

**CULTURE AND FOOD CONSUMPTION IN KENYA:  
A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF FOOD ADVERTISEMENTS ON  
TELEVISION**

**By**

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**DECLARATION**

**STUDENT'S DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, declare that this research project is my original work and has not been previously presented in part or in totality to any other institution of learning for the award of any degree or examination other than The University of Nairobi.

Signed ..... Date .....

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**SUPERVISORS DECLARATION**

This research project has been submitted with my approval as the candidate's University Supervisor.

Signed..... Date.....

Prof. Hezron Mogambi

Supervisor

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my children Ellaine, Evian and my late mother Hellen.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

If there was a time I learnt the value of reading, it was through the period I worked on this study. I have emerged a better reader. I acknowledge the support of my supervisor Prof. Hezron Mogambi for his timely and candid feedback that helped me work more effectively and efficiently. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Elias Mokuu, Lecturer at the University of Nairobi's School of Journalism and Mass Communication for his academic counsel.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed at analysing messages and their meanings that are conveyed through food television advertisements in Kenya. The study was conducted in Parklands and Gatina wards in Nairobi County. The study involved analysis of six selected food advertisements aired on Citizen TV and Kenya Television Network stations in 2017. The qualitative research approach was adopted for this study due to an interest in the audience's perceptions and opinions. The study sought to investigate what the messages are, their hidden meanings, influence on food consumption habits and the audience's reception. The semiotic and media ecology theories were applied in this study. A combination of both semiotic analysis and interviews were employed to gather data on the hidden meanings, the audience reception and views on the advertisements. The primary data collected was analysed by conducting a thematic analysis. The findings of the study concluded that food advertisements do not necessarily affect food purchase and consumption choices. There are several other factors that affect food choices for example personal preference, culture affordability and food suitability. These factors are majorly based on the audience's already formed world view and daily practices. The study also found that the audience is cognisant of the signs used by advertisers in food advertisements. In addition, food advertisements have open and hidden meanings that the audience needs to decode in order to understand the value and meaning of the advertisement. No specific food advertisement elements like drama, music and words were identified as having a particular level of influence on food consumption and culture. This study recommends that marketing firms should adopt advertisement translators to act as the audience in decoding advertising messages. This will ensure that the messages are well crafted and all possible hidden meanings identified.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Overview

This study examined the messages used by advertisers in food advertisements on Kenyan television, food advertisements reception by consumers and how they influence food consumption habits. This chapter provides the background information on the study and the factors that necessitated this study as indicated in the problem statement. The chapter also outlines the objectives, justification, significance, scope and the limitations of the study.

### 1.1 Background

This study was based on food advertisements aired on TV. The focus was their influence on consumer food habits by investigating the signs, messages and their meanings. A semiotic analysis was employed in analysing the messages communicated through these food adverts. This study also sought to identify the audience reception of the messages and related it to their food consumption habits. This study took a keen look at how advertising firms and their audiences construct meaning. Advertising is circulation of shared meaning just like any other form of communication. Wood (2004, p.9), defines communication as “a systematic process in which individuals interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meanings.”

Food advertising on TV allows food companies to tell and also showcase their products at the same time. Its use, which often targets multiple touch points, can effectively influence consumers' purchasing and consumption behaviour and eventually their food habits. Global food production and distribution firms like Nestle, McDonald's, and Unilever use TV advertising to promote their food products and to capture the audience's attention.

These firms prefer to use TV despite the emergence of new media due to its ability to showcase the products being advertised using food styling. Food styling is described as the art of preparing food to feed the eyes and the imagination (Delores, 2010). This art helps to enhance food advertisements by showing steps on food preparation, cooking and presentation. Food advertising on TV largely exposes consumers to information on various foods. These advertisements display food items, how to prepare them, food combination and nutritional information.

Kenya's switch to digital TV broadcasting has seen an increase in the number of channels that air content, giving viewers a wider choice for information, news, entertainment and advertisements. Traditional media consumption like TV is still prevalent despite the growth of new media in Kenya. A media consumer survey conducted in 2017 by the Kenya Audience Research Foundation indicated that there are sixty-six local TV channels in Kenya.

Food advertising in Kenya is guided by the advertising code of practice and direct marketing. Similar food advertisements are aired across the existing media houses. Notably these advertisements are aired when family viewership is at its highest or between evening news items. Kenyan firms spend millions of shillings on TV adverts. Analysis indicates that between 2012 and 2014, TV accounted for the largest share of advert spends. According to the Kenya Audience Research Foundation (KARF) data in 2017 TV advertisements accounted for the largest share in all advertising mediums.

TV advertising has a direct but relatively modest influence on food preferences and choices. A large and growing body of evidence has established significant associations between media exposure and a variety of health risk behaviour in children and adolescents, Rich and Bar-On (2001). Studies further indicate that there is need for consistent policy implementation and monitoring to ensure compliance to the set guidelines.

The advertisement's messages, images, use of characters, music and nonverbal cues can have a ripple effect on the perceptions that the audience forms of the foods being advertised. There is also an increasing trend in celebrity endorsements in advertising various food products. The simple reason is that people idolise celebrities and so when famous people are seen in certain advertisements; it prompts the audience to buy a product either subliminally or directly. Celebrities also inspire a level of customer confidence as they stamp a sense of product legitimacy and trust. According to Atkin and Block (1983), there are two reasons why celebrity endorsements have gained prominence. First, they are traditionally viewed as being highly dynamic having both likeable and attractive qualities. Secondly, the celebrity's fame brings about attention to the product.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Watching food advertisements on TV has been viewed as having a level of effect but does not entirely influence food consumption habits. This is because viewing is a sedentary activity. The reception and reaction by the audience is what leads to adoption of food consumption habits. According to Chapman et al (2014), watching television represents a condition during which many habitually eat, irrespective of hunger level. There is however no indication on how the content of television viewership differentially impacts concurrent eating habits.

In their study, they also drew conclusion that TV watching can have a significant impact on concurrent food consumption but the content of the TV programming is elemental to this effect. Chapman et al (2014) also made recommendation for further studies to investigate precisely how other factors like emotions, preference and calmness modulate the role of TV in food consumption.

Previous research does not identify the specific aspects of food advertisements that are responsible for shaping and influencing food consumption habits. The available studies and longitudinal research largely indicate that food consumption habits are generally influenced by television advertisements but do not narrow down to which aspects of the advertisements influence the audience and in what ways. This research sought to narrow down to the specific messages, their hidden meanings and related them to food consumption habits.

TV advertisements are made up of words, phrases, visuals, music and even nonverbal cues. Consumers often support the interpretation of the message in their own ways where cultural, personal preference, social and ethical values play a major part. On a daily basis the audience is exposed to numerous food commercials on TV which has various impact levels. This is an expression of the society of which all are a part of. Media is a mirror image for various practical purposes and has far reaching influence on the social, cultural and moral values of its audience (Ciochetto, 2004).

Meaning making also plays a part where advertisers and the audience form their own meanings of these advertisements and the messages. These meanings could equally account for consumer food consumption habits. Advertisers should not sit back and assume that the audience will react to the messages in the TV advertisements just as they crafted them.

Every aspect of these symbolic terms connects the audience to the food products being advertised. It is not only important to understand how consumers interpret the information communicated in an advertisement, but also all the meanings in the advertisements.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The study was guided by both general and specific objectives.

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The general objective of this study was to analyse messages and their meanings in food advertisements aired on TV and whether they influence food consumption habits in Kenya.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of this study were:

- i. To identify the signs used by advertisers in creating television food advertisements in Kenya.
- ii. To investigate whether food advertisements on television are used as a basis by the audience in their food choices in Kenya.
- iii. To analyse elements in food advertisements that capture audiences' attention in Kenya.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the signs used by advertisers in creating food advertisements in Kenya?
- ii. Does the audience use food advertisements on television as a basis when making food consumption choices in Kenya?
- iii. What are the elements in food advertisements that capture the audience's interest and attention in Kenya?

## **1.5 Justification**

Semiotics is the study of various signs and what they mean. This illuminates the different advertising styles, meanings and messages as portrayed in varied food advertisements in Kenyan television channels. TV is one of the most popular platforms used by advertising firms in reaching a mass audience. It provides one of the first and most intimate experiences of commercial food promotion. It was therefore important to carry out this study to have a better understanding of the aspects of food advertisements on TV that trigger the audience to consume a certain food.

Advertisers in the food industry face a distinct set of ethical challenges, since food advertising can have a deep psychological impact on consumers, affecting consumer food habits. The sensual appeals can connect with consumers on an emotional level, causing them to associate food products with personal feelings of joy, excitement or reward. This can boost sales revenue for the food production firms but it can also trigger addiction. It is against this realisation that this study sought to make a contribution by interrogating the food advertisements on TV, their meanings, audience reception, interpretation and food consumption habits.

In TV advertising, signs are associated with displays, symbols, colours, themes, words, images, drama and background sounds. So why is it important to understand these messages and their meanings? Advertising firms can craft more effective messages that will not only be visually captivating but will also capture the audience's mind. Previous studies have indicated a gap between the use of accurate and open messages and use of enticing messages only to arouse viewer's desires and interests.



This study investigated the aspects of food advertisements that capture the audience's attention and if they have any influence on food consumption habits. Semiotic analysis also offers an avenue for future recommendations in its application when crafting marketing messages that will be more effective.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

TV advertising plays a major role in consumer purchase decision making. Through these advertisements, consumers are able to identify with specific food brands. By carrying out a semiotic analysis, this study sought to unearth the signs used in these advertisements, advertising styles, images, tones alongside their meanings. The findings of the study are therefore important in understanding the meanings of the messages delivered via food TV advertisements.

The study also highlighted some of the indicators on whether advertisers are compliant with the advertising code of practice. The study is therefore important to the policy makers in monitoring the compliance of food advertisements to the advertising code of practice especially in disclosing hidden messages and disclaimers like side effects. The study also provides future researchers and advertisers with information on content and message crafting as they employ the various elements of communication. This will add value to advertising firms and food production companies in churning out TV advertisements that bring out inner meanings that can capture the consumers' intuition.

## **1.7 Scope and Limitations**

The study was limited to selected food advertisements aired on selected Kenyan media houses in the year 2017. This media houses were Citizen TV and Kenya Television Network (KTN) which enjoyed the highest and second highest viewership respectively in the year 2017 according to media measurement service by GeoPoll. Similar food advertisements are aired on multiple TV stations and hence the study was not carried out through all media houses to avoid repetition.

