Advertising – Ideology and meaning
- Ads are an important cultural factor
- To quote Williamson (2002) in her book decoding advertisements she says they pervade all the media, but limited to none, advertising forms a vast superstructure with an apparently autonomous existence and an immense influence.
- Ads not only sell things but create structures of meaning – some of which can be said to replace art or religion.
- Ads sell us something else besides consumer goods – they are selling us ourselves.
- People are made to identify themselves by what they consume
- We are looking at ads because they are part of popular culture

Signs
- Advertisements in all media make connections through formal techniques such as connect an object to a person etc.
- The differentiation of products is created by advertising.
- The identity depends more on what the object is not than on what it is.
- Advertising links elements between different referent systems e.g. using a famous model and a product.
- The distinctions between products are created rather than actual.
- Advertising is part of ideology as a false assumption occurs that they are real or exist in some kind of reality.
- The ideology may be hard to detect.
- Images and feelings, or ideas become attached to certain products – the process of linking is unconscious.

Emotions
- Advertising tries to evoke emotions by promising us things.
- Advertising links the unattainable to attainable things.
- Ads invoke the idea of a feeling – the emotion is promised when you buy a product – the 2 become linked.
- Hence the product merges with the sign

Who do the signs address
- They individual is a creator of meaning and take meaning from how we are created by the ad – and how we create ourselves in the ad.
- Ads create a set of facts about ourselves as individuals – we as consumers have certain values and will consume on the basis of those values.
- We are trapped in the illusion of choice.

Totemism
- We are created as particular kinds of subjects by products in ads.
- We differentiate ourselves from other people by the products we buy and we become identified with the product that differentiates us.
- This is a kind of totemism (group symbols)
- You have to feel that you already belong to a group and will therefore buy a product.
- The regrouping of society occurs in terms of consumerism.
- Ads appeal to our specialness but submerge in the totemic group of the product.
- Ads form a symbolic system, representing the imaginary
- The desire is the attempt to unite the self and the other.
Images and identity
- In buying products with certain images we therefore create ourselves, our personality, our qualities, our past and future.
- We are both the product and the consumer. We consume, buy the product and yet we are the product.
- Our lives become our own creations by buying.

Consumer culture and advertising
- Advertising tells us that new commodities will make us happier, more popular and successful.
- Ads are often image based and create a connection between the product and the desired condition.
- They try to associate products with socially desired values of the time.
- Ads address certain individuals and invite them to identify with certain product, images and behaviour.
- Ads have to persuade people that they are part of a throw away society and that goods need no longer be used – they buy new ones.

Ads and capitalism
- Advertising is seen as the current art form of capitalism- encouraging people to become individuals through the goods they buy.
- The goods themselves are mass produced rather than individualistic.
- The ads promise to give/meet emotional needs such as happiness, success etc.
- But how can products do this –false hopes.

Marxist position.
- In Marxist theory, advertising is a vital and integral part of the system of Capitalism.
- Once the basic needs of shelter, food and clothing have been satisfied, capitalism faces the problem of realisation, of ensuring the goods produced beyond the minimum level are consumed.
- For the system to survive it has to stimulate demand and it is advertising which accomplishes this.
- Raymond Williams – argues that modern Capitalism could not function without advertising.

False needs
- The only true needs are said to be for nourishment, clothing and housing
- Ads connect an imaginary event with a simplified ideal.
- In Berger’s ways of seeing 1972, advertising works on a deep powerful level of human emotions.
- People are subject to manipulation and influence

Ads and lifestyle
- Ads promote consumption as a way of life.
- Consumption is an alternative to rebellion, protest and alienation - these are turned into commodities.
- The natural satisfaction of needs, then, is replaced by an artificial medication of commodities.
• Ads offer the purchase of the commodity to satisfy the needs. They represent our experiences and its images come to replace reality.
• Ads must perpetually create new demand and thus must continually produce unsatisfied consumers.

Gender ideology and ads
• Advertising has been criticised for gender representation, placing women into subordinate roles and making the male voice more authoritative.
• This is also the case with advertising aimed at children
• Where the ads clearly markets toys for boys and girls very differently – reinforcing gender binaries and stereotypes.
• Girls are often shown in indoor environments with little aggression whereas boys are often shown in more active play, sometimes with aggression such as fighting toys.
• Even in ads aimed at both genres, the male style often dominates highlighting the hegemonic nature of masculinity (that girls will accept the male style, whereas boys might not accept the female style).

Advertising and social media
• Social media provides new opportunities for marketing companies to micro target potential audiences.
• At the same time, there are ethical considerations as our private information becomes publicly available to marketers.
• And as marketers are able to study our online profiles.
• There is also charity advertising that has caught on using social media (such as the Ice bucket challenge)

Elaboration Likelihood model
• There are counter-adverstiements which instead of persuading people to buy something
• They persuade people not to do something such as smoking or drinking.
• There are two routes that this is suggested to work according to the elaboration likelihood model
• The central and peripheral routes
• Central – someone evaluates the content of the message and may result in attitude change
• Peripheral message – nature of the communicator is credible or attractive and may lead to change.

Interviews
• An interview is about a conversation between a researcher and an interviewee.
• This can range from informal to more formal.
• Semi-structured interviews where you have an interview schedule but you can be flexible to follow up interesting lines of conversation.
• It is important to conduct a pilot to test your questions and to make sure they are not bias or leading in any way.