close the door and turn off the car's music. The students express their feeling in a subtle, passive manner, shaking heads, showing disgust and putting on black helmets to protect themselves from what is to come (Table 13.4).

The crowd E is very expressive in their body language, demonstrating extreme happiness when the car of actor D is smashed by the monster truck. The students and crowd E together are acting in a passive manner, while the actor D is

Table 13.4 Code: gestures

Gesture descriptive	Definition	Example
Negative	Not welcome here	Actor C Gestures with a shake of hand when actor D arrives Actor D Puts head out side of car and gestures "who cares" to actors A, B, and C
Confidence	Look at me	Actor D Does an exaggerated body move to bring attention to the door closing Body action appears to shut off car music
Confrontation	Between students and car driver	Actor C mentions to Driver D that it is taken "No, No, No. Esta apartado por un amigo" Actor D Parks car in a space that is already spoken for; he laughs at their comment Actors A B, C Look at each other in confusion and disagreement Actor D Rubs hand along car in a suggestive manner Actor F Driver of truck clenches hands around steering wheel of monster truck
Aggression	Driving monster truck	Actor D lifts head in a 'who cares' attitude. Arms risen on either side of his body in an aggressive stance Actor F Drives monster truck onto parked car
Upset	Not happy with what is/has happened	Actors A, B, and C when car takes parking spot Actor C Female student gives look of disgust to camera when actor D makes a suggestive gesture by running his hand along roof of car Actor D Drops to his knees when car is destroyed
Happy	Crowd watching the activities on the street	Actors E Crowd cheers when D's car is destroyed and he is on his knees on street
Preparation	Wearing of helmets (prop)	Actors A, B, and C wear helmets as a response to actor D's aggression Actor F Wears a helmet Actor Curls fingers around steering wheel

aggressive. I conclude that the brand demonstrates its dislike for overt aggressive gestures that lower classes are aggressive, and shows its support for a passive attitude that is attractive to the majority of Mexicans.

*Text tracks in the commercial*

Script:

SFX—Cumbria music in background grows louder as car approaches.

Actor C (Girl)—*No, no, no. Esta apartado por un amigo. (No, no, no. It is reserved for a friend.)*

Actor B (Boy)—*No (low voice).* SFX—

D Door shuts and music turns off. Actor

D (Man)—*Laughs.*

Actor F turns on Monster truck engine.

ANNCR—*Llego todo la adrenalina a de los nuevos Monster Runners. (It has arrived, all the adrenalin of new Monster Runners)*

SFX—(Metal Crashing) Truck landing on car and crushing it. ANNCR—

*Nos costa la adrenalina. (All it takes is adrenalin.)* ANNCR—*Sabour a turbo queso. (Tastes of turbo cheese.)* Crowd—Cheers in reaction to previous scene.

SFX—Heavy metal guitar coincides with cheese Runners shooting out of the Monster truck’s tires (Table 13.5).

Table 13.5 Code: text tracks

Text tracks descriptive	Definition	Example
Negative	Words/sounds/music used in a sentence that has a negative connotation Aggressive in tone	Actor C (Girl)—No, no, no. It is reserved for a friend Actor B (Boy)—No (low voice) Actor D (Man)—Laughs SFX—(Metal Crashing)
Positive	Words/sounds/music used in sentences that are favourable Happy in tone	Actors E Crowd—Cheers! ANNCR—All it takes is adrenalin SFX—Heavy metal guitar music that coincides with cheese Runners shot out of the Monster truck’s tires
Problem	Words/sounds/music that indicate a problem	Actor C (Girl)—No, no, no. It is reserved for a friend SFX—Cumbria music in background grows louder as car approaches
Solution	Words/sounds used are favourable and part of the solution to the problem	Actor F revs Monster truck ANNCR—(It has arrived, all the adrenalin of new Monster Runners) ANNCR—Tastes of turbo cheese SFX—Heavy Metal music when car is crushed

### *Decoding the text*

The word “No” is said 4 times by students A, B, and C to the car driver D. He responds by laughing sinisterly. The crowd E cheers after the car is crushed and a heavy metal riff is heard, representing the adrenalin of the monster truck coming and hitting the car. The upper classes usually listen to foreign music because they understand English lyrics. Imported contemporary popular music such as heavy metal is accessed through online services like iTunes, offered on expensive electronic devices such as iPhones—which is a luxury the less fortunate cannot afford.

The Cumbia music is heard when the car driver parks the car in a space that is not his. Cumbia is a very traditional music, and is usually listened to by the lower classes, as it is made available in accessible formats such as locally made CD’s and even cassettes. Cumbia music has a traditional base in colonial Latin America, so Mexicans who want to get in touch with their latin roots gravitate to this type of music. However, it should be mentioned that all Mexicans of all socioeconomic level do appreciate cumbia music during traditional celebrations like weddings and special holidays.