The study was based in Nairobi County being the capital city of Kenya and the highest in population at 3.31 million people according to the 2009 Kenya population and housing census basic report by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. The research sites were Parklands and Gatina wards due to their diversity in social and economic status. Parklands is considered to be an up market and high income area while Gatina is classified as a low income area. The observation is that access to electricity and provision for watching television at home is prevalent in both research sites.

## **1.8 Operational Definitions**

**Product (s)** – The use of product (s) in this study covers both products and services.

**Ads** – Used to indicate advertisements.

**Adverts** – Used to indicate advertisements.

**Audience** – Used to mean receivers of food TV advertisements.

**Consumer** – Used interchangeably with the word audience above to mean receivers of TV advertisements and those influenced by the food advertisements aired on TV.

**Food** – Food is any consumable / edible item in this study and not necessarily solid food (s).

**Semiotics** – Used in this study to mean the study of signs and their meanings.

**TV** – Used in the study to mean both television sets and viewing of television.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.0 Overview**

This chapter summarises previous works of literature on the subject of television advertising and its effect on food consumption habits. The study narrowed down to the messages, the meanings conveyed on the TV adverts, consumer buying habits and the decision making process. A background study on the concepts of television advertising as carried out in this chapter is valuable in the understanding of what consumers respond to and how they react to food television advertisements. The chapter also highlights the theories applied in the research. Any knowledge gaps from previous research were also identified.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is a review of empirical literature in the research area of television food advertising, audience perceptions and effects. The second section is an overview of the media ecology and semiotic theories that formed the theoretical framework in studying media consumption and signs used in these advertisements.

#### **2.1 Literature Review**

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2010) advertising can be described as any form of non-personal communication of ideas and information about a product in the media with the objective of creating brand image. Advertising of food products dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century mainly on print platforms like newspapers and magazines.

TV advertising dates back to the 19th century when paid TV advertisements were first introduced in the United States of America. Advertising is a common marketing avenue used by firms and marketers to create awareness and promote various products.

Newspaper, magazines, door to door sales and radio advertising were historically the most common channels for advertising before TV. TV advertising even as a traditional mode of advertising has grown immensely from the first Bulova watches advertisement aired on July 1, 1941.

In his analysis, Jefkins, F. (2005), indicates that advertising firms and professionals employ persuasive mechanisms on TV advertisements to ensure that they are highly irresistible. TV offers the audience a combination of visuals, music, catchy words, phrases and nonverbal appeals. TV advertising is a valuable tool for any organisation in promotion of its products and long term positive effect on sales. TV viewing is a matter of personal choice and preference. The use of communication is paramount in advertising.

TV advertising employs sound and sight senses as its nature is non personal. These include the use of music, color, nonverbal cues and drama. This indicates that information on TV advertisements is directed to a mass audience without one on one or personal engagement between the seller and the audience. This therefore requires well-crafted messages that pass the exact intended product information to aid the audience in drawing conclusions that are favorable to the product being advertised.

The advertisements' informative and persuasive aspects tend to serve as reference points for consumers when they choose to act by engaging the product being advertised. TV advertising is effective in reinforcing attitudes, preferences, values and the disposition already held by the audience.

The growth of TV advertising birthed television food advertising which is now a common marketing tool for food production companies. Food companies are important stakeholders that perform roles in the processing, formulation, production, distribution and marketing of foods (King, 2012). These companies employ TV advertising as part of their marketing strategy to reach out to the audience so that they can consume their products.

Advertisers of food products use TV due to its ability to capture large audiences' attention and its ability to reach these audiences' when they are attentive and alert since they are glued to the screen. This is despite the high cost of running TV advertisements which is considered to be the most expensive form of advertising. TV advertising enjoys the highest returns on advertising spend. On the contrary, TV adverts could also be ineffective due to varied reasons like if the messages are too complex, language barriers, miscommunication and audience perception that adverts are boring and therefore they change TV channels.

In the 1990s, food and beverages together formed the most heavily advertised type of products: approximately forty to fifty percent of TV commercials were on food products, amounting to between ten and fifteen commercials every hour. Numerous studies are consistently seeking to showcase the relationship between food advertising and food consumption habits. One of the most researched areas on effects of food advertisements is its influence on negative food habits like binge eating and health effects like obesity.

Obesity is now considered to be a global challenge and especially childhood obesity. Paarlberg in his 2015 book, *The United States of Excess: Gluttony and the Dark Side of American Exceptionalism* indicated that the Obama administration had proposed voluntary guidelines for the industry on food advertising. These guidelines were meant to aid in promotion of healthier foods by ensuring controlled food advertisements on TV. Current research shows that there are more food advertisements on American TV than any other marketing advertisements for example motor vehicle and even real estate. These advertisements are majorly for fast foods. Constant watching of TV exposes the audience to enticing food advertisements and can have an effect on their choice of food. Transportability also indicates that viewers have the ability to be engrossed in what they are watching though this is a matter of personal choice.

A qualitative survey carried out by Cancer Research in the United Kingdom in 2016 suggests that entertaining TV advertisements for sweets, crisps and fast food have a real impact on primary school children, reinforcing the calls by health organisations for tougher advertising curbs. Some of the children interviewed during this survey indicated that they enjoyed watching engaging advertisements and could recall advertising theme tunes. The researchers further indicated that by using celebrities, bright colours and funny voices, advertisements are able to attract children and to some extent influence their eating habits. Use of celebrity endorsements is very popular in marketing various food brands in the world.

These advertising messages are what the children felt attract them to the foods being advertised. This is an indication that the themes, messages, music, colours, personalities and nonverbal cues are all important aspects in food advertisements that ought to be critically analysed.

In Singapore, TV advertising is indicated as an effective medium for reaching young children and influencing their food choices. These messages are indicated to be rarely consistent with healthy eating habits and messages. Food advertising consists of thirty-three percent of all TV advertisements providing a source of food information.

In South Africa similar studies have been carried out on the effects of food TV advertisements and food consumption habits. The results indicate that nearly fifty percent of food advertising occurs during child and family TV viewing time and the most common foods advertised are sweets, fast foods and sweetened drinks. The strategies used by South African advertisers are similar to those in other countries.

They include persuasive appeals that target more of the vision, auditory and sensory modes. These studies indicate that while food advertisements offer information on various foods and trigger consumers' interest, it is the audience's response and reactions that result to their food consumption habits. The triggers of food consumption habits could be varied for example, personal preference, peer pressure, product association with certain trends like dieting, nonverbal cues, music, colours and personalities in TV adverts.

Advertising largely follows the AIDA model that aims at: raising awareness of the product, generating consumer interest that leads to a desire of the product and consequently action by the consumer to purchase (Jones, 1999, p. 220). Therefore, unsurprisingly, the effects of TV advertising on food brand preferences are well established.



## AIDA Model: Awareness, Interest, Desire and Action

<b>A</b>	• <b>Awareness:</b> Creating product awareness e.g. by advertising
<b>I</b>	• <b>Interest:</b> The advertising message generates audience interest by indicating product use, features and benefits.
<b>D</b>	• <b>Desire:</b> The audience interest is converted into a desire to purchase the advertised product. Moves the audience from liking to wanting.
<b>A</b>	• <b>Action:</b> The audience makes a decision or takes action to purchase the advertised product e.g by asking for more information.

**Figure 2.1: AIDA Model – Source, Researcher**

Advertisement is a medium used to deliver messages to the audience with the goal of influencing them to use certain products. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1973) conducted a research and found out that media are used by individuals for various needs. Cognitive needs (to acquire knowledge, information and understanding), affective needs (emotional and pleasure experiences), personal integrative needs (strengthening self-image), social integrative needs (strengthening social cohesion) and tension release needs (escape from personal challenges and stress management). In this context the audience watches food adverts to satisfy any of these needs depending on the advert appeal, message and structure.

The PWC report on Kenyan Entertainment and Media Outlook: 2013 – 2017 mentions television as the single most effective channel for advertising in Kenya, which accounts for an estimated forty percent of advertising revenue in 2012. This means that television as a medium for food advertising cannot be ignored. According to Harrison (2011):

*“People love to talk about advertising because great ads capture the imagination. They are part of everyday life. They help to shape our world. There is nothing better than sharing the gist of a new ad campaign with friends who have not seen it yet (August 30).”*

Advertising is a key revenue generator for most media outlets and hence one cannot ignore the fact that marketing firms are a key resource for them. Commercially operated media firms for example Citizen TV and Kenya Television Network sell information as a commodity. They ensure their programming is appealing to large audiences and hence are quite focused on popularity and consistency in viewership. Manufacturers and marketers of food products place their advertisements on television based on the media strength to reach out to large audiences.

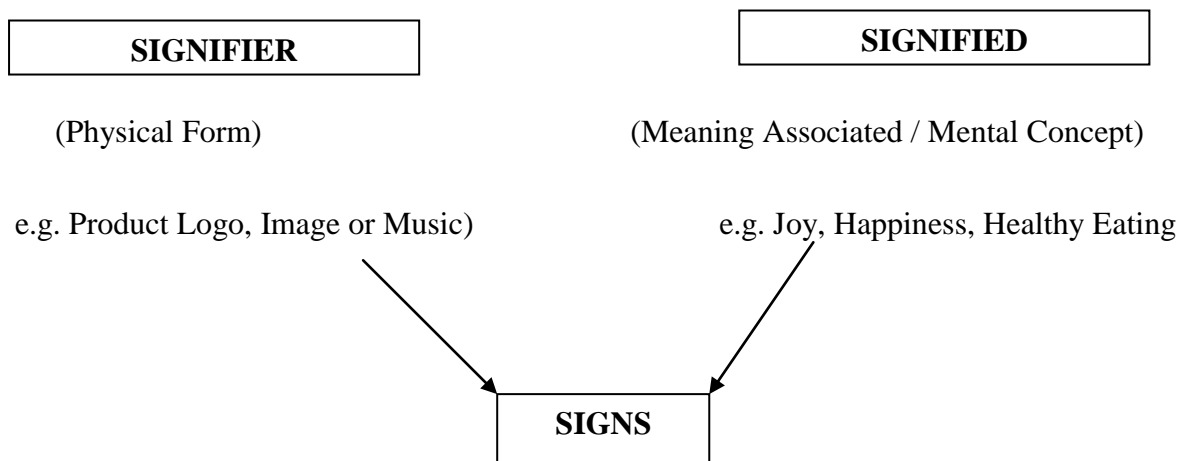
This way, media houses make money by sustaining these advertisements. The bigger the audience for a media houses programming, the more advertising revenue it enjoys (MacChessney, 2006).

