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**THE REPRESENTATION OF SEXUAL SIGNS IN CHINESE  
DUREX TV COMMERCIAL.  
A SEMIOTIC APPROACH**



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This thesis applies a semiotic approach in analyzing the sexual content related commercial “Perfect Fit” for the condom product - Durex, in China. The chosen theory is fundamentally based on the binary construction of meanings of Barthes' *Mythologies* which was built on the linguistic structural sign system developed by de Saussure. As this video combines a rich variety of elements and distinctions, the methodology of Multimodal analysis has been chosen. During the case analysis, images are captured from the commercial and all the relevant sexual signs are collected and addressed visually or auditorily. Particularly, connections between the meaning and the myth are elaborated in order to reveal the embedded significance.

The thesis constructs the connections between the myth of bodily aesthetics, sexuality (femininity/masculinity), social policies/laws and problems (such as STDs / HIV), and contemporary culture, especially the new phenomena of the Internet and semiotics through the commercial.

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tämä opinnäytetyö soveltaa semioottista lähestymistapaa Kiinassa Durex-kondomituotteelle tarkoitetun ”Perfect Fit” mainoksen seksuaalisen sisällön analysoinnissa. Valittu teoria pohjautuu pohjimmiltaan kaksiosaiseen merkityksen rakentumiseen Barthesin *Mythologioiden* mukaan, joka puolestaan rakentuu Saussuren kehittämälle lingvistiselle ja strukturaaliselle merkkijärjestelmälle. *Multimodaliteetti analyysi* valittiin metodiksi sillä video yhdistää runsaan valikoiman erilaisia elementtejä ja eroavaisuuksia. Tapaustutkimuksen aikana mainoksen kuvia analysoitiin yksi kerrallaan ja kaikki relevantit seksuaaliset merkit kerättiin ja käsiteltiin visuaalisesti tai äänellisesti. Yhteydet erityisesti merkityksen ja myytin välillä käsiteltiin yksityiskohtaisesti, jotta mahdolliset piilomerkitykset voitaisiin selvittää.

Opinnäytetyö rakentaa yhteyksiä myytin ja ruumiillisen estetiikan, seksuaalisuuden (feminiinisyys/maskuliinisuus), sosiaalipolitiikan/lakien ja ongelmien (kuten sukupuolitautien/HIV) ja nykyaikaisen kulttuurin, erityisesti uutena ilmiönä Internet ja semiotiikka, mainoksen kautta.

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Durex-mainos, multimodaliteetti, myytti, julkinen piiri, semiotiikka, seksi, seksuaalisuus

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Object of Study and Motivation

*Since humanity came into being, man hath  
enjoyed himself too little: that alone, my  
brethren, is our original sin!*

- Nietzsche <Thus Spake Zarathustra> (1891)

In this thesis, the main focus will be on the application of a semiotic approach in analyzing sexual content related commercial for the condom product- Durex. In particular, I will utilize the theory of Myth from the book *Mythologies* (1973) from French semiotician Roland Barthes(1915-1980) to analyze the case study - the first Durex TV commercial launched in China on Subway lines 1 and 2 in Shanghai during March 2008, as it is shown in the image below.



Image 1: Durex commercial “Perfect Fit” on Subway line 2 in Shanghai. (2008).

[Released Graph illustration taken by Zhang Dong from *Oriental Morning Post* on 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 2008] Retrieved from <http://news.sina.com.cn/s/1/2008-03-25/084815219286.shtml>

Moreover, as this video combines different modalities and distinctions, such as music, moving images, vocal and written narrations and so on, choosing the

methodology of Multimodality from Van Leeuwen and Kress (1996) is unquestionably the most appropriate choice for analyzing this multimedia case.

The research questions for the thesis are: what are the sexual signs appeared in the commercial and what are the significations from the sexual signs can be interpreted by the Chinese spectators? Why and how these signs are formed this way? Are the ideological significations successfully conveyed through different arrangements of signs?

There are three reasons for me to choose these questions as my research questions. Firstly, I find it extremely interesting to connect the mythologies from a Chinese context with the sexual signs that appear in the commercial. Secondly, because sex and sexology has been a taboo topic for long since the regime of P.R.C was established. Conquering all the difficulties looking for research materials, studying the changing history of Chinese people's ideologies and articulating the original natural harmonious attitude from the ancient Chinese with sex itself are meaningful and significant from a bigger blue print for China. Thirdly, when content is strictly restricted, it is certainly divertive to read the ambiguous signs vaguely implying the meanings on a commercial purpose to communicate with the audience in front of the screen. Moreover, the fact that the content of the commercial is only available on the internet for people who have internet access to watch, makes it unique in its medium and means people can get information and freely give their opinions which can also influence the government's decision-making at a certain level. It is a special moment in history for the world, for Chinese people in particular, to have free choice to pursue what they need for a life steering away from the gatekeepers from the institutional domination. This aspect is worth detailed discussion and thus elaborated on in chapter 2.1.3.

Insofar as the case study discourse, I will capture the images from the video of the commercial, collect the interesting sexual signs addressed visually or auditory, and then analyze all the signs and discuss the connection between them as well as the

reasons why they were designed that way. In the end, the connections between the meaning and the myth will be elaborated to see the embedded significance. Additionally, the sign system from Barthes' *Mythologies* which I am applying derives from de Saussure's binary linguistic perspective which can be clearly seen from the diagram 1 "de Saussure's Elements of Meaning" below: a sign is composed of signifier and signified, whereas the signified -the signification behind the sign is closely linked to the meanings in the outside world. Roland Barthes develops Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857-1913) linguistic sign system to another level of meaning interpretation which gives a new meaning to Myth behind all the different sign arrangements which will be deliberated in chapters 3.1 and 3.2. This is why chapter 2 deals with cultural background as this is a fairly essential part of the myth, necessary to be understood in order to aid better interpretation of the signs that appeared in the Durex commercial. Moreover, the definition of Myth will be elaborated upon in chapter 3.2.

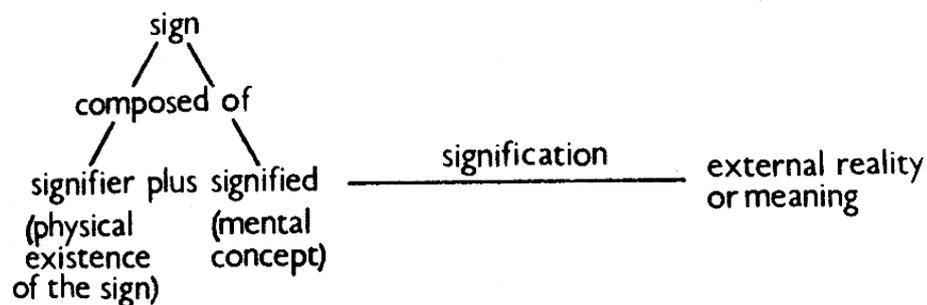


Diagram 1: de Saussure's Elements of Meaning. (1990). [Graph illustration captured by writer on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010 from John Fiske' *Introduction to Communication Studies*. p.44.]

As for causes of the case itself, it is well-known that China is a special country with strictly restricted regulations of erotic content from advertisements appearing in public media including paper-based media and TV. After this TV commercial was put on an LCD screen in the subway for a week, it was considered to be illegal according to the local administration for industry and commerce due to too many

complaints from passengers. This controversial issue has brought up numerous arguments from netizens (citizens on the internet) on the internet and real life citizens. Most of the people who hold the opponent view, thought that it would be inappropriate for juveniles who were taking public transportation since there was no restricted censorship system established in China yet.

According to Wu and Jiang's (2008) news report from the Oriental Morning Post which I translated from Chinese to English that "This commercial attracted quite a few passengers to watch, but one middle-aged woman with her 10-year old daughter said, 'I don't think it is good for the media in the subway to put this content in front of the kid which will bring some bad influence, some related bureaus should take care of it.'"

The general public who are supportive suggested that the repression with regards to sex products such as condoms can be seen as absence of proper sex education for Chinese adolescents; besides, condom commercials can be seen to promote the prevention of sexual diseases for public charity purposes.

After the commercial was banned in the physical world, it could only be found in the virtual world – on the Internet. Having followed its interesting appearance from a LCD screen on the subway to personal computers, with the public debate having moved from newspapers to online forum discussions, I can conclude that the role and the influence of this commercial has been shifted dramatically by the development of technology and people's need for public speech. Habermas' (1974) notion of "the public sphere" has been expanded here through the demonstration of case development. The Utopian world for absolute free public speech does not exist despite the economical influence or state political interference, yet the booming development of the Internet broke the conventional limitation for space and rights. Moreover, the louder voices of millions of Internet users has had a huge impact for people's opinions towards culture, history, politics and other aspects in real life, sex and sexuality are apparently included as one of the big items.

The reason why the commercial has been treated this way and raised such a big issue is because sex and sexuality has been a sensitive subject for China from a long time ago because of some historical, cultural and other factors which will be elaborated on in chapter 2.1. The openness of a healthy attitude towards sex and sexuality that people are longing for is in contradiction with both the conservative understanding embedded in society and the restrictive governmental policies. This disagreement puts the appropriate prevalence of the anti-HIV/AIDS publicity in an awkward position. In terms of the prevalence of the proper protection-condom uses, the institutional ambiguous attitude harms the effectivity and efficiency of the right treatment and the prevention for Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs).

On the other hand, the call for free expression of public opinions from netizens has been changed dramatically and apparently it is affecting the mainstream opinion about sex and sexuality in society. With the influence of the dramatic growth of the economy and the impact from globalization, China is now standing at a transitional stage where some policies should be established and improved in order to facilitate a better development meeting the actual needs from the Chinese citizens to improve the quality of their lives. The conventional understanding toward sex and sexuality has been rapidly changing through the long history and it has various reasons.

Sex is no sin. When Eve tried her first bite of the golden apple in the western world and Nüwa (A goddess in Chinese myths who creates the world and makes human with soil.) created mankind in the east, no matter sinful or natural, sex as an indivisible component of our daily life and has existed in the universe among us human beings for a long time. Meanwhile, due to the changeable needs from the continuous development of technology, science and culture, sex's role and the way people treat it has changed dramatically from a re-productive tool to an indispensable element in life for achieving certain physical pleasure. And the extent of acceptance of sexuality and gender roles for the public nowadays has become broader and broader. Heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual relationships are

acknowledged to co-exist, following by all kinds of new scientific approaches to producing offspring without necessary heterosexual penetration such as surrogate birth, In vitro fertilization and cloning. It is not a science-fiction movie. The truth may scare us but the world we are living is permeated with commercialized scientific means as if technology can make every dream become real as long as we have enough space for imagination. The attitude towards sex in the western world has been shifting through several stages changing from naturally free, religiously restricted since the creation of Christianity, Nietzsche's "God is dead" freedom and Freud's re-construction to Victorian repression, and sexual revolution in the 60s in modern history. Until now, people holding conservative opinions or zip-less sexual expectations are respectively enjoying comparatively equal rights around the world.

No matter how technology affects the mainstream opinion, it is a fact that various Sexually Transmitted Diseases and fatal illness such as syphilis and HIV/AIDS can be troublesome or even pestilent. Meanwhile, it is undeniable that the influence is deeply infiltrating and endangering people's actual lives and something needs to be done immediately. In order to prevent AIDS and have safe sex, promoting of the utilization of condoms plays a significant role.