There are a lot of binary cues used in the audio construction of the narrative. The “No” from the students; the “Ha, ha, ha” laughter from the driver; young age versus old age actor D; the cry of the man D when his car is crushed versus the cheering of the crowd; old car versus a monster truck; and, the cumbia music versus the heavy metal music.

There is a music war when the imported, contemporary heavy metal music overpowers the traditional cumbia music. This is demonstrated by the heavy metal music being played when the monster truck is introduced and when it crushes the car that emitted the cumbia music. Therefore, the heavy metal music is associated with victory, modernity and the upper classes, and the cumbia music is associated with losing, tradition and the lower classes.

### *Gaze*

#### *Decoding the gaze*

The same camera angle is used throughout the commercial to present a suggested neutral narrative. However, the visual narrative breaks when a lower camera angle is used to demonstrate the joy of the crowd when the car of actor D is crushed. The gaze of the camera is shot from below and this helps to present the crowd as a hero, forcing the viewer to look up at the crowd. This technique of looking up to present a hero was used by Leni Riefenstahl when she presented images of the Nazi party in her movie *Triumph of the Will* (Triumph 1935) (Table 13.6).

### *Conclusion:*

#### *Decoding the signs and cultural codes*

In his book *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes explains the concept of connotation and denotation—where myth occurs when the consumer reads connotative meanings as denotative. This concept, applied to the helmet visual device as seen in the

Table 13.6 Code: gaze

Gaze descriptive	Definition	Example
Eye level of viewer	Neutral framing of scenes. No opinion is given	Actors A, B and C in conversations with (D): Camera angles are from eye level
Camera angle from below looking up	Hero. Crowd watching the activities on the street	Crowd E Camera is placed at a lower level looking up to subjects

television commercial, produces the following connotative meaning: the snack Runners is actually a device to protect the young, mostly light-skinned consumer against the older lower class. What this signifies is that a food made from corn is actually a helmet that separates the upper class from the lower class and turns them into heroes. This meaning is socially and culturally specific and not a natural association.

This commercial demonstrates that during a confrontation, the higher class has power over the lower class. The helmet is a representation of the brand Runners and demonstrates how it will protect the young, upper middle class, mostly lighter-skinned students in their fight against the older, lower-class “nacos.” The students also have the support of the mostly white majority. This is reinforced through the use of signs and cultural codes that emphasise differences in socio-economic status, skin type, gestures, artefacts, age and music. Runners creates a mythical story of struggle between the contemporary bourgeois middle and upper classes versus the traditional lower class.

#### Advertisement 2

Company: Palacio de Hierro

Name of family that owns company: Bailleres.

Client: Palacio de Hierro

Advertising Agency: Teran/TBWA Mexico City.

Product: Department store image advertising

Title: “Andres Velencoso”\*

Length: 60 s

Medium: Television and Cinema.

Year created and exposed on paid media: aired early 2015.

Link to commercial: <https://vimeo.com/136048998> (password is Mexico)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HMzETI44BI>

\*TV Commercial not sourced from *Circulo de Oro* competition 2014.

Actors: Two main actors in commercial.

#### Company

Palacio de Hierro is a department store that sells luxury brands to the A and A+ markets in major urban centers in Mexico. This is the description on its website: “El Palacio de Hierro is the most prestigious department store in Mexico, offering customers products and services of the most prestigious brands”. The owner,

Fig. 13.14 (A) Actor, male  
35 years of age. Name:  
Andres Velencoso. Model  
from Spain. Born March 11,  
1978. Has appeared in many  
advertising campaigns (e.g.  
Chanel and Louis Vuitton)  
(Fig. 13.14)



Fig. 13.15 (B) Actor,  
female. Approx. 25 years of  
age (Fig. 13.15)



Alberto Baillares, has been described as a man with many passions, including architecture, design and advertising.

### *Narrative*

The television commercial starts with scenes introducing the well-known Spanish model, Andres Velencoso, in full body shots and close-ups in various urban locations, during different times of the day and night. It is filmed as if it were a print fashion shoot, with scenes that have limited movement. A young female is introduced into the narrative as a voyeur observing him undressing. She finds her way to Velencoso and they slow dance. He takes her for a ride in a sports car, and for the rest of the commercial, we see Andres displaying various positive emotions directly towards the camera. During the advertisement, typography appears over scenes—“soy...” (I am)—combined with various positive adjectives. The commercial ends with the text “Soy totalmente Palacio” (I am totally Palacio) and a large logo saying “Palacio de Hierro” (Palace of Iron).



## Skin classification in television commercial

*Decoding Skin*

I would like to note that the actor Velencoso does appear to have a Fitzpatrick Type III in most of the photographs that he appears in (Fig. 13.16); however, for this specific TV commercial and accompanying billboard campaign, his skin is lighter and is Type II (Fig. 13.14). His facial and body skin colour are the same: Fitzpatrick Type II (Fig. 13.17). The female (B) has Fitzpatrick Type I skin. Her facial skin type is the same type as her arms and legs (Table 13.7).



