

## **The Value of Liberal Feminism in “Si” Giorgio Armani Perfume Line Advertisement**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to find out how verbal communication and visual signs in the “Si” Giorgio Armani Perfume Line Advertisement reflect the value of liberal feminism. In conducting the study, I used Danesi's theory of Signs in semiotics (2004). This study was done using a qualitative approach in which I transcribed both the song lyrics and the narration that appeared in the video. I also captured the scene of the video to analyze the visual sign aspects. For this study, I analyzed the visual sign through the actress's body language, facial expression, and the color that often appeared in the video advertisement. The data finds that the “Si” by Giorgio Armani perfume line advertisement uses the concept of liberal feminism to appeal to a modern and empowered audience of women. By incorporating messages of individual choice, empowerment, and self-affirmation, the advertisement positions itself as a brand that supports and celebrates the values of liberal feminism.

**Keywords:** advertisement; feminism; liberal; sign verbal communication

### **INTRODUCTION**

As stated in Eram (2020), the age of advertisement is upon us. When it comes to promotion, advertising is everywhere. Advertising is any kind of non-personal communication, paid marketing of concepts, products, or services by a sponsor who can be identified (Kotler and Armstrong, 2014). Advertisement is crucial in the contemporary world of trade and business. As a result, a good advertisement is incredibly beneficial to businesspeople and merchants.

As cited in Faizan (2019), semiotic analysis is used to decode the symbolic messages of two pairs of advertisements (for cigarettes and perfume) in order to analyze the various approaches used to target various client segments based on demographic factors like gender and age. Some signs that appear frequently in the video commercial are visual signs and verbal communication. From my brief research, there are many studies linking the semiotics and the commercial, but what makes this study different is I am not only analyzing the meaning behind the signs, but I will do further research to find and reveal the liberal feminism within them.

Conforming to Bailey (2016), liberal feminism is a type of feminist ideology that has been crucial in igniting women's rights movements and the important legislative, educational, and policy changes that have boosted women's rights in a variety of situations rooted in liberalism's political traditions. Liberal feminism encompasses a variety of strategies aimed at, among other things, reducing social and legal barriers or promoting environments that encourage women's equality. In accordance with Bessaud (2016), the “Si” line from Giorgio Armani is not just a mere naming.

Giorgio Armani also focuses on making the scent of “Si” women that can define a woman who is full of passion, freedom, commitment and femininity. As mentioned in Pouted.com (2022), “Si” Giorgio Armani perfume is listed in the Top 5 best-selling women perfumes. “Si” is taken from the Spanish word used to indicate “Yes.” This perfume was

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introduced by Armani in 2013 and since it has a strong value among women, it has consistently been in the best-seller list. Which, Giorgio Armani wants to state that "Si" woman has the confidence to say yes to the values that define her life" (lintonsbeauty.com, 2023)

As I have always had an interest in the beauty industry, I am attracted to analyzing the video commercial of the "Si" Giorgio Armani perfume line. Moreover the commercials use some obvious signs to emphasize the messages and concepts. Besides color and the narrative, the commercials also convey certain messages through various signs such as the behavior of the main character, the song lyrics and many more.

In fact, there are lots of versions for the "Si" Giorgio Armani perfume line commercial with different languages and story lines but the writer chooses the 2 particular commercials as both commercial's narratives are in English so it will be easier to analyze. Moreover, those commercials also show how women have the freedom to do whatever she wants.

I use the main theory of signs by Danesi (2004). Based on Danesi (2004, p. 5), Through signs, someone can refer to concepts and things that may not be apparent to the senses. Even if the cat is not present, the image of the animal immediately comes to mind when someone utters or hears the term cat. The other theories are visual signs and verbal communication. Visual semiotics is the study focusing on visual signs. Next, verbal communication has purposes much beyond the basic exchange of information. It entails figuring out who says what to whom, where and when it is said, and how and why it is uttered. In other words, it is prompted and molded by the context, the message's contents, the participants, and the objectives of each interlocutor.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents data analysis findings to answer research questions and prove that verbal communication and visual signs in Giorgio Armani's advertisements convey liberal feminism in the video. The analysis begins with verbal communication and progresses to visual signs.

### **Verbal communication in stanza of "You don't own me" song**

The first verbal communication in the advertisement, uploaded by Giorgio Armani, wants to show that women cannot be ruled by anyone. In this video, Giorgio Armani decided to use the song "You don't own me" by Lesley Gore.

*You don't own me  
I'm not just one of your many toys*

It can be seen from the video 1 where the lyric of "You don't own me" is sung. Armani wants to emphasize that women are not objects. The patriarchal society tends to think that women are below men, therefore women are considered as their property.