Image 2 : Durex Fiesta Strawberry Flavored Condom. (2004). [Released Graph illustration designed by Advertising Agency McCann Erickson Belgium July, 2004]

Retrieved from [http://www.coloribus.com/focus/part\\_of\\_durex\\_history/](http://www.coloribus.com/focus/part_of_durex_history/)

The purpose for condom commercials is gradually changing from focusing on the products to people's quality of life. Inasmuch as the myth- cultural signification is uniquely different from diverse nations and cultures, commercial makings should be more localized and specific to certain target groups. Famous condom producers like Durex, Trojan, Lifestyle and so on, integrate the idea of having safe sex with great pleasure via creative advertising design as a modern lifestyle to infiltrate in people's minds. It does not only simply emphasize the single function of protection, but also combines the humor filtered with the living attitude of enjoying the intercourse. For instance, as the advertisement "Durex Fiesta Strawberry Flavored Condom" illustrates, a little imagination of fun in daily life and branding can be elaborately united together. What is the first assumption a consumer will make with a glimpse at this paper-based commercial? A pack of fine sugar and the shape of a phallus made by a sieve lying casually on the kitchen table, the scene seems to be confusing but familiar. The second thought, one will try to find any fruit or any cakes which

usually go with the fine sugar on top. At that moment, one may notice the brand in the bottom right hand corner and the slogan for the new Durex product with strawberry flavor. The style of the kitchen and the practice of adding fruit flavor, especially strawberries, are very common in central and northern Europe where this advertisement's main target market group is. In another situation, for example in Asian or Arabic countries, it may take a longer time for the audience to realize the humor and lifestyle behind the advertisement because of the different cultural background and living habits. Hence, the localization of ideas for branding is extremely essential no matter whether promoting the brand itself or for a new product launch.

Inasmuch as I realized the vast significance of the usage of the role that a small latex product, the condom, plays for each individual living on the earth, it is inevitable for me to be curious enough to study how and why those sexual signs occurred and the way they are designed in this condom commercial and the meanings behind.

Moreover, as I have explained above that localization for branding and new product launching has a huge impact for the effect of the promotion; it is appealing for me to take a Chinese condom commercial as a case study to explore the relations between signs and significations within the specific cultural background-Chinese culture.

Due to some legal or other historical reasons, commercials for sex products have not been allowed to be shown on TV and the regulations have been fairly restricted which will be elaborated upon in the next chapter. On the contrary, the open attitude emerging from the netizens and the growing impact of the Internet has illustrated the urgent need for more public discussions of sensitive issues within the public health realm as well as the closely related rights of a good life with a fair judgment for all the citizens in modern China. It is fairly important for all the individuals in China nowadays to realize the significance of the role safe sex can play for a

healthy life and their basic rights to freely express themselves against some negative mainstream conservative ideologies towards sex and sexuality.

Therefore, deliberations for the history of a natural face of sex and sexuality in China became a necessity for this thesis and will appear in the second chapter. Further deliberation will be given in the second chapter and the cultural context will be exclusively introduced. Holding questions such as “what are the meanings behind the sexual signs, why and how are they designed in that way, did they successfully convey the meaning” and so on, reviewing and analyzing the content from the multi-mode case Durex’s “Perfect Fit” becomes an interesting challenge for the writer because of the limited research resources and its significance. In my opinion, “Perfect Fit” as a pioneer wielding the delicacy of the grey area between laws and related policies to localize the western ideal of condom culture in somewhat conservative Chinese sex culture is a fairly brave breakthrough. It is not only profitable for condom corporations, but also substantial for the sake of every Chinese individual, the Chinese contemporary culture and the future for young generations which makes it unique and worth for researching.

## 1.2 Organization of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter briefly introduces the object of study, the general background and the motivation behind the research.

The second chapter details Chinese cultural background for a deeper perception of history with regards to how and why Chinese erotic culture became like it is today. However, it focuses on contemporary culture including real world regulations and the phenomena in the virtual world in order to connect the research target with the cultural background as well as to understand the broader and more comprehensive significance of the situation. Discussing the correlation between the sign-science semiotics and the sign carrier commercials is substantial and inevitable for the

research since commercials cannot exist without sign systems. I will apply the semiotic approach to analyze the Durex commercial later in the case study. Additionally, re-emphasizing the need of studying media content in China is necessary for the motivation and the aim of the present research.

In the third chapter, the theoretical framework of this thesis will be precisely explained and critically examined. Not only will the concepts involved in this thesis be carefully defined, but also the brief history of the development of structuralism and semiotics will be designated to help form the theoretical background for further discussion. It is imperative to introduce de Saussure before studying Barthes since he plays a fundamental role for structuralism and semiotics theory especially with reference to the linguistic perspective. Therefore, the deliberation of Barthes' *Mythologies* (1973) will be the most important section constituting the main theory which I will apply for the case study in the fifth chapter.

The research question and the methodology are illustrated in the fourth chapter where the research limits and boundaries are detailed as well.

The fifth chapter is the most essential one which links the theory to the actual case and exemplifies the signs, codes and myth in the Durex commercial. By analyzing the denotation (form) and connotation (meaning) according to Barthes' theory of Myth from the sexual signs designed the way they are in the scenes, music, narration of the commercial as well as the social phenomenon behind, the correlation will be deliberated and analyzed. Meanwhile, a deep understanding of theories of sexuality and consumerism is instrumental and valuable for the analysis of myth as a whole entity in this section.

In the final chapter, a brief summary of the content of the previous chapters is given, and then the importance of the understanding of the relations between myth and the semiotic representatives of sexual signs is discussed. Furthermore, I will try to explain why it is important to connect myth with signs and whether those meanings

of sexual signs have been well-presented in multi-media approaches. The discussion of the influence from the commercial will be extended in a social perspective and a hypothesis of the meanings for further research will be raised as well.

## 2. Cultural Background

In this chapter, the brief Chinese history of sex and sexuality will be deliberated in order to explain the natural role of sex and the position it is supposed to hold for human beings. Moreover, the severe condition of STDs, especially the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Asia, explains the need for such study within Chinese media content.

### 2.1 Features and background of Chinese erotic culture

China is a self-contradictory country with laws prohibiting sexual business and a notoriously huge amount of sexual workers such as prostitutes which are closely connected with night club chains, karaoke and so on. Sexual repression and massive prohibition has been the first impression of people's attitude towards sex- the most natural human behavior since life existed in the universe. The lack of a proper sexual education in school for juveniles, where sex is still a taboo, is a severe problem causing abortion, and unreversible psychological and physical damage. However, from a historical perspective, China has thousands of years experience in studying bedroom art with a more objective and positive attitude. This makes it urgent and necessary to bring out the history and clarify the misjudgments we hold nowadays in China.

#### 2.1.1 Ancient China: open towards oppression

According to Ruan Fangfu's (1991) *Sex in China- Studies in Sexology in Chinese Culture*, the world's oldest sex handbooks are Chinese. They were made in 168 B.C. and found in 1973 at the Ma-wang-tui Han Tomb No.3, Ma-wang-tui, Changsha, Hunan province.

These three sex handbooks are: *Ten Questions and Answers* (<Shi Wen>), *Methods of Intercourse between Yin and Yang* (<He Yin Yang Fang>) and *Lectures on the Super Tao in the Universe* (<Tian Xia Zhi Tao Tan>) which used multiple means to explain the ancient idea of sex as reaching a harmony between men and women.

Ruan adopted some historians' views in order to divide Chinese history into three periods which respectively are- the Formative Age (Pre-history to 206 B.C.), the Early Empire (206 B.C. to A.D. 960) and the Later Empire (960 to 1850).

In the Formative Age, due to the deficiency of biological knowledge and the focus on re-productive purpose, phallism, which is defined by Oxford English Dictionary as “The worship of the phallus, or of the sexual organs, esp. as symbolic of the generative power in nature.”, was one of the fundamental beliefs and people tended to have an attitudes of worship towards genitals. Hence, accessories, kitchen apparatus and utensil for fete for worshipping ancestors usually applied the shapes of some specific animals for symbolic meaning, for instance, Image 3 Yubi and Image 4 Yuxing Zhui as shown below. The shape of Yubi evidently represents the shape of female genitals and the lips of the fish illustrate the shape of the labia, that is the reason that Chinese have the great history of hanging fish or fish-shaped nuts on their doors to protect themselves from devils and give them luck. Additionally, shells, frogs and birds are also used as the sexual symbols either because of their shape or their fertility, for phallism worship.



Image 3: Yubi (Jade Ring), a traditional Chinese accessory. (2008). [Released Graph

illustration about Hua Xia civilization on June 23, 2008] Retrieved from  
[http://cathay.ce.cn/file/200806/23/t20080623\\_15928626.shtml](http://cathay.ce.cn/file/200806/23/t20080623_15928626.shtml)



Image 4: XinShiQi shidai Yuxing Zhui (A Neolithic fish-shaped Jade Pendant), a Chinese traditional accessory. [Released Graph illustration from ZhongJia International Auction on Oct 23, 2008] Retrieved from <http://auction.artxun.com/paimai-10628-53136224.shtml>



Image 5: Beixingwen Hu (Shell-vein vessel), Made between 3300 B.C. to 2050 B.C., found in Ma Jia Yao in 1924. [Released Graph illustration about Ma Jia Yao civilization on June 22, 2004] Retrieved from [http://www.gs.xinhua.org/dfpd/2004-06/22/content\\_2361714.htm](http://www.gs.xinhua.org/dfpd/2004-06/22/content_2361714.htm), on June 2rd, 2009

According to Zhang's research (2008), in the formative age, the understandings of sex can be divided into phallism, procreation and coition fetishism which respectively are worshipping for genitals, reproductive ability and sex intercourse. People used to connect fields, rivers and the earth with females because they

thought the reproductive abilities of women were similar to the earth growing opulent grasses and trees. This understanding gives an enormous impact to the later opinions of achieving sexual harmony and “yin”, “yang” theory. Moreover, a lot of petro glyphs in XinJiang province and Inner Mongolia proved that worshipping mysterious power including the great pleasure and etc. of sexual intercourse is notably prevalent back then.

Since the private ownership property system was established, the wide variation and flexibility of the ideals of sex and sexuality is the biggest feature of that time period which is also called “the Period of the Hundred Philosophers”. There were three leading ideologies which did not pass over in silence as the other hundreds of ideologies in later history: Confucianism, abstinence for sex and Carnalism. The ideology I here mention refers to the main stream understandings of a thing from the majority civilians based on a certain political, historical and cultural background, such as people’s general ideas towards sex, food, money and so on. Confucianism asks women to obey the principles at home that husbands come first that they need to be complaisant and submissive to male partners. Nevertheless, it does confirm the fact that sex is a natural component of our lives and there is one famous quote from Confucius which says “Shi (eating), Se (desire), Xing (sex)” are three basic needs for human beings. Lao Zi, who is a major master as well as the initiator of Taoism, holds the view of “Wu Wei (doing nothing)” that abstinence for sex and other desire is preferable and we human beings should keep the desire empty. On the contrary, Yang Zhu raised the idea that human beings should focus more on their own needs and self, at the same time releasing the inner desire which leads to the view of enjoying every moment and sex as much as possible.

In the Early Empire age, China gradually reached its peak in cultural, political and economic perspectives. Due to the highly developed economy, the frequent trade and communication between Han and the other ethnicities, tribes, and people (regardless of whether civilian or ruler) in that time period tend to have an

extremely open, flexible and natural attitude towards sex and sexuality in a comparatively multi-cultural environment. Under these circumstances, Taoism and Buddhism are fairly significant for this thesis, as two major religions in China which influenced Chinese traditional ideologies and philosophy as well as Chinese sexology.

Since Taoism is a religion originating from China, its basic “yin” and “yang” theory inevitably needs to be deliberated. The persistency for pursuing sexual harmony which is “Yin Yang He Xie” (Yin Yang Harmony) is the essential idea for Taoism.

In Van Gulik’s (2003) *Sexual life in Ancient China*, he argued the meaning of “yin”.

*In the first place, the ancient Chinese had no clear conception of the physiological function of the female generative organs. They did not know that fertilization is effected by the union of the man’s sperma cells with the woman’s ova. They did not distinguish between general vaginal secretions and the ova, but considered the latter and all secretions and fluids of uterus and vulva together as yin essence- a lining of the womb necessary for allowing the male semen to develop into an embryo.*

(p.45)

*I-ching*, the oldest and the most fundamental philosophical handbook from the New Stone Age sets the theoretical basis for all important philosophers such as Confucius and Lao Zi. Moreover, it has an enormous impact towards all the Chinese traditional cultural aspects like Chinese traditional medicine, characters and mathematics. It has a fundamental theoretical arguments about the how “yin” and “yang” are supposed to unite together to form a harmonic, universal balance.