Fig. 13.16 Vanity Fair Magazine. Spain 2010



Fig. 13.17 Scene from TV Palacio De Hierro 2015

Table 13.7 Code: skin type

Skin type descriptive Fitzpatrick scale	Definition	Examples
Type I	Always burns, never tans (pale white skin)	Actor B
Type II	Always burns easily, tans minimally (white skin)	Actor A

*Class description in advertising**Decoding Class*

The male actor A wears what seems to be a new outfit in each scene, demonstrating various 'looks' and combinations of clothing that can be worn throughout the day and evening. The clothing, props, car and jewellery are all designer objects, representing the best-branded commodities that the department store has to offer. The latest trends from the fashion industry are designed to separate the higher classes from the lower through the use of coded signs. The commercial is also informing the consumer of the latest signs and codes that project the image of the upper ruling class (Table 13.8).

The female B appears as a luxury accessory to the male A to emphasise his seductive powers.

*Gestures/body language descriptive of each actors 'performance' in advertising.*

*Decoding gestures*

The main gestures observed seem to be that of actor A seducing B through his removal of clothes and overall use of his body. B demonstrates her attraction to A when she opens her mouth when she sees him removing his shirt through the open window. B makes herself available by walking around A when he is sitting in the chair. During the dance, A allows herself to be pulled tightly against his body. The male is in full control of the situation, using his masculinity to seduce the female and the audience (Table 13.9).

*Text tracks in the commercial*

The actors do not speak in the commercial; however, text appears during specific scenes and a soundtrack is present. It was music featured in the opening credits of the HBO series True Blood—"Baby did a bad thing" from Chris Isaac.

The script.

Text: QUIEN SOY? (WHO AM I)

Table 13.8 Code: class

Class descriptive	Definition	Example
Clothing	Description of attire worn by actor	Actor A All the designer clothing worn is sold in Palacio de Hierro. The actor wears suits, a tuxedo jacket, shirts, shoes, leather jackets, leather belts, various ties, bow tie Actor (B) The actor wears 2 different designer dresses, shoes
Accessories	Description of props held or possessed by actor(s)	Actor A wears a Breitling watch, drives Porsche sports car and sits on leather chairs. The female actor appears as an accessory in the car Actor (B) wears a few rings on her left hand

Table 13.9 Code: gestures

Gesture descriptive	Definition	Example
Seduction	Use of body language in free, open manner	Actor A Stands in front of glass window and removes shirt to reveal muscled chest Actor B Voyeur looking through window at male removing shirt Actor B Opens mouth when sees male removing clothing Actor A Sits confidently in chair while (B) walks around him, with her hand running along chair Actor B Allows herself to be grabbed from behind her back and pulled towards (A)
Confidence	Movement of body and extremities to attract attention	Actor A Looks directly at camera throughout most of the commercial Actor A Leans against walls in various situations, projecting confidence Actor A Sits in chair while female parades around him Actor A Pulls pelvis of (B) towards his lower body Actor B Sits on (A)'s lap while he stares at camera Actor A Drives car inside a stadium and does wheelies at a dock. He drives with confidence Actor A Dances by himself. (A) throws shirt at camera while he is shirtless Actor A Walks towards camera while taking off glasses with hand in pocket
Challenge	Body movement creates movement and action	Actor A Takes off shirt (A) Throws shirt at camera (A) Looks directly at camera, laughing (A) Runs towards camera through smoke

Text: SOY ATRACCION (I AM ATTRACTION).

Text: SOY ESTILO (I AM STYLE).

Music: Baby did a bad bad thing.

Text: SOY SEDUCCION (I AM SEDUCTION).

Music: Baby did a bad bad thing.

Baby did a bad bad thing, feel like crying, feel like crying.

Text: SOY EMOCION (I AM EMOTION).

Music: Oh, feel like crying, feel like crying.

Text: SOY LIBRE (I AM FREE).

Music: Oh, feel like crying, feel like crying.

Text: SOY AUTENTICO (I AM AUTHENTIC).

Text: SOY ASI (I AM LIKE THIS).

Text: SOY TOTALMENTE PALACIO (I AM TOTALLY PALACIO).

Table 13.10 Code: text track

Audio descriptive	Definition	Example
Statement	Adjectives used in text are favourable towards actor A	SOY ATRACCION (I AM ATTRACTION) Text: SOY ESTILO (I AM STYLE) SOY SEDUCCION (I AM SEDUCTION) SOY EMOCION. (I AM EMOTION) SOY LIBRE (I AM FREE) SOY AUTENTICO (I AM AUTHENTIC) SOY ASI (I AM LIKE THIS) SOY TOTALMENTE PALACIO (I AM TOTALLY PALACIO)
Music	Lyrics to accent visuals English-language music is imported and expensive to buy	Baby did a bad bad thing (repeated)
Typography	Selected fonts to represent an emotion or attitude	Sans serif, bold, aggressive font in upper case letters. It is an order telling the audience that “I AM AUTHENTIC”. The same type of font used in the traffic sign STOP Logo Palacio de Hierro: cursive serif font

ANNCR: *Soy totalmente Palacio (I am totally palacio).*

Music: Guitar rift.