### **2.1.1 Semiotic Analysis**

Semiotics is the discipline that involves the study of signs and their functions in the society (Bignell, 2002). It is commonly known as ‘Semiology’ (Rose, 2012) but semiotics is commonly used. In this study both semiology and semiotics are used. The advertisements in themselves do have a deeper meaning. So what do these advertisements really mean and how can we find the real meaning? Crafters of advertising messages go to great lengths to develop marketing scripts that appeal to the desired audience.

The messages used in food adverts tend to be more effective when a twofold approach is applied that is, making them both engaging and persuasive. To achieve this objective, the application of semiotics adds value in identifying and matching various advertising elements.

Semiotics is applied to develop a correlation within the elements used in advertisements. A semiotic analysis is critical in highlighting the key messages in the TV advertisements and how they influence food consumption habits and culture. It is an enquiry into the physical form of images, videos and words (signifiers), the associated or mental meaning of what is aired in the advertisement (signified) and a combination of the two (sign).



**Figure 2.2: Sign, Signified, Signifier: Source – Researcher based on Literature by Semiotics founder, Ferdinand de Saussure**

One of the interesting tools used by many advertisers is the “Semiotics” that they utilise to organise and create images in such a way that consumers make meaning out of these constructs to fit their realities. Bignell (2002, p.1-3) quoted that ‘Semiotics’ (or semiology) is one of the most powerful and influential ways of thinking about media.

Ferdinand de Saussure, well-known as the father of modern linguistics, looked forward to a science that studies the life of signs within societies; he called it ‘Semiology’ from the Greek word ‘Semion’ meaning “sign.” This is a general approach to the study of signs in every cultural life and even study of culture as a sort of language.

As quoted in his book, *Course in General Linguistic*, Ferdinand de Saussure, explains:

*“Language is a system of signs which express ideas. Hence it is like writing, the deaf and dumb alphabet, symbolic rites, etiquette, military signal and so on, except that it is the most important of such systems. One may therefore envisage a science which studies the life of signs in the framework of social life.... we shall call it semiology (from the Greek semeion, ‘sign’). It will teach us what signs consist of and the laws which they are governed by.”*

Semiotics as a field of study is associated with two scholars: French Linguistic Ferdinand de Saussure and American Charles Sanders in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The theory of semiotics by French theorist Roland Barthes analyses signs and their meaning (Griffin, 2012) whose works were used in this study. In semiotics, Barthes focused more on the nonverbal meanings of signs rather than on their verbal meanings (Griffin, 2012). He identified three levels of significations: Denotation, connotation and myth. Denotation is the obvious meaning which anyone can identify and relate with in a text. Connotation is the hidden meaning in a text or message that needs interpretation. A myth is the common associated meaning or ideology in any text or message.

Nonverbal cues are an important aspect of television advertising. This is because there are many instances that advertisements are aired and the audience has to look at the actors’ body language and dramatisation to deduce meaning. A semiotic analysis as a tool therefore ensures the association of themes and customer perceptions are clearly identified and analysed. This aids in understanding advertisements effects on the consumers, why and how they react to which advert triggers. Nazafian and Dabaghi (2011), mention that anything that causes the audience to assume a meaning in the advertisement is a sign.

By using signs and colours, the advertiser is better able to market the product to the audience and make it popular among them. Bignell (2002) mentions that the combination of linguistic signs with visual, often photographic signs in advertisements allows us to explore the terms and ideas. Television adverts are composed of syntagmatic sequence of images, sounds and words. For the audience, it is normally difficult to immediately interpret the meaning of the advert when shown on TV. This is because the adverts avail very little time for articulation of the complete image.

### **2.1.2 Denotation and Connotation of Television Images**

Denotation and connotation are important aspects in understanding how the audience receives and perceives food advertisements on television. This is because the audience form their meanings and conclusions from what they see, the association they form of the image or their already formed meanings. These are important ways for senders and receivers to understand and form meaning from various texts or messages. Denotation of television messages and images looks into what the audience sees or the literal meaning. It simply involves what the audience sees in its purest and real meaning. For example, when one watches a milk advertisement they simply see the packet of milk as just a packet of milk.

While denotation is the literal meaning of something, it could have many connotations depending on the author and receiver of a message. Connotation of television messages and images on the other hand looks into the images, what the messages imply or their associated meaning. In the example above the audience will look at the milk advertisement and apart from just seeing a packet of milk, they will look into why milk is important and even associate it to the message and actors in the advertisement.

If it's a successful boxing champion used as the image or actor in the advertisement, then the audience will look at the milk product as something that can make them equally successful and strong as the champion portrayed.

The act of watching television in itself is not simply about the audience receiving the televised advertisements. It is normally a complex process that involves marketing teams creating advertisements that take into account the knowledge levels and relations of the audience with television advertisements. These texts or messages are then laden with the preferred or dominant meanings which are then encoded into the television watching experience (Nightingale 2006, Goldberg 2009).

The audience on the other hand decodes the advertisement's meaning based on their predispositions and world views. It is therefore important to take into account the audience's environment, culture, social beliefs and other influencing factors. These can be discovered during the market research normally carried out by advertising firms as part of the pre advertising process.

### **2.1.3 Consumer Buying Habits**

Kumar and Raju (2013) in their paper sought to study the role advertising plays in consumer decision making. They investigated emotional response and attitudinal behaviour aspects of consumers. They argue that the consumers mostly associate with brands whose adverts have emotional values and messages that they can resonate with. They also assert that more information needs to be available in adverts to enable consumers make buying decisions. The consumer goes through a process before making purchase decisions.

Their purchase decisions are influenced by many factors like preference, product association, social norms, and available information. Berger (2011) indicates that people's perceptions of themselves are connected with the way advertising helps them shape their identities. According to Berger (2011),

*“Brands (in advertising are signifiers that we use to help define ourselves to others...we can say that we are the brands we assemble to forge a public identity,” (p.232).*

There are four main types of buying behaviours that are important in understanding how consumers react to food advertisements on television.

#### **2.1.3.1 Complex buying behaviour**

The consumer is highly involved in information gathering and comparing products. In this case the consumer takes their time to ensure all features, uses and benefits are analysed before deciding to buy. The consumer even goes ahead to do a comparison and a cost benefit analysis. Complex buying behaviour is largely observed where the buyer feels that the purchase poses a large risk should they make a wrong purchase decision. In some instances, especially in large and formal organisations it involves procurement and purchasing processes.

#### **2.1.3.2 Variety seeking behaviour**

In this case the consumer involvement is low but there is availability of various brands that allows them to compare. The consumer likes to try out different varieties and this can be due to issues like previous bad experiences or an interest in new brands being advertised. Advertisers and marketers must work hard to encourage such consumers to try out their products.

### **2.1.3.3 Dissonance buying behaviour**

The consumer is highly involved in the purchase but the difference in brands is minimal. This is very evident when product developers package and market their products in some similarity for example similar colours, prices and even advertising themes and styles. This sometimes leads to trade wars where companies even go ahead and sue each other and sadly cause the consumers to be confused.

### **2.1.3.4. Habitual buying behaviour**

There is low consumer involvement and the consumer does not consider the different brands. They tend to use the same products over and over. One will notice consistency in certain products always being bought and running out due to consumers' habitual purchase and consumption.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

There are several theories that have been adopted in this field of study that support customer perception, meaning making, buying habits and message reception. This study was based on semiotics and the media ecology theories. These theories helped in supporting the study by availing a better understanding on the use of signs and also application of the media as a message and an environment for communication.

### **2.2.1 Semiotics Theory**

Semiology by French semiologist Roland Barthes is the study of signs and symbols and what they represent. These signs convey meaning. This theory offers a basis in unearthing what these signs are and what they mean.



The goal of semiotics is interpreting both verbal (linguistics) and nonverbal signs. There are three types of signs in the study of semiotics. Iconic signs are those where meaning is based on similarity of appearance. Indexed signs have a cause and effect relationship between the sign and its meaning. For example, an advertisement of a cold soda could mean that it is a hot day and one needs to quench their thirst. Symbolic signs have an arbitrary or conventional link.

Signs can be broken into two parts the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the thing, code, item, photo, music or colour. The signified is the meaning being expressed by the signifier. Signs are therefore important in television food advertisements as they carry hidden meanings that need to be identified and their effects analysed. A sign cannot stand on its own as its support is the signifier and signified for meaning to be derived.

Signs gain cultural prominence when broadcasted through the media. This is because they form an integral part of mass communication. According to one of Barthes famous quotes,

*“A garment, an automobile, a dish of cooked food, a gesture, a film, a piece of music, an advertising image, a piece of furniture, a newspaper headline – these indeed appear to be heterogeneous objects. What might they have in common? This at least: all are signs...this car tells me the social status of its owner, this garment tells me quite precisely the degree of its wearer’s conformism or eccentricity.”*



Barthes further indicates that signs come in all form of shapes and sizes and carry all sorts of meanings. One must remember that they are all signs and they symbolise some bigger and broader concepts.

Mayr (2013) posits that a semiotic analysis unfolds the obvious and hidden meanings in a television analysis. Mayr (2013) was able to demonstrate how codes and certain context within social relations play an important role in creating meaning. This demonstration was based on a study which was aimed at using semiotics analysis as a tool to teach foreign language students in Germany. While semiotic analysis was carried out, the study did not go into the audience opinions and perceptions as a way of understanding how they form self-identity and how they adopt meaning making.

In the study of semiotics, we cannot ignore the different types of signs that help the audience to associate meaning.

- a) **Iconic Signs:** These are signs whose meaning is based on similarity of appearance or rather an image of the item being represented.
- b) **Indexical Signs:** These are signs that show evidence of what's being represented. There is cause – effect relationships between the sign and its meaning.
- c) **Symbolic Signs:** These are signs that have an arbitrary or conventional link. These have no inherent relationship and their representation must be learnt.