*The I-ching describes yin and yang as the dual cosmic forces that perpetuate the universe in an unending chain of permutations.*

*This concept was worked out into a philosophical system, approved and utilized by both Confucianists and Taoists...The I-ching stresses that sexual intercourse is the fundament of universal life, it being a manifestation of the cosmic forces yin and yang... 'one yin' and 'one yang' are taken to refer to a woman and a man.*

*(p.37, ibid)*

The triagrams from the hexagram represent all kinds of symbolic meaning for instance “water”, “fire”, “woman” and “man” and etc.. “The hexagram expresses this through a combination of the perfect harmony of man and woman completing each other, graphically depicted by the perfect alternation of *yin* and *yang* lines. To achieve this harmony was considered the basis of a happy and healthy life.” (p.38, ibid) Taoism inherited this basic idea and developed its own theories of training a healthy body with the help of good sex. Furthermore, respecting the mythical power of gestating new lives from women is one of the main ideas of Taoism. Meanwhile, Taoist magicians believe that women have the indispensable elements for making some secret drugs for achieving everlasting life.

Buddhism, on the other hand, is introduced originally from India since the Tang Dynasty, which is divided into two groups, the Mahayana and Hinayana. China chose to bring the Mahayana back which divided into several genres later on depending on the different emphasis on the philosophy following the developments in different geographical locations etc. Tantra, as one genre from Mahayana, is mainly pervasive in Tibetan areas where ideas of sex were discussed in its philosophy. The basic idea is that studying Buddhism theory can be better if women and men could perceive the superior spirit together. In other words, man and woman as binary substances co-existing in the world uniting together is the most effective way to exceed the real world to perceive the essence of the religion and attain higher achievements. Moreover, women and men share the equal rights in Tantra.

The Empire Age, which is the time period after the Tang Dynasty when the whole kingdom's entire power was diminishing rapidly. Endless wars between the Han and other ethnicities brought huge damages to civilians and the economy. Han was not the only ruler in history anymore; instead, other ethnicities won the war and took over the political power which shook the core policies and people's understanding towards sex and life that they started to restrict sexuality to protect their abilities of producing offspring. According to Zhang's research (2008), she argued that the Song Dynasty is a worth noting as a conjuncture time period, because of the declining feudalization of ancient China from the peak to the decadency, the mainstream idea of sex turned from open and natural to repressed and restricted.

The value and ideal of preserving virginity, purity and monogamy from women for men has existed in Chinese society for centuries since the early stage Qin Dynasty (206 B.C.) Women were not allowed to have any physical contact with the other men except for their husbands. However, this social value was not strong enough to affect people's daily lives. It was not until the Song Dynasty that the repression of sex and sexuality became widespread. The transition from being open-minded towards repressed is somewhat reflected in the downfall of the decaying of dominion from the feudalization that Chinese empires tended to tighten their policies to keep all social problems under control.

Consequently, Neo-Confucianism, as the most conservative philosophy from Cheng Hao (1032-1085) and Zhu Xi (1130-1202), played a prevalent role with their main idea of "Cun Tian Li, Mie Ren Yu" (To preserve the justice and the rules from the god, to exterminate the human desire) which caused severe persecution of women and their rights for sex. Zhu Xi is famous for his words from his book < Jin Si Lu > (the record of the tranquil thoughts) that he argued "E Si Shi Xiao, Shi Jie Shi Da" (It is no big deal to starve to death; it is a big deal that a woman loses her virtue and chasteness for her husband.) Until the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912), an extreme

restriction for sex and different ideologies caused the fact that women were either rigorously punished or killed if they disobeyed conservative sex rules.

### 2.1.2 The complete prohibition of Erotica in Mainland China (1949-1980)

It is common knowledge for all Chinese that since China was under the Maoist party state's domination, sex has been a forbidden taboo for Chinese to discuss in public. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in particular, the idea of complete ignorance towards individualism, including the defeminization and scientization of sex and sexuality was embedded exceedingly in the society, for instance, the prevalence of androgynous dresses. Sex and sexuality is somewhat not a part of private life any more, instead, it became one component of the social system and "a 'cell' of the entire cause of revolution" (Evans, 1997, p.8).

However, different arguments about reproductive abilities and marital life were discussed on some official journals such as *Zhongguo Funü* (Woman of China) and *zhongguo qingnian* (China youth) published in the 1950s and early 1960s. (Evans, 1997, p.2)

Some scholars argue this situation is because of the big political orientation of socialism that talking about personal pleasure such as sex and sexuality is a bourgeoisie enjoyment. Others believed that the full repression and prohibition of the basic human rights no matter whether from the political or social perspective, was the direct compassionless result of the Maoist regime. Eliane Jeffreys elucidated these opinions in the book *Sex and Sexuality in China* (2006):

*According to this particular story, sex was open and free in traditional China, but all that stopped when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power in 1949. Under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong (1949-1976), sex practically vanished from*

*sight in Chinese culture. The Communist regime enforced a 'puritanical public morality that regarded individual desire as bourgeois indulgence', with the result that men and women dressed in androgynous conformity, premarital sex was virtually unknown, and the commercial sex was banned (Lynch 2003; Wehrfritz 1996:8).*

(p.2)

The part that she discussed about the connection between the repression towards sexual needs and political freedom for Chinese people was worth-mentioning. Even after Deng Xiaoping's Reform (1978), the Chinese government still held a high control over every individual's right for free expression.

Moreover, she especially highlighted some of the exiled Chinese scholars' interpretations of the sexual policies during Maoist decades to annotate the distortion they might have had while presenting their conceptions. Some exiled scholars such as Ruan Fangfu often implied in his work that the greatest sex repression was caused by the Maoist Puritanism under the "Party-police-state". However, since the institutional encouragement for a harmonious marriage and family relations, sex has its subtle role under this mainstream policy. (Jeffreys, 2006, p.3) In most of the cases in daily life for a Chinese civilian, sex is generally regarded as one thing which can be done, but cannot be discussed in public discourse.

However, the topics of sex and sexuality were brought up again in 1980s somehow based on the epistemic discourses that occurred in the 50s. "The continuities between the two periods are sometimes so direct that the views of 1950s are replicated almost verbatim in the later texts." (Evans, 1997, p.3)

### 2.1.3 New phenomena in the internet today

On September 14, 1987, Chinese researchers sent the first email to Geneva's Steinberger using the first mail servers. The booming burst of development of the Internet has influenced the Chinese economy, culture and politics significantly. According to the statistics from the *Zhongguo Hulanwang Dahui* (the Convention of Chinese Internet) on September 23, 2008, the amount of netizens in China has reached 253,000,000. China is the country with the biggest number of netizens in the world; there is one netizen for every five civilians. (Cai & Deng, 2008)

Obtaining great attention from Chinese netizens, the Internet does not only supply a free platform for debate and the expression of free wills from individuals, but it also rapidly becomes a core shaker of liberations for various ideologies. Meanwhile, the hidden discussion of sex and pleasure from private life gradually ascends to the surface of the water and it applies multiple approaches with the help of the developing technologies such as news paper columns, radio programmes and Internet web pages and so on. Elaine Jeffreys commented on Kathleen Erwin (2000) and Gail Hershatter's (1996) research on the phenomena in Chinese society about sex and sexuality that in "reform-era" China in which all areas are changing and civilians start to have new approaches such as "call-in radio, telephone hotlines and internet chat-rooms" (Jeffreys, 2006, p.4) and so on pursuing their freedom for sexual expressions. Additionally, they interpreted these multi-solutions from the Chinese citizens as showing a huge contrast between people's needs and various restrictions from the state and also "Chinese people's' rejection of official state power and former intrusion into the private life of individual citizens." (Jeffreys, 2006, p.4)

When these new approaches emerged, the immense impact they brought not only changed the conventional ways people usually communicated with each other or expressed their opinions, but also changed the range for some disciplines such as the definition of "public sphere" which I discussed in the introduction. The

meaning has been changed due to the internet platform supplied for people to have public speeches about their needs.

However, the comparatively infinite openness of the virtual world has its advantages and disadvantages. It is inevitable that pornographic material, which is forbidden in real society, is widely spread on the Internet where there are no rigid laws to restrict the arguments about sex and sexuality. Therefore, the Chinese government chose to block the information resource to ban the “unhealthy” content and illegal sexual products. Below is the secret deal Google made with the Chinese government:

*CHINA: Google services curbed to block pornographic content. The China Internet Illegal Information Reporting Center ordered Google China last Friday to suspend its overseas web page and associated word search services. According to the Internet watchdog, tests on the popular search engine found pornographic images and content in the search results, but no specific examples were given. Google issued a statement saying it would comply with the order and work to better filter pornographic material. A week before, the government announced that software meant to filter online pornography would be required in all computers sold from July 1. The recommended software has been heavily criticized for security flaws that would render the computers vulnerable to hackers.*

*(Anonymous, 2009)*

Yet, early 2010, Google decided to end its operation in China after 4-year of cooperation with the Chinese government. It claimed to the media that it was because of the “highly sophisticated and targeted attack on our corporate infrastructure originating from China that resulted in the theft of intellectual property from Google” and “surveillance they have uncovered--combined with the

attempts over the past year to further limit free speech on the web.” (Drummond, 2010) Seemingly from the battle between gaining more freedom and continuing compromising with Chinese government, the world’s biggest search engine decided to quit the Chinese market.

Nevertheless, blocking and obstructing all the erotic information from the internet is apparently not that efficient as it did not change the fact that in real society pornographical contents are still widely consumed by Chinese civilians. Jeffrey’s commented on Sigley’s paper about this issue as below:

*Thus Sigley points out that recent governmental efforts to ensure a ‘healthy’ social environment by banning commercial sex in China are not out-of-step with actual social practice, since pornography is widely consumed and prostitution is widespread, but also are viewed as increasing problematic because it is recognized that the very policing of commercial sex is generating corruption, social injustice and violating basic freedoms (Pan Suiming et al.2004:335-6; Yan 2004).*

*(Jeffreys, 2006, p.8)*

The role of the Internet in sex education, mutual sharing of an individual’s private life or misleading of correct understanding of sex for adolescence is fairly controversial. However, it creates a whole new phenomenon where individualism has raised again along side the inner needs of Chinese civilians which have, from a more humane perspective, been put on the table. Additionally, the super expanding commercialization of sex and sexuality, no matter in real society or in the virtual world, facilitates the infiltration and the emergence of the discourse of the basic human rights and the pursuing of a real harmony in individual’s private life beside the traditional reproductive purpose. For instance, when people’s increasing needs for sex products such as condoms and sexual toys or sex related information can not

be attained from the normal sex education in the school system or public media, people tend to seek for answers and solutions from the internet or via calling the hot-line. At the same time, when the sex industry cannot find a normal way like other food or medical products to launch their products, they have to either fight against the policies or actively use some grey area between the law and related regulations from the State such as putting commercials banned in real life on the internet like what Durex did to feed consumer's needs.

## 2.2 Related policies and the situation about sex involved commercials in China

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) state regime keeps tight control of the law and regulations of sex products and publishing sex related content in the media by all means, due to the importance of the cultural impact it may cause. In the opening paragraphs of the 'Directive from the Office of the State Council on Further Progress in Rectifying and Normalizing Order in the Cultural Market' (*Guowuyuan Bangongting 2001*) it states the importance of the cultural market for Chinese society as well as the chaotic situation existing in various public cultural platforms such as "internet access establishments, electronic game arcades, dance halls, audiovisual product stores, in publication and software markets, the printing industry and cultural artifact markets" and illegal conducts should be strictly controlled. (Sigley, 2006, p.55)

Most of the illegal sexual commercials were condemned to contradict several main regulations from *Zhong hua ren min gong he guo guang gao fa* (The Advertisement Law of People's Republic of China) and *Guo jia gong shang xing zheng ju guan yu yan jin you guan xing sheng huo chan pin guang gao de gui ding* (The regulations about strictly forbidding publishing commercials about sex and sexuality related products from the State Administration for Industry & Commerce of the People's Republic of China). In the Advertisement Law, it states the regulations for the

specific behavior which would violate the law harming people's moral health in Chapter II "Norms for Advertisements" (1995) which can be found in Appendix (1). From (5) "*Hindering the public order or violating the sound social moral*" and (6) "*Having information suggesting pornography, superstition, terror, violence or hideousness*" in particular, it is quite obvious that words such as "Social morals", "information suggesting pornography" are raised in the article that condom commercials can be easily categorized into the influencing social morals box.