Text: Palacio de Hierro (logo), Visitanos: En tienda. En Linea. (Visit us in store, on line) (Table 13.10).

The lyrics are used to construct the narrative of a rich bad boy, suggesting that he is an outlaw. It is typical in Western culture to present a wealthy man who has done some “bad bad things”. and, because of this, they are attractive to females. In the 1950s film *Rebel Without a Cause*, James Dean was an outsider whom women were attracted to, specifically because he projected an image of rebellion. In the more recent film *The Wolf on Wall Street*, the lead character attracted many women because of his bad boy reputation and wealth. In fact, American culture rewards rich men who behave badly. For instance, the owners of banks who caused the 2008 financial crash were not put in jail, and in 2009, many received bonuses from the banks they presided over. The music is in English and would be known by wealthy Mexicans who can afford to listen to English language music or watch pay cable, vs cumbia which is less expensive to access and cheaper to buy.

The commercial opens with a question—“QUIEN SOY? (WHO AM I)”—and then answers it with adjectives that are aspirational for most males. The typographic font is confident and bold. The commercial is structured so that the text is answered or reinforced with visuals. For example, when the word ‘SOY SEDUCCION (I AM SEDUCTION)’ appears, the actor A is “seducing” the female; when the words ‘SOY LIBRE (I AM FREE)’ appears, A is shown dancing by himself and doing wheelies with his car by the water’s edge.

The commercial suggests that by purchasing imported branded commodities at Palacio de Hierro, any male can construct an ideal identity and become a member of the light-skinned ruling class.

### *Gaze*

For most of the commercial, the same gaze is used to present a narrative that is from the point of view of the female, who is watching the male through the glass window. The audience thus becomes the voyeur as well, spying on the male. When the female has left the story, the audience continues to be a voyeur, and the actor returns the gaze. The actor A spends more than 50% of the commercial looking directly at the camera into the audience's gaze. For men, this can be considered confrontational. However, when the audience is put into the position of a "female" voyeur, it becomes a seductive gaze, trying to seduce the audience. The technique of inviting the audience into the commercial, of making them forget the camera and insert themselves into the moving image is called 'suture'. As explained by one of Lacan's disciples, Jaques-Alain Miller, "Suture [is], by extension—the general relation of lack to the structure of which it is an element, inasmuch as it implies the position of a taking-the-place-of" (Miller 1977 vol. 18, no. 4). Thus the audience is sutured into the commercial, allowing both sexes to be seduced by the powerful white male who represents the ruling class (Table 13.11).

### *Conclusion:*

#### *Decoding the signs and cultural codes*

Applying Barthes' 1972 semiotic concept of connotative and denotative to the Palacio de Hierro television commercial produces the following denotative meaning: The male actor, who wears imported branded luxury products sold at Palacio de Hierro, becomes a hero. What this signifies connotative is that commodities such as plastic, cloth, leather, metal, and rubber—when worn together on a male body—can change him into an aspirational sex object. It is creating a branded myth. This meaning is socially and culturally specific and not a natural association.

Table 13.11 Code: gaze

Gaze descriptive	Definition	Example
Eye level of viewer	Neutral framing of scenes	The camera is at eye level It appears to be from the point of view of the female voyeur
Camera angle from below looking up	Hero	The camera does not look down upon the male It does look at eye level or up to the male
Gaze	Challenge	Actor B shown looking at actor A through a window as if she is a voyeur Actor A Spends most of the commercial placing his gaze directly at the viewer



The commercial is designed to manipulate men from any class level, skin type, or sexuality to willingly see through the eyes of a white female voyeur and be seduced by the actor and the brand. The commercial is a celebration of the A+ class's and Fitzpatrick skin Type I and skin Type II consumers' lifestyle. It demonstrates how this ruling class lives. It is a message that legitimizes the 'bad bad boys' of the ruling class and permits them to do what they want because they can. The commercial communicates that this lifestyle is obtainable to consumers—for a price. The ad creates a myth where the powerful white male becomes a hero, even though he is a "bad boy", and this is obtainable through the purchase of luxury goods. This constructed hero is able to seduce everyone he meets. The ad is manipulating the consumer into accepting and buying into the ruling class myth through the technique of a sutured gaze. As Foucault discusses in his book *Discipline and Punishment* about power relationships through knowledge and visibility, the powerful ruling families are using television to unconsciously spread information about the signs and codes of the ruling class to inspire the masses to spend money. This is accomplished through the audience's purchase of luxury commodities of businesses, which are owned by the ruling classes, who in turn use the mass media to construct social and cultural values. It is important to note that, for cultural hegemony to work, it does not have to be a conscious decision made by the ruling families; the signs and cultural codes in the advertising portray values which indirectly reinforce their class power.