**Types of signs**

ICON	
INDEX	
SYMBOL	10

**Figure 2.3: Iconic, Index and Symbol Signs: Source – Researcher**

### **2.2.2 Media Ecology Theory**

Media ecology tradition has various roots or sources but those commonly referred to are Marshall McLuhan, Walter J. Ong and Neil Postman. The theoretical concepts were proposed by McLuhan in 1964 while the term media ecology was introduced by Postman in 1968. This theory looks at media as messages which follows from McLuhan's 1964 famous maxim, "the medium is the message" (p.7).

This study focused on McLuhan media ecology theory due to the study's interest in understanding how media is consumed as both a technology and as an environment in the airing of food advertisements in television. The media ecology theory by Marshall McLuhan takes a look at media, technology and how they affect human environments. It is a metadiscipline that deals with the complexities in relationships between symbols, media and culture.

It is an expansive and inclusive theory encompassing various academic disciplines, linguistics, cultural studies and semiotics. Media ecology is a matter of how media communication affects human perception, understanding, feelings, value and how our interaction with media facilitates or impedes our chances of survival (Valcanis 2011). By adopting this theory in the study, effects of how media and communication affect human understanding, perception, emotions, advertisement reception and reaction were identified.

The theory looks at the medium being the message in other words the television advertisements in themselves are both the medium and the message. This is because content cannot exist without a medium. Ecology is a study of environments, structure, concept and impact on people. The media ecology structures what people say, see, and even do. It therefore assigns roles to people and directs on how those roles ought to be played.

In the case of television advertisements, the specifications are more informal, implicit and half concealed by the audience's perception that the television advert is not an environment but merely a machine or tool of information and entertainment. This theory was adopted in this study to make the environmental specifications more explicit. It was used to guide in understanding how the media structures what the audience sees that causes reactions, why the food adverts make the audience feel how they do and its influence on food consumption habits and culture.

McLuhan (1964) also argued that the medium is the message because the content of a medium is in a certain way another medium. His other reason on why the medium is the message is that the user is the content. This means that the audiences must interpret the messages that they receive on the food advertisements, process sensory data that they take in and eventually make meaning of their environments. The theory's main concept that was of interest in this study was meaning making as observed from the perspective of the audience and the advertisers.

In conclusion this theory points out that if the message is largely constructed on the receiving end of communication, then its effect on the audience is limited. The medium has the greatest influence on the audience and not the message. In this study the focus on the messages being broadcasted on television is of greatest value than the face value of messages themselves.

### **2.3 Summary**

According to the semiotics and media ecology theories, advertisers should not take anything at face value but instead make an attempt to recognize the roles objects and signs play in the audiences' day to day lives. Advertisements are an indication that there could be much more than meets the eye. These theories conclude that everyone is a semiotician because human beings are constantly unconsciously interpreting the meanings of signs around us.

Literature available no doubt indicates that food advertisements promote food consumption and shape food consumption habits. There is however still no conclusive research indicating what specific aspects of the advertisements causes the audience to react the way they do. The availability of numerous literature and research findings on TV food adverts leaves gaps in terms of what specifically triggers the audience to react as they do.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Overview**

This chapter outlines the research design, research approach, data collection and data analysis procedures adopted in this study. The study employed a qualitative research approach due to the interest in perceptions, ideologies and meanings found in food television advertisements. This approach emphasises “the active interpretation of meanings in mainstream media texts,” (Lindlof & Tylor 2011, p.23). This approach according to (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002:19) concentrates on issues of how the audience articulate and interpret their social and personal interests. The interest in various perceptions and interviewees standpoint is part of the reasons that lead to the study adopting this research method.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design is a guide on the procedure for research conduct. It informs on how to collect, measure, analyse and present data (Kothari 2014). This study adopted the exploratory research design. The adoption of this research design was due to the nature of the study that sought to generate more ideas for further research based on the audience’s perceptions. This study was exploratory in nature due to its intention of exploring the research questions and the problem statement. The study also adopted the exploratory research design due to the interest in the respondent’s feedback, experiences, and feelings through their narratives.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

The qualitative approach was adopted for this study because its main focus is on meanings, audience reception and perception. Primary data was gathered by conducting interviews and capturing the respondents' comments, feedback and also carrying out a semiotic analysis of the selected food advertisements.

Several television advertisements aired in the year 2017 in both Citizen and Kenya Television Network were reviewed and six food advertisements that qualified for the purpose of this study were selected. The sampled advertisements were semiotically analysed so as to deconstruct the hidden meanings in them (Stacjs and Hocking 1990: Stokes 2005, Berger 2007). This approach involved search for deeper meanings adopted by both the advertiser and the audience.

### **3.3 Sampling Procedure**

Purposive sampling was adopted for this study in identifying both the six food advertisements and the twelve respondents. The six food advertisements and their internet links were identified. This was followed by watching the saved videos repeatedly to ensure familiarity. The main elements identified in the advertisements were then listed in the semiotic analysis table. (Appendix1). The respondents were also shown the videos of the six advertisements. They were then interviewed on their views and perceptions of these advertisements.

Six individuals were selected from each of the research sites. The sampling of the twelve respondents involved identifying and selecting individuals with the experience in the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

This procedure also notes the important of respondent availability, willingness to participate, ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive and reflective manner. The sample size used in qualitative research is not quite justified (Marshall et al, 2013) even though the researcher's main concern is about using the right size (Dworkin, 2012).

### **3.3.1 Sampling of six TV advertisements**

The study had an interest in specific food advertisements aired on both KTN and Citizen Television. Initially varied food advertisements aired on Citizen and KTN in the year 2017 were watched from which six were identified. The food adverts had to have been aired across both channels to ensure wide viewership. The six food advertisements were identified based on the study objectives and were segmented into foods perceived to be consumed in high and low income areas, and also across both areas.

These advertisements were historical and currently saved on the internet as YouTube videos.

The selected food advertisements with their corresponding internet links were:

- i. Broadway Bread : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2E2Pioy1wwY>
- ii. Cadbury Dairy Milk Chocolate : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuOgN8nf6ps>
- iii. Dola Wheat Flour: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkFtYAgykq0>
- iv. Fresh Chewing Gum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyUzYOyZMBc> - (0.00 – 1.01)
- v. Ilara Milk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLUwVdrECrU>
- vi. Sprite Soda: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyUzYOyZMBc> (7.33 – 9.12)



The food advertisements identified were categorized into three; foods perceived to be consumed in low income areas, foods perceived to be consumed in high income areas and foods perceived to be consumed in both high and low income areas. The selection process was guided by specific advertisement elements which were: (i) signs displayed in the advertisements, (ii) home setting, (iii) dressing codes and (iv) activities observed in the advertisement.

#### **TV adverts for foods perceived to be consumed in low income areas**

- (i) Dola wheat flour
- (ii) Fresh Chewing gum

#### **TV adverts for foods perceived to be consumed in high income areas**

- (i) Cadburys Dairy Milk Chocolate
- (ii) Broadways Bread

#### **TV adverts for foods perceived to be consumed in both low and high income areas**

- (i) Ilara Milk
- (ii) Sprite Soda

### **3.3.2 Sampling of twelve research respondents**

Due to the large number of Nairobi residents who had a chance to watch these advertisements in the year 2017, the interview respondents were selected from households in Westlands constituency, Parklands ward and Dagoretti North constituency, Gatina ward. The research sites identified i.e. Parklands and Gatina wards have a difference in socio –economic activities. Parklands is considered to be up market or a high income area while Gatina a low income area. Indicators of Parklands being upmarket are modern homes and roads, many personal owned vehicles on the estates, availability of shopping malls and large medical facilities. On the other hand, Gatina was identified as a low income area due to numerous congested semi-permanent houses, poor water drainage and sewage systems, many small shops and availability of public transport as the main mode of transport.

These research sites were also selected due to the availability of respondents who have an electricity connection to their home, a television set and also watch television. The twelve sampled respondents were identified based on their ability to own and watch television in their homes, eloquence, knowledge of the English language which was the main interview language, availability, interest and willingness to participate without a reward.

The interviews were carried out to gather primary data on the audience's perceptions, reactions and effects of these food advertisements. Another reason for picking a high income area and a low income area was because the meanings the audiences draw from these food advertisements were thought to be varied due to the difference in the social and environmental set up adding value to the study.

### **3.4 Research Instruments**

The research instruments for this study were a semiotic analysis table (Appendix I) to analyse the six food advertisements, a themes and codes table for the thematic analysis (Appendix II) and an interview guide (Appendix III) that entailed relevant questions to the study.

### **3.5 Research Site**

The advertisements being viewed on YouTube were done at the researcher's home computer while the interviews were carried out in the respondent's homes or in the comfort of their ward location. The research sites were in Westland's constituency, Parklands ward and Dagoretti North constituency, Gatina ward.

### **3.6 Data Collection**

The data was collected by watching and analyzing the television advertisements that were aired in on both Kenya Television Network (KTN) and Citizen TV television stations in the year 2017. These advertisements were downloaded from YouTube. They were saved on the computer and shared with the respondents at the start of the interviews. An in interview guide was also developed for primary data collection during the interviews. The interview guide was also pre-tested to improve on reliability.

#### **3.6.1 Semiotic analysis of TV food advertisements**

A semiotic analysis was carried on six food television advertisements in order to deconstruct the hidden messages encoded by the advertisers and marketing firms. The styles, themes, images and advertising elements used were also identified. Semiotic analysis is a way of understanding the meanings the advertisers want to communicate as well as the ideological meanings embedded in the advertisements, Rose, G. (2012).

#### **3.6.2 Interviews on TV food advertisements**

Twelve interviews were carried out to gather primary data on the audience reactions, perceptions and feeling of food advertisements aired on TV. These interviews were conducted using a pre–tested interview guide. The interviews were carried out in a period of twenty to thirty minutes to allow the respondent’s time to avail as much information as possible. All the interviewees’ feedback was noted down.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

According to Baxter and Babbie (2003), ‘semiotics analysis involves a search for the meanings intentionally or unintentionally attached to signs.’ Semiotic analysis was carried out on the six selected food advertisements. This was done using the following guideline.

- (a) Unlocking the signs used in the advertisements and listing them down.
- (b) Identifying the signifier and signified.
- (c) Identifying themes that are most prevalent.
- (d) Identifying ideologies.
- (e) Comparing and contrasting the various advert aspects.
- (f) Identifying value for both sender and receiver.