*You don't own me  
Don't say I can't go with other boys*

From the lyrics, the advertisement shows that women have their own decision and the freedom to do whatever they want. Based on Olympe de Gouges (1791) in Cottais, C. n.d. stated in her famous Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Citizen, "Women are born free and equal in rights with men."

*Don't tell me what to do  
Don't tell me what to say*

The verbal communication in another stanza of this song delivers that men should never dictate to women. In society, women often become subordinate. As cited in Sultana (2011), subordination is the situation in which one is forced to stay under the control of another. It can be seen through the lyrics that women are often forced to do or say under the control of men.

### **Verbal communication in the text-narration in the commercial**

Besides the background song used in the video commercial, Giorgio Armani puts a variation in the way he wants to portray his value in this campaign. There is also verbal communication supporting the value of the campaign which are delivered from the text-narration appeared in the video commercial. Here is the text-narration:

*Si to life  
Si to us  
Si to sun  
Si to lightness  
Si to seduction  
Si to love  
Si to freedom  
Si to myself  
#SaySi*

The first narration supporting women's freedom to live in this commercial is "*Si to life*" which means "Yes to life". According to Elliott (2018), it represents a call to action for women to live their lives to the fullest and not be held back by societal norms or limitations.

The other narration is "*Si to us*", emphasized through the diversity of individuals. While "*Si to life*" emphasizes the importance of living life to the fullest and pursuing one's dreams, "*Si to us*" takes a more individualized approach. According to Elliott (2018), this name may suggest a positive, empowering message, encouraging individuals to embrace themselves and pursue their dreams and aspirations with confidence and determination.

Moving on to another narration in the commercial, the "*Si to sun*" message features images and themes related to sunlight, nature, and freedom. These elements evoke positive emotions and a connection to the natural world (Elliott, 2018).

Continuing with the other narrations in the commercial, the next one is "*Si to lightness*", which is a message of embracing a carefree and joyful attitude towards life and letting go of any burdens or negativity that may weigh us down. According to Elliott (2018), this message of lightness and simplicity can be interpreted as a continuation of the themes of positivity and empowerment throughout the commercial.

Next, "*Si to seduction*" could be interpreted as embracing one's sensuality. The narration was, moreover, allowing oneself to be alluring and attractive. This could be interpreted as embracing one's sensuality and allowing oneself to be alluring and attractive (Elliott, 2018).

The following analysis is "*Si to love*" in Giorgio Armani's commercial to encourage individuals to embrace their capacity to love and be loved and to cherish meaningful relationships. It is consistent with the overall themes of positivity, empowerment, and independence throughout the commercial.

The following narration is "*Si to freedom*", which represents a message of empowerment and independence for women. It encourages women to be confident, assertive, and independent and to embrace their freedom of choice and expression. The commercial features shots of a woman confidently striding down the street and enjoying her freedom, suggesting that women should be free to make their own choices and live their lives on their terms.

Moving to the other narration in Giorgio Armani's commercial video is "*Si to myself*", which is still consistent with the overall themes of empowerment, independence, and positivity that are present throughout the commercial. By encouraging women to embrace their unique qualities and strengths, the commercial inspires viewers to prioritize their well-being and happiness.

### **Visual Sign in the “Body Language”**

The first visual sign is the body language that will be a representative of the message besides the verbal communication. Body language may provide clues as to the attitude or state of mind of the person. The way the actress is dancing in the rain is to convey the meaning of life. Dancing in the rain is often associated with a joyful and liberating experience that many people enjoy. As stated in Jenkins (2023), the dancing in the rain is a metaphor, because it shows that a person has discovered how to overcome obstacles to achieve their full potential.

After analyzing the visual sign of “dancing in the rain”, the writer proceeded to another analysis about the “pull of scarf” to support the campaign of the Giorgio Armani “Si” perfume advertisements, which are free women. In accordance with Özcan (2013), headscarf has been a contentious issue for many years, with some seeing it as a symbol of oppression and others as a symbol of religious freedom. This gesture can be seen as a form of self-expression and self-determination.

Another aspect of the commercial, specifically the analysis of the “pull of scarf” and how it connects to the scene of carrying shoes, intensifies the freedom aspect. According to Rauscher (2019), the body language of carrying shoes represents a form of practicality and self-determination, as the person carrying their shoes is asserting their own agency and making a statement about their own comfort. The video presents a message about the importance of practicality and individual agency, especially in the face of gendered expectations and limitations.