### Results and Analysis

#### Advertisement 3

Company: FEMSA

Name of family that owns company: Familia Eugenio Garza.

Client: Heineken, Cuauhtémoc Montezuma.

Advertising Agency: Nómades

Product: Tecate Beer

Title: Tecate Choro

Length: 1:27 s

Medium: Television

Year created and exposed on paid media: 2014.

Link to commercial: <https://vimeo.com/136048997> (Password is: Mexico)

<http://www.latinspots.com/site/sp/pieza/detalle/18440/comercial/Choro>

Actors: Two main actors in commercial.

#### *Company:*

Eva Gonda, widow of Eugenio Garza and their 4 daughters (Forbes) own FEMSA and Cervezceria Cuauhtémoc Moctazuma. They sold the Cervezceria on January 11, 2010 to Heineken so that FEMSA ended up with a 20% stake in its parent firm, Heineken Holding. The objective was that FEMSA could have a larger international presence (BBC FEMSA) (femsa.com) and the sale gave them supervision of the Mexican and Latin American market and a position on the Heineken board.

Fig. 13.18 (A) Female approx. 27 years of age (Fig. 13.18)

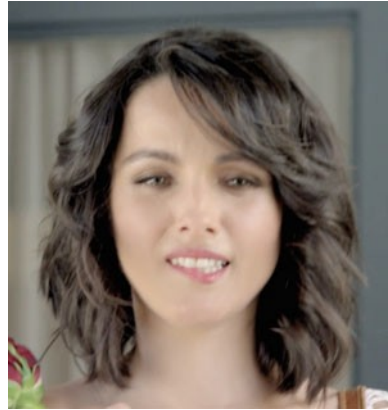


Fig. 13.19 (B) Male approx. 35 years of age (Fig. 13.19)



The operations and marketing in Latin America is still under control of the Eugenio Garza's family, as Jose Antonio Fernandez Carbajal is president of LATAM Heineken committee (femsa.com).

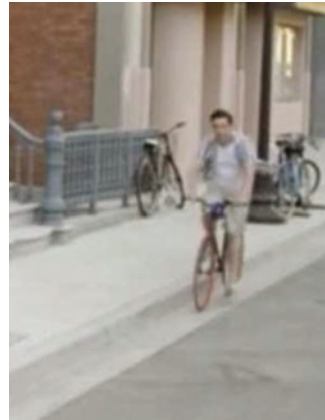
Tecate beer was first created in 1944 and now is the flagship brand for Cuauhtémoc Montezuma and Heineken in Mexico.

The commercial is very long for a typical TV ad, which currently are 20 or 30 s long versus 20 years ago where they were 30 to 60 s. It was to be the first commercial shown before a World Cup match featuring Mexico. It was designed to have the names of the two teams playing as part of the information portrayed at the end of the commercial, and in this case it was Cameroon versus Mexico.



Fig. 13.20 (C) Extras. In the background (Fig. 13.20)

Fig. 13.21 (C) Extras. In the background (Fig. 13.21)



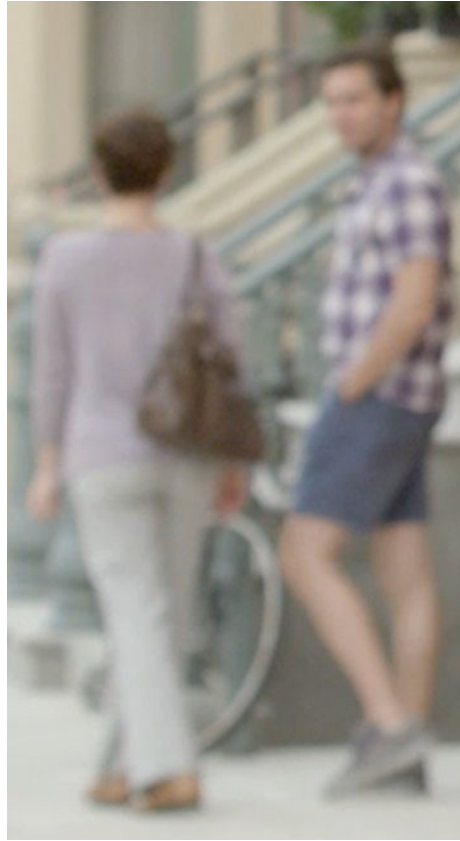
### *Narrative*

The Television commercial opens with a romantic street scene—we see a couple walking upstairs to the door of a townhome. The female invites the male into the apartment, but he hesitates and explains that he wants to show her respect by not going in today. After a long explanation, the boyfriend leaves, and the girlfriend enters the home as he runs away. She is not aware that he went to watch the soccer match with his friends and was making up a reason not to go into her place.

### *Skin classification in television commercial*

The male and female protagonists both have Fitzpatrick Type II skin. Of the 6 extras that appear, 5 are white-skinned and one is Type III. This demonstrates that the commercial features light-skinned actors and is not proportionately

Fig. 13.22 (C) Extras. In the background (Fig. 13.22)



representative of the skin type breakdown in Mexican society, which is 10% light skinned vs. 80% mid range skin tones (Table 13.1).