The data collected from the respondents was also analysed. Data analysis of the primary data was done by typing out the hand written notes, summarising the data into relevant clusters, coding the data, identifying patterns and interpreting meanings. Thematic analysis also assisted in grouping the data into relevant themes as guided by the research objectives. The final step was grouping all the data into thematic groups that enabled the study to connect the data to the three research objectives.

### **3.8 Data Presentation**

Data analysed in this study was presented in both a semiotic analysis table and narrative form. The findings from the semiotic analysis of the six advertisements were presented on a semiotic analysis table. The primary data collected during the interviews was presented in narrative form. Direct quotes and explanations by the respondents were indicated under the advertisement analysis.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

The research proposal was presented to the School of Journalism and once approved permission was granted to carry out field work for primary data collection as per the certificate of fieldwork (Appendix IV). An interview guide was also prepared and pre-tested to allow credible data collection indicated in (Appendix III). Once primary data was collected and the research completed, the work was subjected to an originality test as seen in the certificate of originality (Appendix V). The final research work was checked and verified for corrections as a final step in ensuring that the quality of the research project met the prescribed standards (Appendix VI). Due to the interviews being carried out in the respondents' homes, there was a need for proper planning for the visits, researcher identification for security reasons and assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

Collection of data is only valuable once analysis is carried out so as to bring out the research findings. This section of the research looked into critically analysing the meanings embedded in the television advertisements by the authors and marketing firms and also the audience reception and perception of these messages. The research was qualitative in nature. In qualitative research, subjectivity as a tradition is taken into account (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). This chapter concludes with a critical analysis of the findings.

#### 4.1 Data Analysis

Data analysis is central to credible qualitative research. In this study, a semiotic analysis of the six food advertisements was carried out and also primary data collected during the interviews was thematically analysed. The semiotic analysis involved listing down the six advertisements, identifying the main sign used to represent the food being advertised, identifying the signifiers in a narrative form and associating these with the signified elements.

##### 4.1.1 Semiotic Analysis of the Sampled Television Advertisements

Advertisement Name	Sign Used	Signifier (Narrative)	Signified
Broadways Bread	Bread	Man comes from the gym to enjoy slices of bread	Healthy Eating
Cadbury Dairy Milk Chocolate	Chocolate Bar	Alien enjoying a bar of chocolate	Good feeling out of this world
Dola Wheat Flour	Wheat Flour	Kenyan celebrity acting out and rushing to wheat flour	Families uniting for a common cause
Fresh Chewing Gum	Chewing Gum	Man and woman bonding after man saves woman from tough examiner	Love, Defense and Power
Ilara Milk	Packet of Milk	Family entertaining unending guests	Union of Family and Friends at all times
Sprite Soda	Soda	Talking billboard with different messages	Creativity when one is thirsty

**Table 4.1: Semiotic analysis table of selected advertisements by researcher**

#### 4.1.2 Broadways Bread Advertisement



**Figure 4.1: Broadways Bread Advertisement**

**Source:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2E2PioyIwwY>

This advertisement is promoting the consumption of low fat sugar broadways bread, a product of Broadway Bakery. In this thirty second advertisement, a man comes from the gym and is eager to enjoy a sandwich. He prepares one and the minute he takes his first bite the bread breaks into sugar droplets. There is a voice over of a man recommending broadways bread. This simultaneously prompts the man from the gym to switch to broadways bread and enjoys the experience. The same voice at the end of the advertisement indicates that broadways bread has been in existence since 1958.

The connotation in this advertisement is that eating broadways bread equals to healthier eating. This is because the message in the advertisement indicates that other brands of bread contain a lot of sugar which is considered unhealthy. Indicating the length of time broadways bread has been produced is also a message to generate confidence in product consistency and hence approval. One respondent noted that the period of time the bread has been produced i.e. since 1958 makes it a credible brand.

R6: “*ala kumbe hii mkate imekuwa kwa muda mrefu hivi? Basi lazima iwe ni mkate mzuri sana.*” (So this bread has been in existence for so long, then it must be so good).

Another respondent was shocked at the part in the advertisement where the other brand of bread broke into sugar droplets and when asked why (R2) said, “*I can’t believe the amount of sugar on that bread, so unhealthy, i dint even know bread has sugar.*”

Various codes are used to capture meaning in this advertisement. They are social codes shown through the man’s gym attire and house setting and ideological or mythical in the assumption that eating a sandwich made from bread will equal to healthier living.

#### 4.1.3 Cadburys Dairy Milk Chocolate Advertisement



**Figure 4.2: Cadbury Dairy Milk Chocolate Advertisement**

**Source:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuOgN8nf6ps>

Cadbury dairy milk chocolate is a product produced by a company known as Cadbury. This product has the parent company name in its branding. In the thirty second advertisement the use of fictitious extra-terrestrial characters known as ‘aliens’ and scenes of outer space were used to promote Cadburys dairy milk chocolate.



The advertisement begins with one alien who gets to taste a bar of Cadburys chocolate then suddenly its facial expression lights up with a smile and it begins to dance to the music heard in the background of the advertisement. The alien decides to share the chocolate bar with the other aliens in the advertisement and all their facial expression indicate happiness as they do a routine dance in enjoyment of the Cadburys dairy milk chocolate. In the advertisement there is a voice over of a man encouraging the audience to enjoy the smooth chocolaty taste of Cadburys dairy milk.

The connotation in this advertisement is that eating Cadburys chocolate brings about fun as dramatised by the aliens who are seen happy and dancing. The message also passed across is that if out of the normal 'world' characters like aliens can taste and enjoy this chocolate, so can anyone in the audience.

The technical codes employed are music, sound and lighting. These were noted by several respondents who identified with the dance and music. One respondent described the dance moves as exciting and fun. *(R1) said "wow i wish i could dance like those characters they look like they are having so much fun."* The ideological codes help to persuade the customer that eating Cadbury chocolate is a feeling that is out of this world and has no human limit.

#### 4.1.4 Dola Wheat Flour Advertisement



**Figure 4.3: Dola Wheat Flour Advertisement**

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkFtYAgykq0>

Dola wheat flour advert is dramatised and created in the form of a one-and-a-half-minute story. In the Kenyan culture the male or groom to be is required to make a dowry payment to be given some sort of formal permission to marry the lady of his choice. In this advert, a Kenyan celebrity known as Eric Omondi acts as the groom to be and together with his family they visit the bride to be and her family to ask for her hand in marriage. The guests are welcomed and served with a meal that comprises of a Kenyan delicacy known as ‘chapati.’ As the guests and family share the meal they exchange pleasantries about each other’s family.

The ‘chapatis’ are so sweet and soon they run out yet the wheat flour used to prepare the ‘chapatis’ is also unavailable in the house. Eric and some of his family members have to dash out to the shop and come with the wheat flour for more ‘chapatis’ to be made or he will lose out on a chance to get consent to marry the lady. More chapattis are prepared by the bride to be and the party continues. Eventually both families are happy and Eric gets permission to marry the lady.

The connotation in this advertisement is that sharing a good meal brings people together even through difficult circumstances. Dowry payment is sometimes considered a tough task because it is a form of negotiation.

*(R4) indicated that food is so important in dowry negotiations as such the character Eric Omondi had to run around to ensure he got more Dola wheat flour when it ran out. This same responded further said, “this is a Kenyan culture but i think it’s just so overrated especially where a good impression has to be made so that the outcome of the dowry negotiations is positive.”*

The family and cultural settings are adopted in this advert. The use of a Kenyan Celebrity also signifies celebrity brand consumption influence. This is to encourage and motivate the audience especially those who identify with him. In the end of the advertisement a male voice over says the words ‘*Unga wa Dola, kitu shwari.*’ These are Swahili words meaning that the Dola wheat flour is fantastic.

#### 4.1.5 Fresh Chewing Gum Advertisement



**Figure 4.4: Fresh Chewing Gum Advertisement**

**Source:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyUzYOyZMBc> (0.00 – 1.01)

The Fresh chewing gum one-minute advert adopts an exam room set up. One female student finishes her exam after the time set by the examiner.

This prompts the examiner to reject her exam paper. A male student who has been admiring the female student observes the examiner verbally rejecting her exam paper and comes to her rescue. He is seen opening a packet of Fresh chewing gum and a bubble is observed around him causing a stir.

He then proceeds and asks the examiner if he knows who the girl is to which he responds in the negative and adds that she has failed. He goes ahead and places the girl's exam paper in between the pile on the examiner's desk confusing the examiner. The young man and woman walk away holding hands and later he shares the packet of chewing gum with her. At the end of the advert, a male voice over is heard narrating the words, *'get your fresh in a brand new pack with long lasting freshness and flavour, fresh freedom to be you!'*

The connotation in this advertisement is that when a man is interested in wooing a certain lady then they should go to whatever length to defend them when need be even if they have to break the rules. The other connotation is that a man can energize himself when he has the intention of winning the attention of a lady. *One respondent (R12) said, 'when a man wants a lady he will go to any length to impress her.'*

This is seen when the man chews fresh chewing gum and suddenly possesses the super power to protect and defend the female student. The ideological codes here include a myth that men have the power and skills to protect women and can do so via whatever means.

#### 4.1.6 Ilara Milk Advertisement



**Figure 4.5: Ilara Milk Advertisement**

**Source:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLUwVdrECrU>

The Ilara milk advertisement is a thirty second production based on a family set up. In this advert a young girl engages her mother in the kitchen while she prepares tea. The girl who is quite inquisitive enquires from her mother on why she is preparing tea and so much of it.

The mother informs the daughter that it is a Kenyan way of doing things by welcoming guests with tea. She says “*kawaida yetu sisi wakenya ni hukaribisha wageni wetu na chai.*” (As is the norm here in Kenya we welcome our guests with a cup of tea).

The mother then informs the daughter that the tea must also be made with good milk and in this case good milk is Ilara Fresh Milk. The mother goes ahead and welcomes a group of female guests with a cup of tea. The guests look very elated and get comfortable to enjoy the tea something that looks like a normal expectation.

The girl having watched the mother prepare the tea goes and serves a couple of kids in the garden with glasses of milk seemingly imitating her mother. This happens as a male figure is watching her from the window as she goes along imitating her mother and is quite fascinated.

