

Sample Essay

Original

McDonald's Ads Interpreted

The original visual advertisement from fast-food franchise giant McDonald's features three imposing burgers towering over the viewer against a bright background of red. In the middle is the Big Mac, the centerpiece of the menu since 1967. Positioned in all its glory, this burger consists of two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions – on a sesame seed bun. Stuffed with meat and melted cheese, and dripping with juicy sauce, the Big Mac attracts hungry clientele familiar with this popular burger. At the left is the Double Quarter Pounder with Cheese: two patties, cheese, pickles, diced onions, ketchup – also on a sesame seed bun. At the right is the Angus Deluxe Third Pounder, showcasing a thick beef patty, lettuce, sliced onions, pickles and cheese on a sesame seed artisan-style bun. The bottom left of the ad displays the restaurant chain's symbol, the golden arches, along with its signature slogan "i'm lovin' it." Above the three burgers, in bold white lettering, are three words punctuated by periods: "Big. Beefy. Bliss." This alliterative message is clear: "Big" suggests that hungry patrons will receive ample quantity and size; "Beefy" indicates that the customer will get what meat-lovers crave most; and "Bliss" signifies euphoria, ecstasy – that this eating experience will bring the ultimate in happiness.

The ad is designed to lure hungry customers by offering happiness in the form of several big and beefy burgers. The image appeals to those who desire quantity, taste, and an optimal experience in self-indulgence. It persuades viewers that there are many appealing options at McDonald's, where all satisfied customers leave singing "bada ba-ba-bah/I'm lovin' it." The ad symbolizes Americana, familiarity, instant gratification galore. The iconic original image is widely known and celebrated because it reminds us of franchises in virtually every neighborhood both here and abroad, outlets offering fast food, fast service, and a quick rush of happiness.

One remediated ad parodies the original and serves the viewer with incisive criticism of the McDonald's corporation. While the original advertisement features appealing burgers at the center of the image, this satirical reworking shows no fast food at all. Instead, stationed in front of a golden arches shrine, are two McDonald's workers. The male figure wears a white short-sleeved collared shirt, black tie and badge pinned on his right breast. He appears to be a manager. Adorned with a headset and microphone, a powerpack clipped on his belt, he has his right hand placed over his heart as he stares reverently ahead into space. The figure to his right dons a blue polo shirt, an employee badge, the same headset, mic and powerpack, and right hand over the heart. Both wear black pants to complete the uniform. Both pledge allegiance to the corporation. At the bottom of this image are a twist of the lyrics to the McDonald's anthem, "Bada ba-ba-bah it's mind control." The word "Mind" is depicted with the "M" using the golden arches symbol.

interpretation

The artist's attitude in this remediation appears to be critical, disparaging, and ridiculing.

attitude

intent

symbolize

In this rendition, the manager and employee are saluting an unseen McDonald's flag and pledging allegiance to a dangerous corporate cult. The franchise is accused of mind control, of demanding fealty and total allegiance. The purpose and intent of this advertisement is to shock, horrify, and repulse viewers. It desires its audience to compare McDonald's with fascist regimes and to view its workers as entrapped members of an isolated religious commune. It symbolizes McDonald's as intolerant, domineering – as an entity that controls the mind and stifles the soul.

evaluation

This parody serves as a warning and infers that freedom and independent thought is of greater value than mindless conformity to a company's commands. The artist effectively twists the original ad into a shocking cautionary tale about the power of a corporation that uses mind control to subjugate all employees. After seeing this haunting ad, it is impossible to hear the "bada ba-ba-dah" melody or see the golden arches in quite the same innocuous way ever again.