*Class description in advertising*

The female actor A wears clothing that reflects an upper middle class and what she would wear for a daytime date. Her white top is Spanish in style and is reminiscent of the classic paintings where Spanish women are shown with a white top, revealing the shoulders. Actor B wears clothing that is appropriate for an afternoon date and that can be taken off to fit in with the guys watching a soccer game. The extras are wearing casual American-style clothing. It is not typical for Mexican males to wear shorts unless they are at the beach. Since the set is New York-style and the men are wearing casual American-style clothing, we can deduce that the location is not Mexico. This type of neighbourhood for a Mexican represents upper middle class because of the size of the buildings and the price of real estate—only a wealthy person could afford to live here. So Mexicans living in the world presented here would need to have a lot of money (Table 13.12).

Fig. 13.23 (C) Extras. In the background (Fig. 13.23)



After male B succeeds in convincing female A to let him leave, he runs from the situation towards a modern building. It is as if he is escaping romance and entering the current time period. The woman's house number is 69, which is the same number of a sexual position. This is not a coincidence. It establishes the female as a sexual object (Table 13.13).

*Gestures/body language descriptive of each actors performance' in advertising*

When commercial starts, B is standing at eye level with A. When B starts to explain why he will not come into the apartment, he stands a few steps below A. By standing below the female and looking up, the male gives the female a false sense of power in order to convince her that he is telling the truth. By standing on steps that are below where the female is, he is putting the female in a high position and forces her to look down on him, therefore appearing vulnerable. Instead of turning his head up, the male moves his eyes to look up, as a child would when speaking to their mother. The red rose is used as a device to represent the feelings A has towards B and vice versa. At the end of the narrative, A brings red rose close to her chest to represent love and acceptance (Table 13.14).

Table 13.12 Code: skin type

Skin type descriptive on Fitzpatrick scale	Definition	Examples
Type I	Always burns, never tans: pale white skin	Extras C x 1
Type II	Always burns easily, tans minimally (White skin)	Actor A, Actor B, Extras C x 4 of them with this level of skin
Type III	Burns moderately, tans uniformly (light brown skin)	Extra C 1 has this skin type

Table 13.13 Code: class

Class descriptive	Definition	Example
Clothing	Description of attire actors wear	Actor (A) Jean skirt, white embroidered top, belt, beige shoes with heels, and brown handbag Actor (B) Untucked grey blue jacket, light blue patterned shirt, jeans, brown shoes Extras (C) 2 x men in shorts. 1 x woman in pink top. Blue is the predominant colour. Casual street wear
Accessories	Description of props held or possessed by actor(s) in ad	Actor (A) Leather handbag, red rose One extra has a bike
Location	Description of set/house exterior	Actor (A) Lives in an upscale neighbourhood. There are flowers in pots outside the building and window boxes. The house number is 69 Next to the homes is a modern building complex

### *Text track in the commercial*

The actors (A) and (B) have a two-way conversation.

Here is the written script:

Text: EVITE EL EXCESSO (Don't overdrink).

Actor A: *La pase muy bien (I had a good time).*

Actor B: *Si yo tambien. Te llamo si? (Yes, me too. I'll call you. Yes?)*

Actor A: *Si. Bye (Yes. Bye).*

Actor B: *Bye.*

Actor A. *Jose, JOSE! No quieres pasar a tomar algo? (Do you want to come and drink something?)*

Actor B: *Mira necesito ser muy honesto contigo. Tue eres my especial. No quiero quemar etapas en este historia. La sociedad...te pide que seas macho. Pero yo no. Yo quiero ser un caballero. Yo no busco una mujer para pasarme una noche.*



Table 13.14 Code: gestures

Gesture descriptive	Definition	Example
Seduction	Use of body language	(A) Stands in front of door, looking timid (A) Looks into both of B's eyes (B) Kisses A on cheek and turns to leave (A) Rests hand gently on shoulder of B during gentle kiss (A) Brings left knee in towards right knee, which drops the left side of the body and puts it into a submissive pose (B) Steps up to eyelevel of female and hugs A (A) Grabs rose and holds it towards chest
Manipulation	Using body and face to convince	(A) Looks directly at B innocently (B) Stands below A and looks up at her (B) Drops tone of voice and swallows (B) Looks away sheepishly (B) Smiles devilishly as he leaves A. She is unaware of this smile (B) Runs away after A has gone into house
Challenge	Using body and face to demonstrate challenge	(A) Moves left knee towards right knee. Left side of body drops to one side (B) Rolls eyes upward and clenches teeth when A asks if he wants to come into house

*Yo busco una mujer para despertarme con ella todas las mananas. Puede parecerse esto muy tonto, muy anticuado lo se.*