A male voice over is heard speaking in Swahili reiterating what the mother had mentioned on welcoming guests with a good cup of tea. “*Jamii yetu husema karibu kwa ladha na cream ya Ilara, Ilara fresh milk uzuri wa kipekee na afya tele.*” (Our family says welcome with the tasty Ilara cream and Ilara fresh milk for a unique and healthy taste).

During this study this is one of the advertisements that generated a lot of debate and feedback from the respondents. There are several connotations identified in this advertisement. The main one is that the use of Ilara milk to welcome guests makes them feel at home and comfortable. The young girl imitating the mother by serving milk to other children as a sign of confidence in the milk brand based on information shared by the mother. This is also a sense of trust in the mother by the daughter. R8 indicated that the fact that the young girl is observing and engaging her mother while making tea to entertain guests means that one day she will be very able to walk in her mother’s shoes.

*R10 also said, huyo msichana atakuwa mtoto mzuri sana anafunzwa vizuri na mama yake.’’ (That girl will be a very good child as she is being taught well by her mother.)*

A stereotype connotation is identified in this advert with the mother and girl being the ones preparing tea and yet there is a male family member acting as a ‘father’ in the advert who only observes. This makes the kitchen tasks look like they are designated for the female family members.

Several codes and signifiers are played out in this advertisement. The signifiers that help to deliver meaning include the mother's action of making the tea and doing it in while displaying happy emotions. This shows that she is happy to entertain guests.

The young girl listens to the mother and then goes ahead to imitate her by serving other children with cups of milk signifies trust and confidence in the mother's word. The social and cultural codes are majorly identified in this advertisement.

First is based on the cultural practice of welcoming guests with a cup of tea in Kenya that makes them feel welcome. Secondly the social code of family set up is also portrayed in this advert as a nuclear family that welcomes guests into their home.

#### 4.1.7 Sprite Soda Advertisement



**Figure 4.6: Sprite Soda Advertisement**

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyUzYOyZMBc> (7.33 – 9.12)

The Sprite soda advert is based on almost two minutes of scrolling billboards that have different messages.

In this advertisement the Sprite Soda advertisement is displayed on a talking or rather communicating billboard known as 'Bill.' Messages on Bill the billboard are all about sprite but leave the audience guessing and have a touch of humour. This advertisement displays a message that Sprite would like to move from the normal way of advertising and their usual tag line 'obey your thirst,' to obey you advert. The billboard is set up along the busy Uhuru Highway in Nairobi County.

The messages in the scrolling billboard begin with a greeting to the audience. So 'Bill' the billboard tells a story on how it is to be a bill Board. The story is told as follow via the following systematic scrolling messages.

*Bill: Hello there*

*Bill: My name is board James board*

*Bill: Ok my real name is Bill*

*Bill: Bill Board*

***Sprite Narrator: Sprite presents Bill The Billboard***

*Bill: It's not easy being a billboard*

*Bill: See these drops in on my background? Water drops seen on the background*

*Bill: They're teardrops*

*Bill: The teardrops of a lonely billboard*

*Bill: Okay I lied its condensation*

*Bill: Bill always speaks his mind*

*Bill: I hate pigeons*

*Bill: I also hate round stuff*

*Bill: I find rectangular stuff much more attractive*

*Bill: And is a bit self-centred*

*Bill: Even I'm thirsty now*

*Bill: But I can't even drink*



*Bill: Cause I don't have a mouth*

*Bill: Bill is the first ad ever with mental issues*

*Bill: People treat me like an object*

*Bill: I went to billboard therapist recently*

*Bill: My wife forced me into*

*Bill: She says I talk too much*

*Bill: Anyway the guy asks me about my childhood*

*Bill: So I tell him you know who raised me*

*Bill: A crane*

*Bill: This conversation is not going anywhere*

*Bill: A bit like you*

*Bill: You're going nowhere*

*Bill: With this traffic*

*Bill: Maybe I should just give you some information*

*Bill: Its currently 37° C*

*Bill: In the Bahamas*

*Bill: Ha Ha Ha*

***Sprite Narrator: Bill obeyed himself for a few weeks***

*Bill: There's a huge traffic jam on the Uhuru roundabout*

*Bill: Oops, Sorry, you're in it*

***Sprite Narrator: Morality: If a billboard can live by its own rules***

***Sprite Narrator: Why shouldn't we***

The advertisement ends with the Sprite soda logo flashing and the words 'Sprite Obey You.' In between the scrolling messages, there are images of onlookers visibly fascinated by the messages being displayed on the advert and especially the ones with a tone of humour. The talking billboard is set up on a busy Kenyan Highway as a form of entertainment to motorists and onlookers.

The connotation in this advert is that Sprite Soda brings out a level of creativity and sense of humour. While the use of a talking billboard is a form of one-way communication, 'Bill' the billboard is able to engage the audience with pre-set humorous responses. There are other connotations that are identified based on the messages expressed by 'Bill' the billboard.

The many random, incoherent and inconsistent messages by 'Bill' are an indication of mental illness as portrayed in this advertisement. One of the hidden messages in this advertisement is that one can get to enjoy Sprite soda and bring out a level of creativity and humour no matter the situation. It also displays a state of confusion.

*R1: "Bill the billboard seems mad and i find it so difficult to find the relationship between the numerous messages and why i should drink Sprite Soda."*

The location of 'Bill' the billboard at Uhuru highway is one with a lot of vehicle traffic. This means that drivers are normally stuck there for long and focus majorly on the traffic. The other connotation observed here is that one can find a distraction and a humorous one when they have to endure the traffic. For example, when 'Bill' shares these messages:

*This conversation is not going anywhere; A bit like you; You're going nowhere; With this traffic; Maybe I should just give you some information; Its currently 37° C; In the Bahamas; Ha Ha Ha.*

This advertisement also seems to be promoting a carefree life based on the messages shared by 'Bill.' The advertisements above bring out various codes; have numerous inexhaustible connotations, messages and even hidden messages. There are also other aspects like family settings, social status, influences and even creativity.

#### 4.1.8 Thematic Analysis of Interview Data

The data collected during the interviews was grouped into thematic areas. Braun & Clarke (2006) provide a six- phase guide which is a useful systematic framework for conduct the data collected from the interviewees. Theoretical thematic analysis is the process of identifying patters or themes within qualitative data like what was collected during this research. The following steps by Braun & Clarke describe how to carry out a thematic analysis.

Step	Activity
1	<b>Data familiarization as collected during the interviews:</b> This involves going through all the notes and comments gathered during the interviews.
2	<b>Generating Initial Codes:</b> Identification of common phrases, words, sentences, expressions and comments.
3	<b>Searching for prevalent themes:</b> Scheming and attempting to group the codes into specific themes that are most relevant to the study.
4	<b>Reviewing Themes:</b> Matching the themes to ensure they make sense.
5	<b>Defining Themes:</b> Identifying the meanings of the themes both obvious and hidden.
6	<b>Summary and Write Up:</b> Final write up involving the association of the themes and the study objectives.

**Table 4.2: Braun & Clarkes six steps for thematic analysis**

#### **4.1.9 Codes and Themes Identified**

Several codes were identified from the data collected during the twelve interviews. There were a total of five interview guiding questions in this study. This section will highlight the most prevalent and relevant codes identified that relate to this study. The interview questions were not used as codes and themes, a pitfall identified by Clarke & Braun (2013). To achieve this objective, the data was organised in a meaningful and systematic way and open coding was applied.

Due to the large amount of data collected during the interviews summary notes were compiled and only responses most relevant to the study were adopted for data analysis and subsequently to yield the findings. This section also highlights some of the direct quotes from the discussions with the respondents.

There were no pre-set codes as the codes were developed as the data was being analysed. Much guidance was drawn from Bree & Gallagher's (2016) on how to use Microsoft excel to code. The data was grouped into summarised notes where the most common, overemphasised statements were identified and highlighted. Relevant codes were then drawn from these interview notes (Table 4.3).

Braun & Clarke (2006) distinguished between two levels of themes: semantic and latent. Semantic themes are those that have the explicit or surface meanings. Such themes come into play to explain the basics of what is seen, read or heard by the audience. This helps as a starting point when trying to identify the audience's ideas, ideologies, way of thinking, practices, moods and attitudes.

Latent themes are used to identify what is beyond the surface level meaning for example ideologies and underlying ideas. These are sometimes openly expressed by the audience or determined by the 'unsaid.' The data collected from the interviews was grouped and summarised as seen in Table 4.3.

## Identification of Codes and Themes

SUMMARISED NOTES	CODES	THEMES
<p>Food advertisements are not the only consideration when making purchase decisions. Own meanings are formed based on perception, preference, history, affordability, brand association.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personal Preference</li> <li>2. Personal Choice</li> <li>3. Social Effects</li> </ol>	<p>Food choices are very personal and adverts only serve to inform but not to help decide.</p>
<p>Music, drama, colors, personalities, family and home settings are the most captivating aspects in food advertisements.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personalities</li> <li>2. Logos</li> <li>3. Visual effects</li> </ol>	<p>The advert layout, who acts and what is shown captivates attention.</p>
<p>Food advertisements that have information on processes, usage, health tips and nutritional information are most educative.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health Information</li> <li>2. Use of persuasion</li> </ol>	<p>Some adverts focus too much on convincing rather than informing.</p>
<p>Lifestyles and ideologies promoted by food advertisements include family, social life, cultural practices, love.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family life</li> <li>2. Cultures</li> </ol>	<p>Family, love and unity are key and always matter.</p>
<p>Negative information is normally missing as there are no disclaimers indicated or even any health warnings on consumption.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dishonesty</li> <li>2. Mistrust</li> <li>3. Confusion</li> </ol>	<p>There is a level of doubt due to lack of disclaimers e.g. overeating chocolate can cause tooth cavity.</p>

**Table 4.3: Codes and themes Identified by the researcher**

## **4.2 Research Findings**

Three major research findings were identified in this study. All the three findings were associated with the research objectives which were: (i) to identify the signs used by advertisers in creating television food advertisements in Kenya, (ii) to investigate if food advertisements on television are used as a basis by the audience in their food choices and (iii) to analyse elements in food advertisements that capture audiences' attention.