Furthermore, condom commercials from, for example Durex, Jissbon etc. were accused of violating the regulations about strictly forbidding the publishing of commercials regarding sex and sexuality related products from the State Administration for Industry & Commerce of the People's Republic of China (1989) Number 284 which is generally considered to be one of the most significant regulations as the parameter for the State institutions dealing with sex related commercials in public media:

*All the provinces, municipalities, municipalities directly under the Central Government and all the local administrative departments for industry and commerce in single cities in plan:*

*Recently there are some commercials of sexual life related products, such as 'the apparatus of the happy sport for couples', 'the supplementary apparatus of vacuum sex life' and etc. The commercials asserted that these products were designed to cure the malfunction of sex life and to assist sex life for medical purpose.*

*The publication of these products is reversed to our traditional conventions and moral standards. Hence, it does not matter whether these products are allowed to produce or not, it should be prohibited using Advertisements for promotion.*

*When the local administrations get the regulation, please*

*transmit it to all the Advertising companies. Towards all the conducts which are against this regulation, they will be disposed by the first rule from Eighth Article of the Regulations on Control of Advertisements.*<sup>2</sup>

Correspondingly, the Durex commercial “Perfect Fit” was also put down in a few weeks after its first launch. It received too much negative social consensus from the passengers and it was regarded as a “bad influence” on Chinese youngsters taking public transportation. The commercial was banned from public media according to the aforementioned regulations about strictly forbidding the publishing of commercials for sex and sexuality related products from the State Administration for Industry & Commerce of P.R.C. Number 284 by the local administration in Shanghai. However, the commercial can be still found on Durex’s official webpage.

### 2.3 The need to study media content in China

China is the nation with the largest population in the world. Like I mentioned before, it has the largest number of netizens as well. With the briskly growing advertising industry, Television and Internet have been two major media for Chinese commercials. However, the rigid regulations and censorship from the Party-state regime have set huge road-blocks for releasing and publishing commercials of sex related products, especially condoms. The condom has an ambiguous status for defining its utilization either for sexual needs or for hygiene purposes.

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<sup>2</sup> Article 8: An advertisement that contains any of the following contents may not be published, broadcast, installed or posted: (1) that violates the laws and regulations of the State. (Promulgated by the State Council on October 26, 1987.)

The Chief Representative in China for Jissbon -one of the biggest condom brands apart from Durex in China- Wang Xuehai, talked in an interview about the role that the condom plays. He thinks that condoms should be categorized with hygiene products rather than sex products because the condom is considered to be the most effective way for preventing AIDS and STDs worldwide. Having condom commercials with the idea of safe sex and prohibiting the diffusion of HIV for charity purpose should be encouraged. (Zhu, 2003)

In fact, 3/4 of the HIV virus is spread via sexual intercourse: 3/4 is via heterosexual contact and 1/4 is via homosexual contact. Zeng Yi, a scholar from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, as well as the chief of an AIDS funding organization in China, argued that the Chinese situation can not be an exception. Zeng said in one of his interviews that there were 830,000 HIV infected patients in China (According to an official annual report in 1999), but there might be approximately 4 to 8 million. Besides, due to the irresolution of commercial sex issue and the enormous domestic flow of population, the speed and the realm of contagious STDs especially AIDS are stupendously accelerated and extensive. (Anonymous, 2005)

The recently published “Regulations on AIDS Prevention and Treatment” (2006) has related articles about the popularization of condom use which can also be found in Appendix (2). It specifically states, information about selling locations, the way to sell the product, and the penalties for the distributors or the producers if they do not abide by the regulations properly. It means that no matter how, when and where the product is wanted to be sold or promoted, the distributor and producers have strict rules to follow. Once they violate the law and some related policies during the process, like Durex’s “Perfect Fit” did, they have to face either banning or some more severe consequences.

It is fairly encouraging that policies have progressed to allow the utilization of the condom in the commercial sex industry to prevent sexual diseases. Based on the data from the “Joint UN Country Programme on HIV/AIDS in China 2007-2010”,

until the end of 2005, the number of HIV carriers has reached approximately 650,000 (540,000 to 760,000), the average HIV prevalence rate is 0.05% (0.04%-0.06%). Although the rate for the whole nation is fairly low, there are still high-infected districts as it is shown on the graph of HIV prevalence (%) in Adults (15-49) in Asia, 2007. (2007)

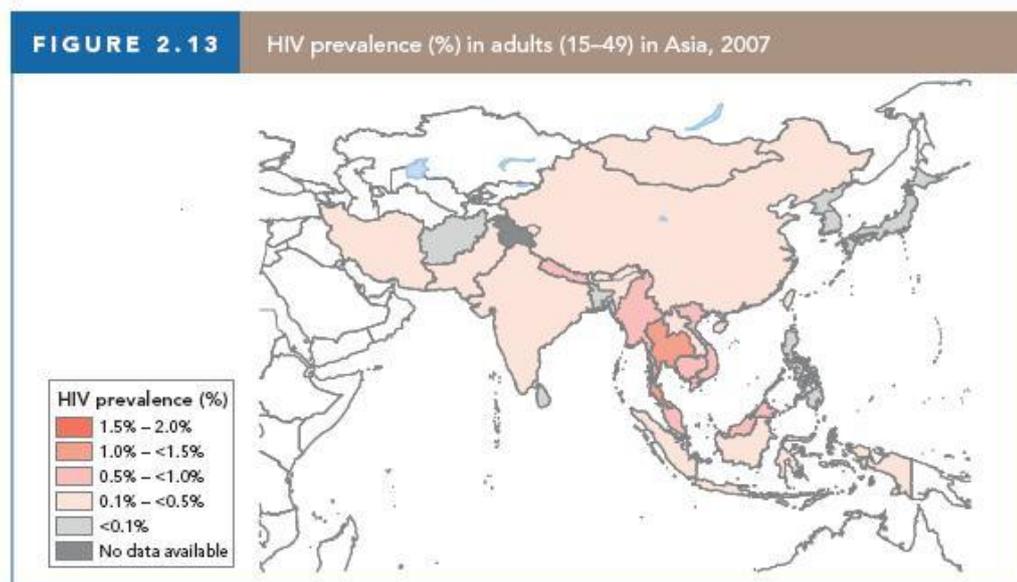


Image 6: HIV prevalence (%) in Adults (15-49) in Asia, 2007. [Released Graph illustration from the Chapter 2- Status of the Global HIV Epidemic, 2008].

Retrieved from 2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic in 2008

In spite of the HIV/AIDS problem, the youth abortion situation is severe in China nowadays as well. According to the China Population (CPDRC) website in 2005, there are 10 million women having abortions every year with 2.5 million being teenagers under the age of 18. This pre-mature sexual intercourse, the nescience of sex knowledge, pre-marital and extra-marital behavior have been inevitable social issues since the 80s. The mental and physical maturity of Chinese adolescence has

sped up to this early stage. The deficiency of sex education caused a big problem for high-school students, university students, and couples. Statistically, only 42.2% of couples used condom for safety purposes when they first had sex. (Anonymous, 2006)

Sex education in China is a blind spot and it usually wears the mask of Anatomy and Biology with embarrassment from educators in schools. Sex itself has the clear aim within society as superficially a reproductive purpose and it is oftentimes treated as somewhat taboo among people for daily conversations and communications without a comparatively natural and equal attitude nowadays. The strict restriction and regulations for publishing information in Chinese media such as newspapers, magazines and TV about normal sex products and the overflow of information of medical products for sex uses has become an extremely bizarre phenomena for consumers and civilians in China. Sex education is supposed to be seen a life-long education because it does not only matter to people's physical health; but also to their psychological health. The current focus of education on the biological knowledge aspect is by far not enough for juveniles and even adults; it should put more attention on teaching people to distinguish between unprotected sexual behaviours from safe sex as unsafe sex could cause permanent physical or mental damage and establishing a real harmonious and healthy sexual relations.

With the booming information explosion and the widely influential usage of personal weblogs, podcasts and etc., the Internet has stretched and its touch and infiltrated more marginal areas due to the incomplete law system. Sex related content such as pornography and Japanese AV (Adult Video) downloading websites can be easily found on the internet with functional search engines. With either Youtube or Tudou- the most famous online video sharing platform in China, it is no longer impossible for Chinese netizens to get pornographic videos. No matter how much effort the Chinese government has put in the past few years trying to restrict those sex related content published via various media, it has gradually become an

undeniable fact that simply blocking or limiting the information for Chinese citizens is not a wise decision.

The China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC)<sup>3</sup> conducted the 24<sup>th</sup> Statistical investigation on Internet Development in China and according to the final report published on July 16, 2009, the number of Internet users has reached 338 million with growing Internet prevalence and interests from Chinese netizens in all aspects. Inasmuch as the Internet does not only produce economic benefits, it also displays a free virtual space for people to share their knowledge and opinions and the political and cultural impact it has brought has been unquestionably significant.

Moreover, the investigation indicates that the prevalence of the Internet in China has reached 25.5% and it is gradually increasing year by year. As public media such as Radio, TV and the Internet have been playing such an important role from communication or educational aspect for Chinese spectators, the situation has become fairly severe. Also because of the insufficiency of systemized sex education from childhood no matter for parents or teachers to the adulthood and the lack of the prevalence of condom use, the need for studying media content should be considered to be imperative and indispensable.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

In this chapter, the main focus for discussion will be on the concepts of

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<sup>3</sup>China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), the state network information center of China, was founded as a non-profit organization on Jun. 3rd 1997. CNNIC takes orders from the Ministry of Information Industry (MII) to conduct daily business, while it was administratively operated by Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). Computer Network Information Center of Chinese Academy of Sciences takes the responsibility of running and administrating CNNIC.

Structuralism, Semiotics/ Semiology, signs, and myths as well as the theory of Mythologies from Roland Barthes. The case which needs to be studied is combined with multiple media applications such as moving images, music etc. and the method for interpreting the example like image reading will be dealing with all kinds of sign systems which would be within the semiotic realm. Semiotics, under the wide range of Structuralism will be suitable and applicable. The relation between Structuralism and Semiotics and the reason why we utilize it will be discussed in the sub-chapter 3.1. The Mythologies theory has its blind spots as it was created during semiotic theories' early stage which does not categorize signs and there are much richer developments of theories coming later. I will choose what I believe is fitting for the case studies from Barthes' theory and try to combine the method with my interpretation for the further elaboration.

### 3.1 Structuralism and Semiotics

The theories no matter from Structuralism or De-construction are all different ways how we human beings see the world and interpret it. Semiotics is one way how we interpret the image world, which contains an infinite amount of signs and meanings, from a well-structured semiotic ideological perspective.

Structuralism rose in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century and reached its peak in the late 50s and early 60s in France because of its outstanding interpretation of rationalism and Sartrean existentialism under the specific circumstance of the crisis and the turbulence of the society after the Second World War.