In addition to the act of carrying one's shoes, walking in the opposite direction in this scene serves as another powerful expression of individuality. This shot can be interpreted as a symbol of individuality and independence, as the woman is confidently walking in her own direction, away from the crowd. According to Zang and Liu (2021), walking in the opposite direction can be seen as a form of resistance against social norms and expectations. By choosing to go against the flow, individuals can assert their own agency and make a statement about their freedom of choice.

### **Visual Sign in the Color**

The next discussion in this visual part is the term of the color usage in the Giorgio Armani “Si” perfume advertisements. The consistent use of red across these videos suggests a deliberate choice to emphasize a particular theme or evoke a specific emotional response from the viewers. This red color supports the value of women that is passion, excitement, and sexy. In semiotic, throughout the world colors are used for connotative purposes. In all societies, colors

play a critical function in the realm of symbolism. The visuals in all of these three videos are showing the obvious use of the red color. In general psychology based on Cerrato (2012), red color is defined as excitement, strength, sex, and danger.

Besides the color red, there is also another color sign for supporting this commercial value, which is gold color. This commercial shows the term gold color to emphasize the meaning and value of women. The wide-ranging color psychology of gold color is identified as prestige, luxury, inner wisdom, quality, and wealth (Cerrato, 2012).

Now turning to another aspect of the commercial, the focus shifts from the gold color to the black color, which describes power and strength. Based on Cerrato (2012), black color is associated with power and elegance. Liberal feminism seeks to promote gender equality and empower women to exercise their individual rights and freedoms.

### **Visual Sign of the “Facial Expression”**

The next discussion of visual sign analysis is about facial expression. Facial expression is signaling and believed to deliver multiple messages, such as; communicating information regarding one personality, expressing emotional state, and also providing interaction signs. Moving on to another visual sign in the commercial, I can examine the significance of the action of raising chin to depict the confidence of a woman. As stated in Tracy (2004) raised chin gesture can be a sign of pride, and may be used to convey a sense of confidence, dominance, and social status. In her research, she proposes a theoretical model of self-conscious emotions, which includes pride as one of its primary components.

Continuing the analysis, the raised chin in the previous scene is followed by the next visual sign of the open-mouthed woman, which represents excitement and release. Based on an article published by Ursula Hess, Jr. Adams, and Robert Kleck (2005), they discuss how facial expressions can interact with facial appearance to convey different emotions. They note that an open-mouthed expression can be associated with excitement and can be particularly effective at conveying these emotions when paired with other cues, such as wide eyes or raised eyebrows. Open-mouthed facial expressions can be a strong indicator of excitement, particularly when combined with other cues that signal arousal.

The next visual sign observed in the commercial is smirk to convey playfulness and freedom. According to Sénéchal (2013), asymmetric facial expressions, such as a smirk, are strong emotional signals indicating playfulness and emotion states such as excitement and joy. By using a non-traditional facial expression, women can signal that they are not conforming to conventional gender roles or expectations, and can assert their independence and individuality.

### **CONCLUSION**

The verbal communication in the advertisement conveys messages of empowerment, choice, and self-affirmation through the repetition of the word “Si” and the emphasis on individual intervention. By emphasizing the significance of individual intervention and personal decision-making, the verbal communication aligns closely with the principles upheld by liberal feminism, which advocates for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The visual signs in the advertisement, including the use of certain gestures and facial expressions, convey a sense of confidence, independence, and self-determination. These attributes, highly cherished within liberal feminist principles, serve to inspire women to break free from societal constraints and embrace their own unique identities.

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The research also concludes that the "Si" by Giorgio Armani perfume line advertisement uses the concept of liberal feminism to appeal to a modern and empowered audience of women. The study indicates that the Giorgio Armani "Si" perfume advertisement effectively demonstrates how brands can integrate feminist ideals into their marketing approaches. By utilizing both verbal communication and visual signs that embody the principles of liberal feminism, the advertisement successfully appeals to an empowered and socially conscious customer demographic. This approach demonstrates the potential for brands to resonate with individuals who prioritize gender equality, women's empowerment, and personal agency in their purchasing decisions.

In the context of this video advertisement analysis, further researchers are suggested to explore and analyze the potential impact and effectiveness of using liberal feminist themes in advertising, and consider discussing how other brands or industries have utilized similar approaches. For another suggestion that makes this analysis can increase the awareness of campaign advertisement, further research can conduct a comparative study analyzing the reception and impact of different feminist advertising approaches. In spite of the limitations of this study, I wish that this study adds more knowledge and understanding for the readers especially in the correlation between semiotics and advertising.

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