### **4.2.1 Signs used by food advertisers in food advertisements in Kenya**

The semiotic analysis carried out on the six food advertisements identified that various signs are used in identifying different food brands. The most common identifier is the product name or logo for example Ilara milk or Broadways Bread. The use of brand names makes it easy to recognise and associate with a brand. These identifiers help the audience in remembering the food brand and associating with it.

The interviewees further identified that association of more visual signs like dance, colour and drama in almost all the food advertisements identified. In most of the advertisements background music is played as the advert is running which was identified as captivating. The use of drama is also identified. In all the advertisements the drama is well crafted and the audience easily identifies with different flowing scenes. The advertisements are created in the form of a story that the audience can easily follow and understand.

The findings from the interviews are that the audience gets captivated by various acts in the advertisements e.g. where there is a funny scene like the Sprite soda advertisement or during the Dola wheat flour advertisement when the main character is running around sourcing for the wheat flour to ensure he does not miss out on the dowry negotiations.

In one of the advertisements (Dola wheat flour), a popular Kenyan personality known as Eric Omondi who is a comedian is the main brand promoter. The use of the personality not only brings out his 'funny nature,' but also motivates and persuades the audience who look up to him as their hero. This is a technique used by many marketers where the use of a known personality like Eric attracts the audience and also helps to generate brand confidence and affirmation. Celebrity endorsements help to promote the food brands being advertised and is increasingly being applied as a marketing strategy.

In today's competitive world corporate organisations are ensuring they adopt all possible efforts and strategies to promote their brands. The huge investments by companies in advertising are not without motives, as companies try to outsmart each other with their investments in order to obtain a domineering market share and win customers favour Solomon (2002). This includes using celebrities as index signs like Eric Omondi. The celebrities and personalities are carefully selected depending on the activity and what they stand for. A good example is using an athlete in a sports shoe advertisement because there will be a form of association and relevance.

Most of the signs used in these advertisements are iconic. The use of the actual name of the product, its brand colours and even logo are largely applied. There was however instances where iconic signs were mixed with index signs. Williamson (1978) posits that advertisers draw discourse familiar to their target audiences, which she calls "a referent system" (p.26).

The consistent use of the iconic signs during the running of the advertisement is seen as a strategy to capture the audience's immediate attention and also a stamp in their memory perhaps when they do decide to go and purchase the food item.



The use of iconic signs is also applied to ensure brand differentiation especially where there are almost similar competing brands in the market.

Body language is also identified as another form of signage in the advertisements. In the Fresh chewing gum advertisement, the male student takes an interest at the female student and keeps looking at her. After he comes to her defence and they walk away, they share Fresh chewing gum and look at each other to signify affection, appreciation and love. The demeanour of the examiner is also displayed in his tough look. The facial expression of the man from the gym in the Broadways bread advertisement changes to shock and dismay immediately he bites into the bad quality bread. Once he gets convinced to try broadways bread his face brightens up again indicating a sense of happiness and satisfaction.

#### **4.2.2 Food advertisement influence and audience reception**

In the process as is seen in the thematic analysis carried out in this study, certain mythical or ideological meanings come out without the intention of the advertisement creators (Baxter and Babbie 2003). The semiotic analysis done had some findings in perception and meaning making. The meanings were drawn from the already formed world view and daily cultural practices. It is also evident from the summary notes, codes and themes that there are other determining factors to whether the audience consumes a food product or not.

As audiences, Baran (2010) argues:

*“We have a responsibility to question the tellers (e.g. marketers) and their stories, to interpret stories in ways consistent with larger or more important cultural values and truths, to be thoughtful, to reflect on the stories’ meanings and what they say about us and our culture. To do less is to miss an opportunity to construct our own meaning and thereby, culture (p.15).”*

The summary notes from the interviews indicate that watching a food advertisement cannot be the sole determinant of a purchase decision. There are other factors that come into play. Such factors include history, personal preference, perceptions, ideologies and even culture. These findings therefore indicate that the audience already has some form of ideology, world view and pre-determined way of doing things and making food purchases. From the data above, the interviewee's decisions are largely influenced by their existing environments (within) more than external (without).

Cultural practices are identified as having a level of influence in audiences meaning making. In both the Dola wheat flour and Ilara milk advertisements culture is portrayed as an influence in food consumption and food purchase decision making. In the Kenyan culture (as indicated in the Ilara milk advertisement), food is important in how the society vies Kenyans especially where guests are concerned. Guests are welcomed with a cup of tea or a well prepared meal for them to consider one a good host. These are already formed cultures and societal norms that are practiced on a daily basis. The interview data identifies culture as being important because it determines food consumption and choices and eventually what brands the audience makes a decision to buy.

It is noted that the use of brands repetitively also influences brand choice. For example, no matter how enticing an advertisement is, if the user is used to a certain brand because they believe it brings out the best in them then they will always purchase it. During the interviews it was however noted that the same audience does take note of these advertisements and even get fascinated and engaged. This could be an opportunity to capture new food product users or to get them to change their brand preference.

### **4.2.3 Food advertisements captivating elements based on the audience**

There was indication based on the interviewees and semiotic analysis that the food advertisements do have several captivating elements that capture the audience's attention. The advertisements sampled indicate the use of different strategies to bring out the message without really directly quoting. In each of the advertisements there is a hidden message that speaks more about the food item being advertised. The Broadways bread advertisement has a man coming from the gym and using him implies that to be strong and healthy, then one needs broadways bread. Going to the gym is a connotation of health and body fitness.

The Cadburys dairy milk chocolate advertisement use of aliens is a message that the tasty and awesome feeling is out of this world. In this advertisement, the message that comes across is that the good and tasty feeling of Cadburys chocolate has crossed the world borders and even reached outer space where aliens are found. The use of dance in this advertisement also signifies fun and these is associated with the chocolate brand.

Dola wheat flour advertisement shows how culture plays out in the Kenyan context. One the messages here is that food is a huge part of the dowry negotiations and without it then the whole processes is compromised. The use of a Kenyan celebrity also signifies that even celebrities are subjected to the cultural practices in their day to day lives.

The bride to be making good chapattis also signifies that she needs to be a good cook for the dowry negotiations to go on well. This is identified as a gender stereotype where women are expected to be able to do certain tasks like to cook well in order to qualify as a good spouse.

The Fresh chewing advertisement is anchored on love and a man's defence for a lady he is interested in. The hidden message here is that a man can go to great lengths like defying examination rules. It also shows that when one is defended in such kind of a way they warm up as the female student did to her male counterpart.

The message identified here is that Fresh chewing gum puts you in a friendship path and you can always get a level of confidence when you chew it. The Ilara milk advertisement also brings out the Kenyan culture of welcoming guests in certain ways almost like an unspoken rule. The young girl asks the mother why she is cooking so much tea and she responds and says that it is for the guests. A hidden message here is that the large tea quantity is to ensure each guest is well served and can have as much tea as possible. In this advertisement a male figure acting as the father is only an observer. The societal gender stereotype places women as the ones who should be carrying out kitchen duties.

Lastly the Sprite soda advertisement captures numerous hidden messages. One is that humour is important in stress situations like being stuck in traffic. It also indicates that one has to be extra ordinary to stand out like 'Bill' the billboard. Use of words that resonate with a level of mental illness also expresses a sign of societal disorder and need for help.

This advertisement being anchored on a talking billboard which is out of the norm indicates that there are numerous emotions, perceptions, feelings and ideas that people have and are not able to express unless given a unique opportunity and forum to do so.

This advertisement also has indications of a state of disorder and confusion at face value due to the inherent messages that one must piece together to form some meaning. The concept in this advertisement is identified by McLuhan who viewed media as an environment and indicated that technologies are extensions of our bodies and our capabilities in the media ecology theory.

### **4.3 Discussion**

This section entails a summary of the data that was collected and analysed and also the findings drawn. The relationship between the findings, available literature and theories adopted in this study is also outlined. An in-depth narrative of each advertisement that was semiotically analysed is also presented. The interview data was summarised and codes and these relevant to the study were selected.

In semiotics, Barthes focused more on the nonverbal meanings of signs rather than on their verbal meanings (Griffin, 2012). He identified three levels of significations: Denotation, connotation and myth. These three levels are identified in the advertisements analysed in this study. The advertisements adopted numerous nonverbal signs for example the use of images, colour, body language and even dance. The use of literal and hidden meanings is also identified in various sections of the advertisements.

The findings of this study identify TV as having a level of influence on the audience but does not identify which specific elements influence a particular audience reaction. Chapman et al (2014) also made recommendation for further studies to investigate precisely how other factors like emotions, preference and calmness modulate the role of TV in food consumption.

The semiotic theory identifies the use of the signifier and signified in contextualizing food TV adverts. The semiotics theory confirms the study findings that the audience does associate with different signs in the food advertisements. The audience is also able to identify different meanings including the hidden ones. Semiology theory also identifies use of the signifiers and signified in decoding messages and in meaning making.

The respondents were able to identify certain signifiers and associate them with certain meanings albeit based on their own interpretation. By identifying the signs used in the advertisement both the sender (advertiser) and audience are able to form certain meaning of the message being communicated.

On the other hand, the media ecology theory was valuable in looking into how media and communication processes affect human perception, feelings, emotion and value. This theory is supported by the study findings that the audience does engage media by way of watching the TV food adverts and is able to identify several elements and even cause them to react in certain ways. The fact that the audience can watch and identify hidden messages means that they consume media as an environment in which they thrive in.

The audience also uses TV as a form of medium not only for entertainment but for educational purposes. Media ecology as applied in this study also identified how TV as a medium of communication affects human perception, understanding, feelings and value; and how our interaction with media facilitates or impedes our chances of survival (Salas, 2007, pp.63).

#### **4.3.1 Broadways Bread Advertisement**

This study was able to identify the signs and their meanings used in this advertisement. The message that this bread has been in existence from 1958 was identified as a confirmation of credibility which seemed like the intention of the marketer.

*R6: ‘‘ala kumbe hii mkate imekuwa kwa muda mrefu hivi? Basi lazima iwe ni mkate mzuri sana.’’ (So this bread has been in existence for so long, then it must be so good).*

The man coming from the gym and having some slices of bread also signifies that eating good bread is healthy.