At the beginning, the major development of Structuralism was mainly focused on the linguistic perspective, centering on studies from Ferdinand de Saussure with the notion of language being a series of rules and settings generating meaning from

written or non-written symbols. Moreover, the characteristics of Structuralism postulate its function of applying the objective, abstract and accurate scientific methodologies analyzing diverse social phenomena reconciles the historical background of the development of the philosophy. Later on, many intellectuals developed this ideology and applied it to other disciplines such as social anthropology, literary criticism, psychoanalysis, and sociology. For instance, Claude Lévi-Strauss broadened the horizon towards interpreting Myth and other cultural events with the anthropological perspective; Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan worked on historical and psychoanalytical aspects. However, the emergence of post-structuralism and deconstruction replaced its prominence at a later stage. Inasmuch as the development of post-structuralism, deconstruction and postmodernism facilitates and complements the infinite imagination for cultural expressions which rigid structuralism lacked of.

Terrence quoted Jean Piaget's definition while explaining the concept *Structure* in his book *Structuralism & Semiotics (1997)*:

*One of the most fruitful attempts at a definition-has been made by Jean Piaget. Structure, he argues, can be observed in an arrangement of entities which embodies the following fundamental ideas:*

*(a) The idea of wholeness*

*(b) The idea of transformation*

*(c) The idea of self-regulation*

*(p.16)*

The idea of wholeness firstly sees the world as a single entity with each structure being one entity whereas in side of the entity is unstable and can be categorized.

The idea of transformation indicates the dynamic nature of the structure from one category to another which is transformable. The idea of self-regulation represents the character that structure has for everything inside of one structure to be arranged in a certain way of some resemblances. Additionally, the internal coherence, the dynamic and self-regulating of the wholeness represents three major characters of the concept behind the meaning of Structure. The world is not only constituted by real substances and living existences, but also the correlations between different objects which can be perceived and interpreted by different individuals, differentiates its role from the usual physical science ideology. (Terrence, 1997) Meanwhile, Terrence defined the notion of structuralist in his *Structuralism & Semiotics* that “This new concept, that the world is made up of relationships rather than things, constitutes the first principle of that way of thinking which can properly be called ‘Structuralist’.”(p.19) Meantime, the range of semiotics covers various areas such as linguistic semiotics, behavioural semiotics etc. Moreover, the correlation between structuralism and semiotics are closely coterminous with the same embodied discipline of communication.

Essentially, applying structuralism as a methodology while analyzing semiotic cases would be neatly systematic and well-organized. However, addressing it as a major idea while studying the semiotic discourses no matter from linguistic or anthropological perspective can be immensely restricted inasmuch as the strictly structured genres such as gender, psychology and etc. limit the application and synchronizing multiple disciplines viewing the world as a totality.

Both of the terminologies *Semiotics* and *Semiology* derive from the Greek word *semeion* ‘sign’. The etymology of the word semiotics is the Greek word *semeiotiké* (<sema ‘sign’ and *semeiotikos* ‘observant of signs’). The word Semiotics is firstly more referred to the symptomatology from a medical perspective rather than the meaning behind the signs or “theory of signs” which was developed later on. Moreover, the English word “semiotic” was firstly published by Charles Morris in

his *Signs, language and behavior* (1946). However, famous North American semiotician, Charles Sanders Peirce, used the terms of “semeiotic”, “semeotic”, “semiotic” in his fundamental works in semiotics, but never “semiotics”.

The word Semiology, on the other hand, has its etymological source from the French word *sémiologie* and the word “semeiology” occurred in the Imperial Dictionary of England in 1883 before the popularization of the definition from Ferdinand de Saussure in his *Cours de linguistique générale* (Course in General Linguistics ) at 1916. (Nuessel, 2006) Additionally, according to John Fiske’s definition of semiotics (1990), “the study of the signs and the way they work is called semiotics or semiology” which fits the general understanding of ‘the doctrine of signs’. (p.40) Nevertheless, ‘the father of Structuralism,’ de Saussure, defined Semiology as below:

*A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it semiology (from the Greek semeion ‘sign’). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them. Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology; the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and the latter will circumscribe a well-defined area within the mass of anthropological facts. (Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, p. 16)*

*(Terrence, 1997)*

The theories of semiotics, which is usually seen as the science of signs, was developed mainly by the works of two masters- de Saussure and Peirce- and was later expanded to a bigger general meaning interpretation for various human

cultural behaviors by other Semioticians such as Roland Barthes. The notion crossed the disciplines of linguistics, musicology, photography, film and all sorts of forms of expressions on different platforms such as television and the Internet. As emphasized on the importance of its role shown correlations and the implied connections between different items, semiotics postulates an invisible constitution of a constructed relation network and the background significance within the wholeness of this existing world.

### 3.1.1 Signs, Codes and Myths

The sign, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (second edition, 1989), refers to a token or indication (visible or otherwise) of some fact, quality, etc. As an entity which indicates the other object or the signification in a semantic perspective, a sign shows the correlation between different items, for instance like a red heart can be a sign symbolizing love or affection between lovers in cartoons and other forms of media.

The linguistic sign that de Saussure discussed in his *Course in General Linguistics* is arbitrary inasmuch as the meaning and the sign are not necessarily connected. The meaning of the word is pre-constructed within the language structure realm as wholeness. The components of the sign are respectively *signifier* and *signified*. *Signifier* is the vehicle which carries the meaning of an object or a concept. *Signified* is the idea or mental concept of an entity. For instance the word “bird” is pronounced “[be:d]” but there is no connection between the pronunciation and the actual object or a concept. “Bird” is the carrier of the meaning –a flying animal with two wings. Hence, “bird” is the signifier of the mental concept in our head in so far as the idea (signified) is using the meaning vehicle to utilize the destination of communication. However, the shape of the hieroglyph from Asian countries, especially Chinese, does generate the

meaning from mimicking the objects, which is different from Romanized languages. Nevertheless, the pronunciation and the meaning are still arbitrary which was elaborated By Jonathan Culler (1976) in his book *de Saussure* and also see Umberto Eco's *A Theory of Semiotics* (1979, p.14).

The greatness of de Saussure is that he reminds us that the fact that “we are surrounded by and shaped by sign systems, leads to the realization that consciousness and experience are built out of language and the other sign systems circulating in society that have existed before we take them up and use them.” (Bignell, 2002) The sign systems which will be considered in this thesis are far more complex and broader than linguistic discipline. The signs in media will inevitably be interpreted or affiliated with other signs with social or cultural context.

Within different social or cultural contexts, different organizations of signs can generate different meanings. In other words, when the signs are designed in a certain way in order to convey some specific meanings, we need coding and decoding to design or interpret some sequences of signs. Umberto Eco discussed the code system in his great work, *A theory of semiotics* (1979). He stated that “signs are the provisional result of coding rules which establish transitory correlations of elements, each of these elements being entitled to enter-under given coded circumstances-into another correlation and thus form a new sign.” (Eco, p.49) Since there is a sign system existing, code is one system of thought that enables us to understand some kind of event. According to Fiske, “Codes are, in fact, the systems into which signs are organized. These systems are governed by rules which are consented to by all members of the community using that code.”(1990, p.64) Also Gullian explained the definition of “code” that “a code is a set of conventionalized ways of making meaning that are specific to particular groups of people. In the context of making television news programmes, for example, Stuart Hall (1980: 136) comments on what he calls the ‘professional

code' that is mobilized in the work of producers, editors, lighting and camera technicians, newscasters and so on. ” (2001, p.35) In my opinion, encoding and decoding can be read as a way of attributing meaning via displaying signs in different orders and an approach for interpreting meanings from a designated sequence of signs under a certain cultural context which may require an “interpretative contextual ‘reading’ ”.(Eco, p.49) Moreover, the function of codes in sign systems is that “codes provide the rules which generate signs as concrete occurrences in communicative intercourse”.(ibid, p.49) The relation between connotative and denotative codes is that the further signification of a connotative code conventionally relies on a primary one. (ibid, p.55)

The relation of the codes and culture in Eco’s book is similar to what Barthes elaborated on with his theory of mythologies, which will be discussed in the next subchapter. He thinks that the codes set up a cultural world and its existence is connected to a cultural order accepted by the society which in a way is how a society thinks, speaks and “while speaking, explains the ‘purport’ of its thought through other thoughts”. (ibid, p.61)

In both de Saussure and Peirce’s theories, they are studying the “conventional relation between symbol and reference (or meaning) between a sign and the series of its interpretants.” (ibid, p.60) However, de Saussure has two ways of defining codes: *paradigm* and *syntagm*. A simple explanation is that paradigm is selecting signs from an existing sign system and syntagm is a combination of different signs. De Saussure and Barthes both assert that no single sign has its own meaning; it only generates meanings when it has a correlation with the other signs. According to Fiske, we must distinguish *codes of behavior* and *signifying codes*. Behavioral codes refer to legal code, code of manner and etc.; signifying codes refer to sign systems. (Fiske, 1990) Since signifying codes have the correlations between signs within the sign system, all codes express meaning, influenced by their cultural background, perform recognizable social or communication function, and they are

transmitted by proper media.

To refer to a multi-mode case with all sorts of sequences of signs, I will briefly introduce Peirce's trichotomy (symbol, icon and index) of sign, necessary because *Mythologies* does not explicitly categorize. A symbol is arbitrarily linked with its object; icon is similar to their object; and index is considered to be physically connected with its object. (Eco, 1979, p. 178)

Myths are considered to be a sequence of stories made by human beings to narrate and explain the events, aetiology, history, ideologies or society in ancient times, which become rather "nature" in people's minds later. Myths have the grounded experience and knowledge which springs from ancestors who constructed the shape of the world that our mind now "Perceived as 'natural', 'given' or 'true'." (Terrence, 1997) Terrence quoted from Vico to elaborate the correlation between metaphysical ideology and physical existence: "...the physics of man 'reveals' that men have 'created themselves' (367), that 'the world of civil society has certainly been made by men, and that its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind' (331)." (p.13)

"Human culture is made up of signs, each of which stands for something other than itself, and the people inhabiting culture busy themselves making sense of those signs. Semiology has elaborate analytical vocabulary for describing how signs make sense, and this is one of its major strengths. A semiological analysis entails the deployment of a highly refined set of concepts which produce detailed accounts of the exact ways the meanings of an image are produced through that image." (Bal & Bryson, 2001) Thus, the meanings of all the entities or events in this world are generated from our minds which originally derive from the structure of meanings that we have already built thousands of years ago. Incidentally Semiotics, the science of signs, is generally studying the how the meanings are generated as well as re-building another world with the interpreted meanings within the whole structure.

### 3.2 Roland Barthes and Mythologies

Since the French semiologist Roland Barthes (1915-1980) wrote “Myth is a type of speech” (Barthes, 1957; English translation, 1973) in his *Mythologies*, the Saussurean binary linguistic structure of seeing the world was challenged and the realm was maximally expanded to all aspects and kinds of cultural and social phenomena.

Myth, in Barthes’ *Mythologies*, differs from its meanings in traditional understandings and concepts of myths discussed above; the notion was elaborately addressed as everything as long as it has a certain type of social usage. Inasmuch as “Semiology is a science of forms, since it studies significations apart from their content.”(Barthes, 1973, p.120), myth as ‘a semiological system’ (Ibid, p.119) develops the meanings and values from facts that “they define and explore them as tokens for something else”. (Ibid, 120) Mythology includes semiology and ideology since “it studies idea-in-form.” (Ibid, p.121) The character of Myth is that it is mobile and dynamic, not stable, fixed and passive. Moreover, Barthes implies that myth can be multi-modal and it cannot be defined or restricted by its ‘nature’ -either material or utterance; what matters the most is what myth signifies and what receivers perceive inasmuch as the interpretation is never passive and the modes can always be switching, depending on the information they are intended to communicate.

*Speech of this kind is a message. It is therefore by no means confined to oral speech. It can consist of modes of writing or of representations; not only written discourse, but also photography, cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity, all these can serve as a support to mythical speech.*

(Barthes, 1973, p.118)

This quotation engaged with the technological development today can take more media forms instead of traditional singular medium that Barthes mentioned in his work. Multiple media such as TV and Internet have taken the role of sending the messages that signs want to send, at the same time, constituting potential ideologies to somewhat manipulate civilians' sense of perceiving information which is processed with an intention of common sense.

