Analysing visual texts

In the following activity you will analyse the way that visual techniques are used in an advertisement.

Text 1 – Advertisement

Use the Image Decoder on the following pages to analyse the way that visual elements in the advertisement above have been used to appeal to a target group of consumers.
# Image Decoder

## 1 Layout
Identifying structural components of visual texts:
- **component parts**
  What is the image composed of?
- **tone/lighting**
  What is the balance of light and dark in the image? Is the lighting natural light (e.g., sunlight or moonlight) or artificial light? Is it side-lit or evenly lit?
- **colour**
  What colours are used in the image? What is the symbolism or effect of the use of colour?
- **perspective**
  From what direction is the image viewed? For example, are you viewing the scene from above or from below?
- **balance**
  What is the weight of visual placement of objects? Visual texts are based on a horizontal (left/right) and vertical (top/bottom) axis. Being in the middle is the most balanced place to be.
- **border**
  Is there a boundary shown around the image or does it bleed (go to the edge)? Are there divisions or sections in the image?
- **texture**
  How do the surfaces look: smooth or rough?
- **contrast or harmony**
  Are differences or similarities in the visual elements emphasised? For example, advertisements sometimes show ‘before’ and ‘after’ shots to emphasise changes in the appearance of an object or person.
- **rhythm**
  Is there any pattern in the visual elements such as repetition?
- **symbols or writing**
  Are there any present? In what ways are they connected with the visual elements?

## 2 The subject
Identifying characteristics for people or animals in an image:
- **pose**
  How is the body held?
- **hand or arm gestures**
  Where are the hands placed and are they moving or still?
- **facial expression**
  What expressions or looks are on people’s faces?
- **costume**
  What are people wearing?
- **identity**
  Are the people individualised or not?
- **props**
  What objects are shown in the image?
- **surroundings**
  Where is the subject located?

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### 3 Interaction with viewer

Positioning devices used:

- **focus and framing**
  
  Is it a long shot, medium shot or close-up?  
  What is the viewing angle? For instance, is the viewer looking up at or down on the subject?

- **orientation**
  
  Is the subject face on, side on, or facing away from the viewer?

- **vectors**
  
  Vectors are imaginary lines created by the visual composition. For example, a person’s gaze or a staircase may lead your eyes in a certain direction, or the image might be divided into different sections. Where are your eyes drawn?

- **eye contact**
  
  Does the viewer have direct, indirect or no eye contact with the subject?

### 4 The function of the image

The image represents a point of view. Consider factors such as:

- **purpose and context**
  
  What is the purpose and context of the image?  
  How and why was the image produced? Who is the target audience for the image?

- **the composer’s style**
  
  What is it similar to? For instance, is it like a family portrait or a news photograph? Does it remind you of anything? Does it tell the viewer a story? Is it serious or is it satirical?

- **issues**
  
  Is the composer making a point or trying to influence the viewer? For example, does the image comment on power, prestige, wealth, fame, age, class, culture, etc?

- **omissions**
  
  Has the composer deliberately left anything out of the image? Are the people in the image representative of society? For example, fashion photographs are often ‘airbrushed’ or ‘photoshopped’ to remove imperfections from a model’s appearance.

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### Using the proforma

As you are analysing the advertisement, make notes on the blank proforma on the following pages.

Consider the following questions:

Who are the people in the image? Where are they? What are they doing? Consider the way they are dressed, their connections with one another and the setting, etc.

How are they feeling about this experience? Consider their body posture, the expressions on their faces, etc.

What product is being advertised? How has the composer conveyed ideas and emotions associated with the product? Consider the structural arrangement of the image, the relationship between the foreground and background images, the use of written text, etc.
## Analysing an advertisement

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- colour
- perspective
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- texture
- contrast or harmony
- rhythm
- symbols or writing

### 2 The subject
Identifying characteristics for people or animals in an image:
- pose
- hand or arm gestures
- facial expression
- identity
- costume
- props
- surroundings
### Analysing an advertisement (cont.)

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### Writing an analysis

Use your notes to write a brief analysis of the advertisement in your learning journal in good sentences and paragraphs. Comment on the subject matter of the advertisement (what it depicts) and the use of visual techniques (how it conveys ideas and attitudes about the product). How effective is the advertisement in achieving its purpose?

Write 150 words or less.