#### **4.3.2 Cadburys Dairy Milk Chocolate Advertisement**

The use of ‘alien’ characters in this advertisement was viewed as a sign that eating Cadburys Dairy Milk chocolate is a feeling out of the normal world. From some of the respondents interviewed, there was indication that the use of dance and music in this advertisement also generated feelings of goodness and interest.

*(R1) said ‘‘wow i wish i could dance like those characters they look like they are having so much fun.’’*

R1 also indicated that this advertisement focuses too much on the sweetness and fun part of chocolate but does not disclose the disclaimer that over consumption of chocolate can lead to tooth decay.

### **4.3.3 Dola Wheat Flour Advertisement**

The study identified different signifiers and signified elements in the Dola wheat flour advert. The most prevalent signifier is the visit from the man's family to the lady's family signifying the Kenyan marriage culture. The pressures of dowry negotiations are also played out in this advertisement when the male character is seen running around to restock the depleted wheat flour. This advertisement also passes the message that food is a very important part of such meetings like dowry negotiations or when guests are visiting.

The connotation that the lady (bride to be) must be a good cook for the man's family to accept her also indicates feminine stereotyping that good cooking equals to a good woman or potential bride.

### **4.3.4 Fresh Chewing Gum Advertisement**

An ideological code is identified in this advert based on the findings of the study. The ideology that a man can go to whatever length to please or woo a lady he wants to pursue including breaking the rules. This advertisement also brings out the ideology that it is men who stand up for women. R9 identified the man chewing gum and suddenly possessing power to attract the lady as a superficial ideology that a man has the ability to gain special powers to achieve what he wants.

### **4.3.5 Ilara Milk Advertisement**

Ilara milk advertisement is one acted out in a family setting and with various connotations identified. First the use of Ilara milk to make tea brings in a cultural perspective. It is viewed as a Kenyan practice to welcome guests with a cup of tea to make the host feel honourable and the guests to feel welcome.



This is identified by a male voice over in the advertisement that said “*Jamii yetu husema karibu kwa ladha na cream ya Ilara, Ilara fresh milk uzuri wa kipekee na afya tele.*” (Our family says welcome with the tasty Ilara cream and Ilara fresh milk for a unique and healthy taste.

The young girl imitating the mother by serving milk to other children as a sign of confidence in the milk brand based on information shared by the mother. This is also a sense of trust in the mother by the daughter. R8 indicated that the fact that the young girl is observing and engaging her mother while making tea to entertain guests means that one day she will be very able to walk in her mother’s shoes.

#### **4.3.6 Sprite Soda Advertisement**

The findings of this study also indicate that sometimes the audience gets lost in a message they consider confusing and incoherent. This is identified by the numerous messages scrolling on ‘Bill’ the billboard that has a touch of humour but equally confusing and engaging.

The connotation in this advert is that Sprite Soda brings out a level of creativity and sense of humour. The use of a talking billboard is also viewed as a one-way communication. Other connotations include that fun and happiness can be achieved with a certain level of creativity and humour no matter the situation.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **RESEARCH SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Overview**

This chapter presents a final discussion of the findings of the study, conclusions drawn and recommendations for further research. The social implications of the hidden meanings, audience perceptions, signs and symbols used in food advertisements are identified and summarised. The main objective of this study was to investigate messages on food advertisements, how the audience receives and reacts to them and the signs and symbols used. The study was guided by three specific objectives and the conclusions in this chapter are aligned to these objectives. The objectives were:

- (i) To identify the signs used by advertisers in creating television food advertisements in Kenya.
- (ii) To investigate if food advertisements on television are used as a basis by the audience in their food choices.
- (iii) To analyse elements in food advertisements that capture audiences' attention.

#### **5.1 Research Summary**

The main elements that were identified in this study were related to the research objectives and summarised as seen in 5.1.1, 5.1.2 and 5.1.3.

### **5.1.1 Preferent signs used by advertisers in Kenyan food advertisements**

Advertising is an integral part of food product marketing. Before the early twentieth century advertising messages were meant to alert consumers of availability of goods and this had to change due to the unprecedented economic growth and competition within the industry; and expansion of mass media (Baran 2012, Turow 2010).

Semiotic analysis of food advertisements in Kenya indicates that marketers use brand names and logos in brand identification as the first sign. Use of the names like Broadways, Dola, Fresh Chewing Gum, Sprite, Ilara Milk, and Cadburys are used. There is also the use of colours associated with these brands as signs. These colours like using green in the Sprite advertisement and Purple in the Cadburys advertisement help to associate the brand name and its environment. Other signs used are personalities like Eric Omondi in the Dola wheat flour advertisement.

The use of music and drama to pass on the brand message is also in itself a sign. This helps the audience to resonate with the food advertisement and also to have a memory stamp. There was however no conclusive evidence on which of the signs and symbols that capture the audience's attention more or cause them to react and want to try out the food products.

Hidden meanings in the advertisements studied are also identified through various acts and signs. Using the bride to be in making chapati for the dowry negotiations to go well and the female family members to make tea in the Ilara milk advertisements are hidden signifiers of negative gender stereotypes and cultural practices.

These scenes bring into play that family is key and the place of the female e.g. the mother in the Ilara advertisement is in making sure meals are well cooked and served and to welcome guests.

### **5.1.2 Food advertisements influence on food choices and food consumption culture**

Food consumption habits as outlined in the findings of this study are not determined by food advertisements. While the advertisements can have a level of effect this effect in terms of percentage of influence was not determined during this study. What was however established in this study was that the audience seems to have an already formed world view of what they want and already consume.

The audience gets to a level of fascination from the food advertisements but the study did not conclusively identify that this led them to an alteration in their food consumption habits. The audience uses food advertisement for information purposes as indicated in the interviews carried out.

Food consumption is largely identified in this study as an already formed practice and way of doing things. The advertisements only serve to inform, educate and entertain an already seemingly decided audience. There are several factors that were identified as causing the audience not to be largely influenced by the food advertisements. These include personal choice, cultural practices, repetition, habits and even reluctance to try out new food products. It was further identified that the audience in most cases have an already formed world view and routine of what they eat and their food habits which were not influenced by the food advertisements.

### **5.1.3 Food advertisement elements that capture audience's attention**

Several factors were identified as influencing the food advertisement reception by the audience. Catchy food advertisements were identified to be most fascinating and generated a level of interest from the audience. The advertisements that have music and drama were identified to be captivating and drew the audience's attention.

The use of family and social settings like in the Ilara, Dola wheat flour and Fresh chewing gum adverts were also identified. This is because the family setting brings the audience to a place of resemblance and identification. These factors drove an interest in the audience because family settings resonate with their world and daily settings.

The lack of information or rather what the audience considers to be of value in most of the advertisements is also a factor that was identified as influencing food advertisement reception. In most of the advertisements the main objective is to persuade the audience to purchase as opposed to availing information e.g. on health tips. Lack of information on side effects and food product disclaimers was also identified. The audience indicated that they would like information like 'too much chocolate can lead to tooth decay' to ensure proper disclaimers and health warnings are alerts are issued. The findings of this study indicate that despite all the positive and captivating factors cited above this still did not majorly drive the audience towards consumption of the food products.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

Based on the findings of this study, food advertisements on TV do captivate the audience and draw their attention. There is however no assurance that the audience will be influenced to change their food culture and food consumption habits.

The audience appreciates and is fascinated by various aspects and elements used and portrayed in food adverts. These elements include music, colour, drama and use of famous personalities.

There is however no conclusive indication from this study on which of these elements captivates the audience most or to what degree and level of influence they have to cause a change in food consumption and culture. Culture is noted as a potential influence on the audience's food consumption habits as it is an aid in the audiences meaning making process and what they associate with on a daily basis. The audience already seems to have a world view of their food consumption habits which are not influenced by the food advertisements they watch on television.

There are also numerous hidden messages in the food advertisements that are left to the translation of the audience which they do so in their own way which could potentially alter the marketer's intentions.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Several recommendations and suggestions for further studies were identified in this study. Marketing firms need to invest in advertising translators who act as the audience and decode advertising messages to ensure all possible hidden meanings are identified. This will avoid the task being left to audiences whose have numerous world views and other influencing factors. An opportunity for further research in food advertisement elements was also identified in this study. This involves identifying the specific elements in food adverts that captivate audiences and further research on their level of influence towards brands use.

This will help marketers to develop more custom made food advertisements that will have a more in-depth influence on the audience. It is also an opportunity to explore deeper lengths of creativity in food based advertisements. It is important that advertisers take note of anything in the advertisement that causes the audience to assume a meaning. These meanings need to be well crafted and analysed for the anticipated effect to be realised. Carrying out pretest, implementation and posttest (PIP) marketing activities could also be an effective way to determine food television advertisement effectiveness on the audience.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Semiotic Analysis Table

Advertisement Name	Sign Used	Signifier (Narrative)	Signified (Ideology Promoted)

**Appendix II: Codes and Themes Table for Thematic Analysis**

<b>SUMMARISED NOTES</b>	<b>CODES</b>	<b>THEMES</b>

### **Appendix III: Interview Guide**

*My name is Pauline J Nyambura, a Masters student at the University of Nairobi's School of Journalism and Mass Communication. I would like you to spare a few minutes of your time to discuss the research below.*

Date of the Interview \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Purpose of the Research:**

The main objectives of this study are to analyse messages and their meanings in TV food advertisements, how the audience receives them and how they influence food consumption habits in Kenya.

#### **Section A**

##### **Interviewee Information**

Household No: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: Male  Female

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Section B**

##### **Interview Guiding Questions**

1. Do you consider messages on food aired on television when making food consumption and purchase decisions?
2. When you watch the food advertisements, what is the aspect that most captures your attention?
3. What do you find useful/entertaining/educative about these food advertisements?
4. Briefly explain the lifestyle these commercials seem to be promoting.
5. Would you say food advertisements have any hidden messages that you have to discover for yourself and if so how do you know?

**Appendix IV: Certificate of Fieldwork**



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Title: CULTURE & FOOD CONSUMPTION IN KENYA: A

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SUPERVISOR

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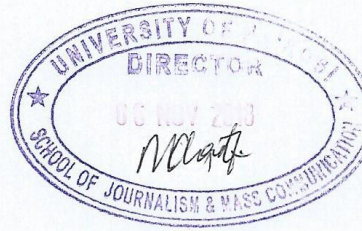
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Title: CULTURE AND FOOD CONSUMPTION IN KENYA:

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