The diagram 2 is Barthes' spatialization of the pattern of myth amplified from de Saussure's binary linguistic semiological system of sign which consists of the signifier and signified. When the terminus sign within the linguistic system which was supposed to be representative of certain meanings becomes the new signifier, the form of myth which is called "the second-order semiological system" (Ibid, p.123) impoverishes the meaning from the first-order semiological system; however, myth itself nourishes and expands the earlier meaning into the a wider social or cultural inversion which would eventually be diffusely accepted by the society as a 'nature' to form the so-called signification-the second level of sign within the range of myth.

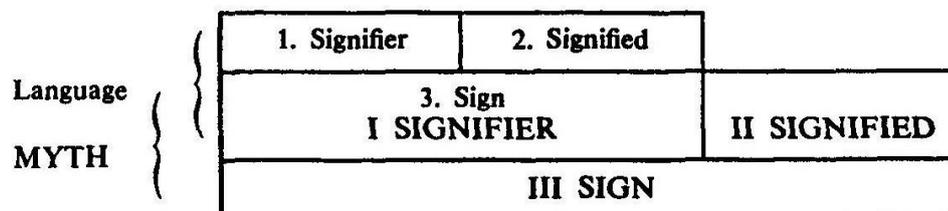


Diagram 2: The Spatialization of the pattern of Myth. (1973). [Graph illustration captured by writer on September 10, 2009 from Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*.

Fiske wrote “A myth, for Barthes, is a culture’s way of thinking about something, a way of conceptualizing or understanding it.” (p.88) It is apparent that no matter how we look into an event and try to understand it, the cultural background matters a lot as the major composition of myth. For instance, Durex launched its new product- Durex Jeans, in April, 2009, image 7 is the promotional poster for it. Applying de Saussure’s first-order semiological system, the first sign that can be perceived by viewers is the cross-legged jeans. It consists of the signifier-plain blue jeans, and the signified-“wear it”, or some people might wonder, is it a sign of saying ‘no’ by crossing legs. People may also consider the imaginary erotic stories behind the image. We can also assume an enormous amount of information between the fabric, the design and the function of the product until we think a little further that the product is a condom and the shape of the jeans reminds us of the world-known symbol of the red ribbon for World Aids Day. The associations of the sign triggers an expansion into the much broader realm that covers the ideas of social responsibility, juvenile crimes, the global prevalence of STDs, AIDS and globalization and so on. Nevertheless, the ideology behind the commercial is still closely attached with the image and the narrative that consumers should go and buy this commodity, meanwhile take social responsibility of having safe sex.

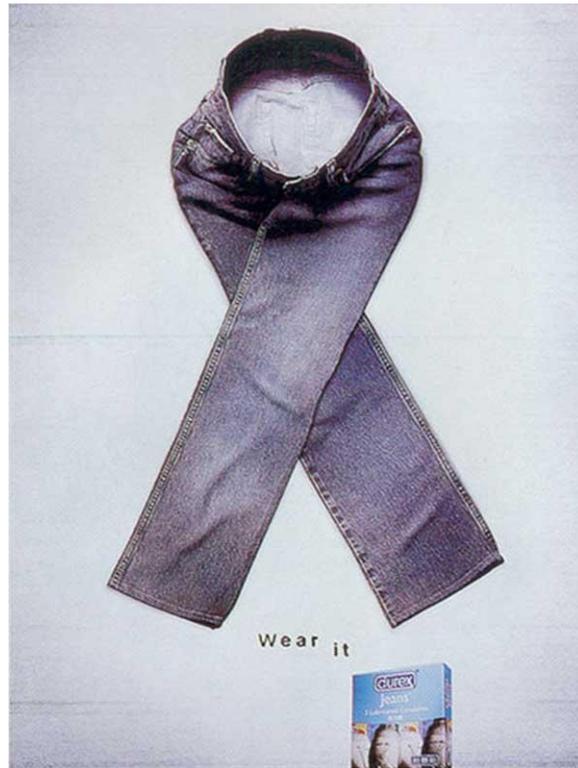


Image 7: Durex Jeans condom. (2009). [Released Graph illustration by TTK LTG Ltd on April 15, 2009] Retrieved from <http://www.thelatestnews.in/ttk-lig-to-launch-youth-focussed-condoms/5733.html>

*In advertisements, consumption is naturalized and 'goes without saying'. In order to accomplish this ideology effect, we will see that advertisements make use of myth, attempting to attach mythic significations to products by taking up already-meaningful signs in a similar way to the photograph on the cover of Paris- Match.*

*(Bignell, 2002, p.26)*

From this commercial poster, Barthes' myth as a form did not decrease the social value; instead, it explores and seeks the deeper meanings behind. Furthermore, the knowledge of a mythical concept is shapeless and unstable due to its function for different cases. "A signified can have several signifiers" (Barthes, 1973, p.129), in so far as the plain blue jeans, the shape of the jeans, the texture of the commercial

and the medium can all be signifiers, while the meaning can be interpreted from multiple angles of different critics and information perceivers.

Regarding what he says in the book, “there is no myth without motivated form.” and “Motivation is unavoidable [...] very fragmentary.” (Ibid, p.137) Rephrasing Barthes, the utterances or discourses of Myth as a semiological form producing mythologies to convey messages, enable them to become the normality that we confront in everyday life. However, Barthes’ work in *Mythologies* is mainly tied up with a left-wing perspective that it has its limitations and blind spots which I would like to avoid while applying it to the case study. Additionally, I do not think that myth serves social needs alone. Media nowadays carries some of the social responsibilities as well as the commercialized profit-oriented ideology which can be conducted intentionally by information senders.

### 3.3 From Theory to Methods for Individual studies

I understood Barthesian mythologies as the signification behind and the connection between sign and the external material world or external mental concept which is usually influenced by history, society and experience. The subject of my research is the first Durex TV commercial in China, which determined the nature of its message carrier- a TV on the subway. The characteristic of this commercial “Perfect fit” is that it employed all Chinese actors and actresses in a Chinese scene, and did not simply translate the lines and dub it into Chinese. The way the information that the commercial wanted to convey and how the sexual signs were addressed and coded in the moving images make this case special and worthy of study. The cultural and social influence the commercial had in society and the impact the commercial had on people’s ideology makes it interesting for researchers to apply Barthes’ mythologies to it.

Since the notion of myth from Barthes can form an inversion to naturalize the

signification as common sense, it makes advertisements a convenient form with which to guide consumers to a certain understanding. In other words, the intention of the commercial is apparently obvious that it is always profit-oriented. “The aim of ads is to engage us in their structure of meaning, to encourage us to participate by decoding their linguistic and visual signs and to enjoy this decoding activity. Ads make use of signs, codes, and social myths which are already in circulation. And ask us to recognize and often to enjoy them.”(Bignell, p.31) How to be completely scientific and objective has been continually problematic, even if you are a strict follower of Marxism.

Meanwhile, the meanings can also be read diversely, due to the variety of viewers, due to, as we have discussed before, geographical differences and so on. In other words, the mental concept the commercial tends to convey or communicate is unfixed. It is not absolutely constituted in its own territory to make itself a normality or manipulating viewer’s cognition for the specific commodity they want to promote or a cultural issue embedded in the society. Thus, the discussion for all the sensory perception from the viewers are more important than analyzing producers which are referred to designers, companies and so on. Furthermore, some aspects, such as the natural material of the commercial, would be unnecessary for me to discuss further while doing the analysis in the case study chapter.

Nevertheless, the audience still gets at least slightly influenced by the ideological significance the myth tries to form and the mythologies produced to send. That is the reason why I thought that mass media could be and should be somewhat ‘manipulated’ to convey certain correct information to lead, to break a threshold of a restricted mentality, or to educate the viewers via the presentation of the visual materials.

While processing the visual material from the TV commercial, distinguishing codes accurately is significant for the research. I found Rose Gillian’s (2001) quotation with reference to Dyer’s approach how to observe human symbolized signs in an

effective and practical manner. It is constituted by four representations of human appearance and behavior: body, manner, activity and prop & settings. Representations of body include analyzing age, gender, race, hair, body size and looks; manner includes expression, eye contact and pose; activity includes touch and positional communication and so on. Certain flexibility will be required while applying it to the actual case. (p.77)

#### **4. Multimodality Methodology**

As I have described in the introduction of my research questions such as “what are the meanings behind the sexual signs, why and how are they designed in that way, did they successfully conveyed the meaning”, I find a multimodality methodology is the most suitable methodology for my multimedia case. In this chapter, the discourse of multimodality methodology will be well elaborated inasmuch as the concept of “mode”, “modality” is explained first. The compatibility between the methodology and the case study is discussed and some free space is left. Furthermore, the blind spots which might undermine the research are raised in the second sub-chapter while presenting the semiotic communication theory connecting the methods.

##### **4.1 Mode, Modality and Multimodality methodology**

The notion mode refers to a ‘grammar’ (Ventola, Charles & Kaltenbacher, 2004) or sign systems which can organize signs in different orders to make various meanings in a certain atmosphere. “The term ‘modality’ comes from linguistics and refers to the truth value or credibility of (linguistically realized) statements about the world.” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996, p.160) Nowadays the notion of modality is not only utilized within a narrow linguistic range but it is conveyed to a much broader realm on the visual perception aspect. For instance, postulating there is one drama playing on the stage in a theater, the dress, the background image, the lines and the music etc. would be diverse medial modes involved which might belong to sensory subdivided categories such as visual, auditory, olfactory and etc.. Traditional mono-modes such as texts and images can coexist in one sign with the development of the contemporary information technologies. The mono-modality methodology could not serve the need for multimedia cases one way or another; the multimodal discourse will be more suitable for this thesis.

Kress & Van Leeuwen introduced the motivation of discussions for the methodology from the multimodal perspective in their book *Multimodal Discourse* (2001) that “Our approach takes its point of departure from this new development, and seeks to provide the element that has so far been missing from the equation: the semiotic rather than the technical element, the question of how this technical possibility can be made to work semiotically, of how we might have, not only a unified and unifying technology, but also a unified and unifying semiotics.”(p.2) In this new era, with all sorts of cutting-edge digital technologies, it is inevitable that we can not avoid encountering multi-media cases such as online video, online games etc. Additionally, the traditional mono-modality method has its short-comings in that it can not cover all the semiotic range which is involved and the deliberations can be limited, even too specific that the significations beneath might be marginalized where some mono-modes might be emphasized too much and be unintentionally put in the middle of the stage for the unnecessary discussion.

“We want to sketch a multimodal theory of communication based, not on ideas which naturalize the characteristics of semiotic modes by equating sensory channels and semiotic modes, but on an analysis of the specificities and common traits of semiotic modes which takes account of their social, cultural and historical production, of when and how the modes of production are specialized or multi-skilled, hierarchical or team-based, of when and how technologies are specialized or multi-purpose, and so on. ”(p.4) No signs are arranged by ‘nature’ and they are all designed in the interactive multi-media cases for communicative purposes. In *Multimodal Discourse*, an example was given of the idea of applying the unified semiotic approaches for multimodal cases such as one summer volume of the magazine *Maison Francaise*. In this analysis, no matter how complicated the modes are shown on the image, they attach and serve the same motivation and scheme- the discourse they raised. In this example, color plays the same role as the text or other modes in a social discourse. Moreover, the articulation of different modes of expression, color visually displayed and material objects such as textuality in the

front page of the magazine evoke the sense of the “living” style the image wants to illustrate and communicate to the spectators. Yet, no matter how many different modes are visually or tactilely involved for semiotic deliberations, the association towards other modes was triggered by the correlated mode and it turns the physiological existence to cultural or experiential meanings that “the meaning deriving from specific cultural provenances and physiological/experiential/emotional effects.” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, p.27)

The production, in other words, communication or expression and the discourse are closely raised or related according to Kress and Van Leeuwen, no matter from the Hjelmslevian’s definition of “connotation” (signification) or “on the ideological nature of the signified which is expressed by the term myth” (Ibid, p.72), while processing the visual material, “all aspects of materiality and all the modes deployed in a multimodal object/phenomenon/text contribute to meaning.” (Ibid, p.28) Moreover, when a mode and a medium are coupled to serve the designed modes, it is “the result of a particular and quite specific form of the social organization of semiosis”. (Ibid, p.67) It echoes the motivation of the discourse of multimodality methodology Kress and Van Leeuwen want to establish, which unifies all the semiotic analysis from diverse perspectives by all means.