*(Look, I need to be honest with you. You are very special. I don't want to burn moments in this story. Society asks that I be macho. But me, no. I want to be a gentleman. I don't look for a woman to spend just one night with me. I look for a woman to wake up to morning. This may sound very stupid and old fashioned, I know.)*

Actor A: *No, no.*

Actor B: *Tu que dices? estamos juntos en ese barco de paciencia y de respeto? (What do you say? Are we together on this boat called patience and respect?)*

Actor A: *Si.*

Actor B: *Okay.*

Text: *Ya comienza el partido. Camerun vs. Mexico. Tecate logo. #somoscaballeros*

*(The game has begun. Everything for soccer. We are Tecate. #WeAreGentlemen)*

ANNCR: *Somos caballeros. Caballeros de futbol.*

*(We are gentlemen. Gentlemen of football)*

Music: Piano (Table 13.15).

Table 13.15 Code: text tracks

Text descriptive	Definition	Example
Reverse roles	Female takes role of male, and male takes role of female	(A) "Do you want to come and drink something?" (B) "Society asks that I be macho. But me, no. I want to be a gentleman." (B) "Don't look for a woman to spend just one night with me. I look for a woman to wake up to every morning."
Not my fault	Uses excuses	"Society asks that I be macho. But me, no. I want to be a gentleman." "This may sound very stupid and old fashioned, I know."
Music	Piano	Romantic piano music

The male B switches roles with the female A. He is saying what the woman would like to hear, with the objective of manipulating the female's opinion. For example, he blames the "macho culture that he is part of". It is a demonstration of how "gentlemen" manipulate females so that they can do what they want. The beer Tecate supports this way of thinking by convincing consumers to be gentleman and yet get what they want with women. Tecate promotes the concept that soccer is more important than women.

*Conclusion:*

*Decoding the signs and cultural codes*

In 1972, Barthes wrote about the concept of messages and how consumers read connotative meanings as denotative. This concept applied to the Tecate narrative as seen in the television commercial produces the following connotative meaning: the beer named Tecate is actually a gentleman in the eyes of women. What this signifies is that a metal can, filled with light brown liquid, can actually turn any man into a middle class, light-skinned gentleman that is attractive to white females. This meaning is socially and culturally specific and not a natural association.

In *The Quest for Semiotic Meaning* (2007), Danesi defines a narrative as a "[...] story that is put together to portray reality in a specific way. It is a representation of human events as they are perceived to be related to the passage of time [...] It is often difficult [...] to determine the boundary line between narrative fact and fiction" (2007: 88). The narrative of the Tecate commercial is constructed as a romantic fantasy with the male trying to escape the 'fantasy time' to be in the 'present time.' The communication presents a story of the manipulation of the female stereotype by gentlemen, all supported by a Mexican beer. The light-skinned actors and expensive location sends out the message that to be a "gentleman" you need to live in a white man's world. This ad creates an attractive message to men

of all skin types because it presents a sport that is played by men of all races, and males would rather watch soccer together than be at home with the opposite sex. It is male bonding, sponsored by Tecate.

## 1.4 Conclusion

My thesis question asks, *What are the visual representations of the power relationships in Mexico's political economy as reflected through the appropriation of advertising?* To answer this question, I investigated the history and political economy of Mexico from before the Europeans arrived to the present day.

Aztecs already operated within a classist structure that the Spanish built upon during colonization. The Spanish created a 'castas' system to categorise the peoples of New Spain into socioeconomic and racial categorizations, and during the 18th century, these were reflected in images called 'Pinturas de Castas' that placed the light-skinned Spanish at the top of the socioeconomic and racial pyramid.

Capitalism gained control of Mexico's political economy through what Morton describes as a 'passive revolution'; through cultural hegemony, the capitalist class established institutions that had a cross-class or corporatist character, such as state-sponsored unions and peasant organizations that were based on a clear class hierarchy under the control of the mostly light-skinned ruling class.

The histories of three current ruling families of European descent:—Servitje, Bailleres and Garza—were examined to explore how the continued cultural hegemony is maintained through their powerful connections, and how myth creation, by way of corporate advertising that contain signs and codes, influences Mexico's social and cultural values.

The branded communications broadcast by these families was decoded through performing a semiotic analysis of television advertising created by their companies Bimbo, Palacio de Hierro and FEMSA. The commercials reinforce the myths of the light-skinned ruling class by persuading the Mexican public to buy branded commodities. As academic Jonathan Bignell wrote in the text book *Media Semiotics*, "[...] to possess the product is to 'buy into' the myth, and to possess some of its social value for ourselves[...]" (2002: 31–78).

The semiotic analysis concluded that all three commercials presented light-skinned actors in middle to upper class levels, which is contrary to the actual Mexican demographic breakdown of 83% darker-skinned population called "Mestizo" (Table 13.1) (CIA) (Fitzpatrick). Through their control of capitalism and communication, the ruling class minority have made their lifestyle and skin colour aspirational for the darker-skinned, lower-class majority. The bourgeoisie class is white, confident and wealthy, and the branded messaging presents viewers with the myth of needing protection from the lower classes; the consumers are offered branded commodities to separate themselves.