In this thesis, the case which I chose is one TV commercial which utilizes all sorts of sensory modes such as visual, auditory and so on as well within the chosen. Additionally, I chose it due to the special situation - that it was put on a subway LCD screen for a couple of weeks but now the only chance to download or watch it online is through the official webpage of China’s Durex. The human interactions involved are not quite the same as being accessible to many passengers on the metro is quite different to being accessible to internet users, which make it quite complex for researchers to analyze. Nevertheless, applying the multimodality methodology can solve the problem that too many modes would need to be discussed. Instead, the integration of the Barthesian theory of seeking the

ideological nature- mythologies and the unified semiosis approaches can make the case analysis possible to focus on studying the inverted meanings the commercial wants to communicate with the audience through decoding the semiotic signs.

#### 4.2 The research limitations

Different readers have different interpretations of the same visual product. It is because of the distinctive features of communication theory that I would illustrate below, towards creating new meanings, different interpretation from different readers may be postulated to share the same sign system, however, their meanings can only get immensely close but are never exactly the same. In other words, different readers' understandings can never be the same.

Hodge and Kress argued in their *Social Semiotics* “a functionally related set of contradictory versions of the world, coercively imposed by one social group on another on behalf of its own distinctive interests or subversively offered by another social group in attempts at resistance in its own interests” (1988, p.3) to capture the contradictory characteristics of ideological complexes from different social groups.

Additionally, Rose Gillian commented on Hodge & Kress's arguments in her *Visual Methodologies: An introduction to the Interpretation of Visual materials* (2001) and stated that the discourse implies that semantic criticisms are as ideological as the Advertisements which are criticized, “The difference between them is in the social effects of the knowledge each depends on, not its truth status.” (p.71)

Furthermore, Mieke Bal and Bryson (1991) argued that since receptions are dependent on signs, and all meanings based on that are defenseless to semantic re-interpretation, re-interpretations from those semiologists themselves are as vulnerable as meaning at the same time. (Gillian, 2001)

*Elsewhere Bal (1996) has described this as a process of 'double exposure'. When a critic writes about, let's say, a video, not only is the video interpreted and exposed to interpretation; the interpretation is also on display, exposing the critic's ideas to interpretation by others. As she says, there are 'intricacies between . . . academic subjectivity and the subject matter it purports to analyse' (Bal, 1996: 7).*

*(Ibid, p. 72)*

Fiske's communication theory on semiotic aspect will be briefly elaborated upon here. It indicates semiotics or creating meanings does not include arrows because arrows show correlations of the signs in the process when they are transmitted. For example, the Diagram of Common Communication Theory on Semiotic Aspect I, made below, demonstrates the correlations between these elements more specifically:

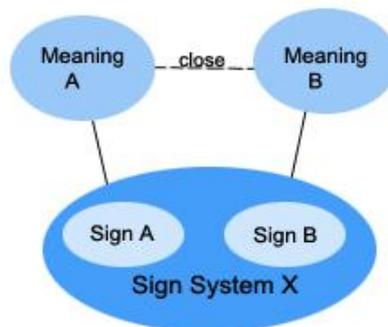


Diagram 3: Common Communication Theory on Semiotic Aspect

Communication in Fiske's mind is more like, for instance, if I want to talk to one person, I generate my Meaning A into a sign - Sign A, which is shown in the diagram

above. The person I want to talk to gets it and interprets it, which generates his/her meaning from the Sign A I gave. Although the meaning may be a little different from the original meaning that I wanted to send, Sign A drives him/her to establish Sign B which has its own meaning B. As long as Sign A and B are in the same Sign System X it is okay; the more similar sign systems we use, the closer the two meaning are. There are no arrows in the diagram and it does not indicate any linear relations between signifier, signified and the sign.

Fiske's theory proves the very nature of semiotic communicative interactions in that it differs in the correlation due to the different sign system they are applying. However, further discussion about communication studies will be left out since the importance of its nature has been deliberated. The Common Communication Theory on Semiotic Aspect diagram provoked discussion about subtle differences between the interpretation and the original meaning during the process of communicative information transferring, and equally the encoding and decoding has its limitations from a semiotic perspective. Based on the same communicative merits and demerits, in this paper I am also doing the interpretation based on my understandings influenced by my experience and the knowledge or the sign system which I am familiar while decoding the TV commercial. The existence of blind spots and flaws caused by personal interpretation is unavoidable.

In my opinion, the related regulations for sexual products in China are fairly substantial and fundamental for the design of the arrays of signs for the commercial. In order to convey the meanings and fulfill the achievement for communication between the substances existing and the spectators, the design needs to fit for the Chinese regulations and cultural context. The sign that I (as a Chinese citizen) observe from the meaning creator, how I read it and how the so-called message stimulates me to create a new meaning are significant and influential to the results that I will get in the later research.

Thus, the meanings that I decode can never be the same as the original designer and

being somewhat subjective and active is inevitable during the analysis since neither the interpretation nor the production/communication is passive. There is no accuracy, but similarity. Even though the methods that I am applying fits the case and increased my freedom for interpretation while doing the analysis, it sets my limitation for the whole research away from being purely objective and systematic.

## 5. Case Studies

This chapter mainly focuses on the analysis of the multimodal case of the Durex commercial “Perfect Fit” from a semiotic perspective. Firstly the composite of text – the paper-based Durex advertisement for the same product will be analyzed, because it differs from the TV commercial due to the different media form and the different modalities employed. This makes it interesting for comparison. Secondly, the TV commercial will be discussed across all interrelated semiotic code system including sexual signs, human behaviours, and music utilizing multimodal methods. No matter which modality or technology the sign takes, they all have the same function and are designed to serve for the same semiotic purpose.

The purpose of discussing the advertisement is that the composition of the poster of the same product, Durex, is elaborated to find the differentiation of the boundaries from paper based media and multi-media. In particular, the literal narration is salient including the meanings behind the words and the way the words are addressed in the poster and in the commercial. Additionally, the subtle Chinese definitions of sex and sexuality are given as a complementary reference with regards to cultural background which the second chapter tries to vividly depict in order for the reader to further understand the commercial.

While reading the multimodal case, “Perfect Fit”, all the sexual signs that emerge will be located scene by scene and interpreted according to Barthes’ *Mythologies*. All myths, in other words, or significations signified from various signs are specifically based on Chinese phenomena in consideration of all political, economical and cultural indications. Moreover, since the poses, gestures, music, bodies, dresses etc. are all multimodalities addressed. These interact differently but serve the same purpose in that they trigger the association of the meanings deriving from physiological/experiential/emotional effects which Kress&Van Leeuwen (2001) amplified as multimodal methodology; all these codes will be elaborated and considered as a whole while serving the same meaning.

In the detailed analysis, all sexual signs from different modes will be decoded respectively following the arranged three groups of Body, Dress & Gesture, Observers & other Objects, and Music as well as the sequential scenes of the plot from the commercial.

Additionally, bodily culture, as an important aspect of Chinese contemporary culture, will be vigorously considered in the examinations of gender related content from the commercial. Heterosexuality and the mainstream appreciation for bodily aesthetics, female bodily aesthetics in particular, are discussed with regards to the different developing trends of ideologies in different eras such as the consumerism era and so on.

## 5.1 When Barthes meets “Perfect fit”



Image 8: Durex “Perfect fit”. [Released Graph illustration by TTK LTG Ltd]

Retrieved from <http://www.durex.com.cn/Ad/PrintAd.php>

The image above is a poster for the product “perfect fit” from Durex, a world-famous condom brand. It consists of five major visual elements including three images, and two pieces of text. The slogan for the product is located under the yellow helmet with the biggest font reading “戴得不合体, 怎样做得好! (Dai de bu he ti, zen yang zuo de hao!)” If translated literally word by word, “Dai” means “to wear”, “he ti” means “fit for the body” and “zuo” means “to do”. The whole sentence means “How can you do it well, if you do not wear properly!”

Here we cannot ignore the puns such as “to wear” and “to do” because “to wear” can apply to the safety helmet as well as the sexual safety guarantee-condom; and

“to do” can be used as in “to do a job” in working circumstances like the TV commercial illustrated (which I will elaborate on more in the later sub-chapters) and can also be refer to sexual intercourse. Moreover, “he ti” does not refer to a specific part of the human body, it can suggest the head, which implies “helmet” as well as the “head”- the male sexual genital that in Chinese is usually called “龟头(Gui tou)” -turtle head inasmuch as the shape of the turtle head is fairly similar to the male sexual organ. Hence, “safety for the ‘head’” can be the idea that the commercial wants to convey to consumers and a vast range of audience.

From this poster, it is fairly clear that I read the yellow safety helmet as the signifier and the condom as the signified; meanwhile, the helmet and the condom can be seen as the signifier and the concept “safe sex”, “protection” or “wearing responsibly” can be read as the signified at the second level of signification in the form of myth. In other words, helmet is the denotation of the connotation “safe sex”.The poster itself is a composite of images and texts. Some more cultural significations from sexual signs will be interpreted from multiple aspects such as gender, social policies etc. in chapters 5.2.1 (p.57) and 5.2.2 (p.63).

The slogan which is written on the poster is also used in the TV commercial. I want to analyze this later and thus we must explore the meanings on the poster first.

The yellow characters under the words “perfect fit” are three adjectives: “有型 (You xing) ”-stylish / tangible/ shaping, “合体 (He ti) ”-fit, and “舒适 (Shu shi) ”-comfortable. The white text is the description of the special characteristics of the new product which interestingly differ from the auditory presentation in that it has more specific functional sex-related words. It says, “Brand new Durex ‘Perfect Fit’ condom, distinctive ‘Fit’ design, more convenient for wearing, brings a more fitting and comfortable sexual experience/ enjoyment for both. The world-famous condom brand, Durex, makes you fulfill your needs for love and sex.” In this small piece of narration, there are two major distinctions in that not only is the word “sex” mentioned, but also the commodity “condom” is clearly brought out

on the poster. On the contrary, neither of these two words is mentioned in the TV commercial. Thanks to the benefits that the Internet brought us since the day it was conceived, the poster which can be downloaded from the official website of Durex China took its advantages to communicate with the audience, more accurate information that the producer wants to convey.

A well-known Chinese sociologist, Pan Suiming, wrote in his *Transformations in the primary life cycle: the origins and the nature of China's sexual revolution* about the difference of the meanings of sex and sexuality in different cultural contexts, which can be divided respectively from a general western gender theoretical aspect and a Chinese conventional aspect.

*Sexuality is a key focus of any Western discussion of a sexual revolution, but there is no accepted translation of the English-language term 'sexuality' in modern Chinese, even though the term 'sex' (xing) is now quite common. In fact, in ancient China, there was no definite term for the biological notion of sex, let alone sexuality. The closest terms were se, which refers to sensuality and carnal pleasure, dunlun, which refers to representations of certain movements, and qing, which refers to passion or sentiment. This lack of precise terminology suggests that, in traditional China, just as ren (person) never referred to the individual, but rather was incorporated into jia (family), so too xing (sex) was never an independent category but rather was submerged with a greater social totality. In China today, the English-language term 'sexuality' has been variously rendered as xing xianxiang (sexual phenomenon), xing zhuangkuang (sexual state), xing jingyan (sexual experience), and xing sushi (sexual quality). I myself have coined and tried to popularize the use of the term xing cunzai to refer to the English-language understanding to 'sexuality' (Sigley and Jeffreys 1999:50-8). This is because I think the term xing cunzai can be used to refer to sex not as a natural category, but rather as something that exists and is*

*understood in terms of existing social frameworks, or as something that refers to the nature of the social organization of sexual behaviours in contemporary China. However, as the previously-mentioned translations imply, the term 'sexuality' in Chinese is usually conceived of as an extension of the biological notion of sex and emphasizes manifestations of sex within actual social, cultural, psychological, behavioural, and gendered contexts.*

*(Pan, 2006, p.24)*

With the subtle differentiation of the cultural context, the analysis and interpretations of gender related content are conducted based on the specific Chinese background which includes variegated facts such as history, economics, politics and aesthetics and so on.