I conclude that the cultural hegemony cultivated by the ruling families is unconsciously maintained through messages that portray values that indirectly reinforce their class power. The social and cultural values created over 500 years ago are now so ingrained in Mexican society that they are not questioned, and are part of the construction of modern Mexico. The power representations of Mexico's political economy that are presented through advertising is the cultivated myth of the light-skinned ruling class.

## 1.5 Visual Project: An Exhibition of Messaging

In the visual component of this research, I want consumers to understand how products get linked to myths, and how advertising normalizes some myths which might just be untrue, and as Bignell states, "Advertising has been critiqued as one of the social institutions which perform this function of naturalizing dominant ideologies in our culture" (Bignell 2002: 31–78). In order to highlight the differences between the ruling classes and the rest of the population, I asked creative workers in the lower classes to design their own interpretation of messages for the brands Barcel, Palacio de Hierro and Tecate. I approached two artists: Don Nico and Juan Carlos from Rotulos Interlonas, who both create communications as a practice, and their advertising messages are directed towards Mexico's urban poor. They were asked to create the advertisements using the same brief and copy.

(A) *El Palacio de Hierro.*

*Soy Totalmente Palacio.*

(B) *Tecate.*

*#somoscaballeros*

(C) *Barcel.*

*Monster Runners.*

I supplied both artisans with black and white logos of each of the brands, a product shot and the text I wanted to appear. I asked that they produce an ad in colour for each brand, and the way they decided to express the advertising message was up to them.

The professional name in Spanish for their practice is 'Rotulo,' and Don Nico is a specialist in painting advertising on walls and banners using acrylic paints. Rotulos Interlonas uses digital technology to create and print their advertisements onto 'lonas' made of plastic. They charged \$450 pesos for each advertisement pesos by Don Nico and \$180 pesos by Rotulos Interlonas (Figs. 13.24, 13.25, 13.26, 13.27, 13.28, 13.29, 13.30 and 13.31).

Once finished, the 'rotulos' were exhibited on the streets of Mexico City from August 26 to August 30, 2015 through an art practice called 'intervention.' They were placed at or close to stores where consumers would be able to purchase or experience the brands advertised, and the placement was recorded using in situ photography (Figs. 13.32, 13.33, 13.34, 13.35, 13.36 and 13.37).

Fig. 13.24 “The brief.”  
Artisan Don Nico and author  
Carl W. Jones. Palo Solo,  
Huixquilucan, Mexico



Fig. 13.25 “Rotulos” are printed at Rotulos Interlonas using digital technology. Palo Solo (village) Jesus del Monte, Huixquilucan, Mexico





Fig. 13.26 “Palacio” Digitally printed on plastic “rotulos”. Designed and printed by Juan Carlos (right)



Fig. 13.27 “Monster Runners” Digitally printed on plastic “rotulos”. Designed and printed by Juan Carlos (right)





Fig. 13.28 “Tecate” Digitally printed on plastic “rotulos”. Designed and printed by Juan Carlos (right)



Fig. 13.29 “Palacio rotulo” Hand painted on material. Designed and painted by Don Nico



Fig. 13.30 "Monster Runners rotulo" Hand painted on material. Designed and painted by Don Nico (right)



Fig. 13.31 "Tecate rotulo" Hand painted on material. Designed and painted by Don Nico



Fig. 13.32 “El Country changarro” with rotulo Monster Runners. Naucalpan, Distrito Federal



Fig. 13.33 “Seven Eleven store” in Colonia Condesa corner of Michoacan and Amsterdam, Distrito Federal. Monster Runners plastic rotulo





Fig. 13.34 "Bistrot" in Colonia Condesa corner of Sonora and Amsterdam, Distrito Federal. "Tecate rotulo"



Fig. 13.35 "Bistrot" in Colonia Condesa corner of Sonora and Amsterdam, Distrito Federal. "Tecate acrylico."



Fig. 13.36 “Palacio de Hierro” store in Colonia Roma corner of Salamanca and Colima, Distrito Federal. “Totalmente plastico” rotulo



Fig. 13.37 “Palacio de Hierro” store in Colonia Roma corner of Salamanca and Colima, Distrito Federal. “Totalmente acrylico” rotulo

The interventions performed in this visual project compared the branded messaging funded by the ruling class to the branded messaging created by the lower social economic class. This demonstrated how the absence of casting and expensive narrative techniques seemed to create a situation where the rotulos depended more on design, and for the most part did not reflect the racism and classism of the more mainstream advertising. What is not included in the images created by the two 'rotulistas' is important, as they solved the communication problem by using visual design to construct the message. This leads to questions such as: Does access to technology aid in the construction of racist and classist communication? Can the lower social economic class be able to compete successfully against the ruling class through advertising messaging? Can a new Mexican myth be created without expensive narrative techniques in advertising communications?

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