## 5.2 Signs and Myth: Semiotics in the Durex TV commercial

In the last section, the print advertisement was analyzed and in this sub-chapter, the Durex "Perfect fit" TV commercial will be put in focus for the deeper discussion. Additionally, Roland Barthes' theory of mythologies will be embedded as the basis while the methodology of multimodality will be employed throughout the whole discourse and analysis.

The TV commercial depicts a crush between a young girl and a plumber by the road. The beautiful young girl is jogging with a hot sporty costume; meanwhile the young plumber is ready to start his work. When she passes by him, they notice each other and get attracted to each other which are emphasized with the slow motion of the video. She pretends to do warm-up exercises by his side peeking at him while he puts a helmet on his head preparing to dig a hole in the street. However, when he starts to dig, the trembling of the excavator shakes his seemingly too big helmet which covers his eyes to cause him inconvenience while doing the work. Within

one or two seconds, there are several ugly holes everywhere on the ground. During the drilling, he tries to adjust his helmet several times, with a male voice saying “帽子不合适，怎么搞得好！” It means “if the helmet does not fit, how can you do a good job?” With the rhythm from the excavator drilling, the road signs, the scaffolding, the girl and the passengers waiting for the bus are all shaking. Suddenly, the fire hydrant breaks because of the high pressure the bad drilling causes and a huge pile of water dashes out volcanically from the fire hydrant. The water hits the cars parked and boxes by or on the pedestrian way that cars are pushed backwards and boxes are falling off which can be seen from image 24 (p. 81). The water also comes to the girl’s face and wets her whole body thoroughly. Eventually the image of condom shows up on the screen with the small red arrows inside of the condom indicating the flexibility of the shape of the condom implying the ideal “fit” with the male voice narrating “全新杜蕾斯有型装，创新有型设计，更合体，当然更舒适！” Then the still images of the package of the product and the brand follow right after for a few seconds, with the plumber adjusting his yellow helmet in between.

The second part of the narration means “the brand new Durex ‘Perfect Fit’, distinctive ‘Fit’ design, more fit, more comfortable for sure!” It is fairly obvious that neither the word condom nor sex is mentioned in this presentation. Instead, the focus is mainly on the idea of “fit”, how and why it fits, what is the consequence if it does not fit and so on. It can be interpreted that the purpose of the producer might have been to lead the audience’s attention to the product itself instead of putting the spotlight on the sensitive words such as “sex” and “condom” in order to prevent the situation violating *The regulations about strictly forbidding of publishing commercials of sex and sexuality related products from the State Administration for Industry & Commerce of the People’s Republic of China* in 1989 which was designated in the chapter 2.2 “Related policies about sex involved commercials and the situation” and would be referred in the later analysis for the sexual signs correspondingly as well.

Nevertheless, it is inevitable for a condom commercial to talk about sex without actually talking about it. Sexual signs are everywhere throughout the whole commercial sending messages implying the myth it wants to signify.

### 5.2.1 Body, Dress & Gesture



Image 9. TTK LTG Ltd . (2008, March). The Durex Commercial of “Perfect fit”.

Image captured by writer on September 25, 2009. Podcast retrieved from  
<http://www.durex.com.cn/Ad/TVAd.php>

Throughout the whole video clip, it is obvious that a large amount of body language is employed as the body is seen more than a simple object, but rather a representative for certain social identity for speaking and communicating. There have been various studies from both western and eastern scholars on bodily aesthetics or bodily appreciation and its social roles.

Western studies of social identity shown through presenting male and female bodies in advertisements argue that “While professional roles on television have tended to become more flexible, women are still expected to be attractive. Women are more

likely than men to be shown as attractive or alluring in TV commercials, and this is the main vehicle of their endorsement appeal (Downs and Harrison 1985; Lin 1997). Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2003), found that young adolescent males with moderate concern about body image are the most influenced by images of “unrealistically” slender women, rating slimness and attractiveness as important traits to evaluate women. This effect on males could act as a route through which women learn that slimness is an important element of the female identity. Jagger (2001), in a study of 100 relationship ads, found that women are more likely to offer physical attractiveness and appealing body shape whereas men offer economical stability.”(Barriga, A.C., & Shapiro, A.M., & Jhaveri, R., 2008). Yet, the universal rule for selecting models for commercials does not change. No matter whether in Asia or the western world, the selection for male or female bodies presented in advertisements, on one hand has to fit the needs of the product producer, on the other hand has to follow the general trend for society evaluating bodily beauty while considering the social identities behind the image.

Image 9 was captured from the “Perfect fit” commercial. It depicts the scene when the girl and the plumber firstly meet by the road and the girl is walking towards him. The amalgam of bodily signs from a syntagmatic aspect is apparent such as her buttocks which are wrapped in sporty mini shorts; her naked arms are casually hanging by her thighs; and the tight yellow vest top does not cover her waist; the gleaming line of the spinal column on her back; the denotations described above show a certain part of nudity signifying a young mature sexual female who is a potential condom user. Having a closer look, the denotation of the tight clothing, her well proportioned buttocks, slender arms, strong thighs, slim waist all compose the representative image of a fine female body figure. They can be read as a wholeness which does not only gives the audience infinite imagination of the beauty of female bodies, but also conveys the connotation that this is all the necessary feminine elements of a reproductively functional healthy female body –in particular the fine breasts and tight buttock -which tend to be extremely attractive

for male viewers under the oriental aesthetic standards. Meanwhile, for the female audience, it can be a positive role model of a healthy image of one of us, and it triggers the deep emotional connection or empathy among female spectators when watching her joy flirting with the plumber. Additionally, in this scene, dress, behavioral motions and the body itself as different modes respectively serve the same semiotic meaning- properly sexy which means it is not too slutty, not too elegant and the saturation of sexiness is somewhere in between. Color here as a mode does not matter much though.

As for talking about the myth of bodily appreciation, especially for the female body, western as well as Chinese scholars have abundant arguments in all aspects along the history of gender or cultural studies. Generally speaking, female aesthetics has two layers of meaning: one is with the female as a subjective observer, evaluating the beauty from other objects; the other is with the female as the object to be observed and evaluated by mainly by males or the society which is also considered as gender aesthetics. From a gender perspective, a female body as both the object which can be observed and the subject which can self-observe has alternative roles in modern society. (Zhang, 2008) In this commercial, the body differs tremendously from the inner-self for self-examination which the former scholars has discussed; instead, it shows as one important component forming the contemporary culture attributes to this commercialized Chinese society under the impact from the globalization etc. For example, the female body as an object to be observed has been influenced dramatically by lots of domestic or global changes as part of the Chinese aesthetics myth which will be elaborated below.

Over the past decades, the standards of aesthetics for evaluating a beautiful female body as a developing dynamic ideology in China have been changing rapidly through different ages, due to the diverse economic and political situation, social expectation and needs, the various cultural influences from other countries and so on. For instance, in the most prosperous dynasty in feudality such as the Tang

dynasty, the general aspects for people to appreciate female beauty were that women were supposed to be fat, or more like chubby. They were wearing thin and light gowns with long transparent sleeves leaving a big space for showing a large amount of cleavage. These features can be observed from the famous painting *Court Ladies Adorning Their Hair with Flowers* (Image 10) from Zhou Fang. This taste for appreciating female beauty is quite rare for the whole feudalistic era because of the extremely developed economy, flexible political governance, tolerance for diverse aesthetic tastes, and the acceptance for foreign culture considering people back then had the time and energy pursuing beauty in a comparatively more open way. However, the ideal image for the female body became more and more strict and narrow-minded, and nudity being for display in public has become less and less allowed in the late feudalistic period because of the descending economic situation, restricted and closed political policies for domestic ethnical as well as foreign diplomatic issues, and the repressed conservative ideology from society.



Image 10: Court Ladies Adorning Their Hair with Flowers. (partial). Mid-Tang Dynasty. [Released Graph illustration from Zhou Fang on July 21, 2009] Retrieved from [http://www.culturalink.gov.cn/gb/2009-07/21/content\\_338651.htm](http://www.culturalink.gov.cn/gb/2009-07/21/content_338651.htm)

When it came to the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially from 1845 to 1949, the general standard for the female body was closely

linked to the historical background because of the colonial domination and the cultural impact that China was forced to open the door to the western world from various aspects, the aesthetic standards, the design, and even the life style were significantly influenced and modified according to the modern western way. The social tolerance for female nudity was leaning towards the open and natural tendency, for example, the side slit for Qipao was higher and higher showing the thighs even up to the hipbone. Bare arms were allowed to be shown in public and sleeveless clothes were gradually accepted by the society instead of the situation in Ming and Qing Dynasty where women had to cover their whole body and stay home. The notorious foot-binding convention also ascribed to this purpose in order to stop attracting other men as well as keeping the Han ethnical purity from the wars and decadence of the economy. The openness from the images of the famous Shanghai Calendar Beauties (Image 11), illustrated below, from the 20s and 30s which was immensely popular for daily uses for normal civilians from a colonial commercialized perspective adopting the western fashion and the traditional Chinese design as the very avant-courier advertising posters well-represents a fairly vivid taste for the ideal mainstream of the aesthetic standards for female body and beauty in Chinese society. Even girls with bikinis and sports wear were painted on the free calendar from those international and domestic corporations for printing and sending out for product or brand promotion purposes and they were widely appreciated by consumers.

In contrast, there is another extreme example representing the historical movement and the corresponding acceptance for female nudity during the period of the Culture Revolution from 1966 to 1976. This was the tendency towards the defeminization and scientization of sex and sexuality which caused the extreme prohibition with regards to showing the femininity and lead to androgynous dresses, elaborated upon in the second chapter 2.1.2 (p.18) while discussing the complete repression for sex and sexuality in the cultural background. From the images in that decade, the designated identical duplication of the uniform-like dresses (Image 12) which

covers the personality depicts the distinction of the appreciation of human bodies' especially female bodies from a de-individualization perspective in that specific time period that neither personal emotions nor personal needs were allowed to be visibly recognized in public. The strongly embedded political ideology caused the whole aesthetic appreciation tendency where the minimum amount of female nudity could be observed by the opposite sex. Moreover, dressing in normalized color such as black, blue and army-green was considered as a convention; on the contrary, wearing bright colors including yellow, red, purple and etc. was considered to have a severe bourgeois depravity and people were condemned because of a slightest emergence of individualism.



Image 11: Shanghai Calendar Beauties. (1920s to 30s). [Released Graph illustration from *Xiexue Forum* on September 28, 2008] Retrieved from [http://bbs.tiexue.net/post\\_3073655\\_1.html](http://bbs.tiexue.net/post_3073655_1.html)



Image 12: Propaganda team in Culture Revolution. (1966-1976). [Released Graph illustration by Dong Jianguo from Chinese Dabao image bank.] Retrieved from <http://pt.tuke.com/photo/C00436857.html>

The aesthetics from daily life is not a single phenomenon that it is closely related to the cultural transition for the whole society. China, especially right now, is in a transitional stage. Multi-cultures co-existing is a distinction of the Chinese reality, and the context of the female bodily aesthetics is more for the leisure class. The show of female bodies derives from the historical change in China from productivism towards the consumerism which is built on a certain economical and industrial basis. (Li,H.,& Liu,M.,& Li, T. , 2007) The distinctions from a transitional society in China nowadays is rather outstanding in that it can be seen from all aspects such as the big leap for Chinese economy and the openness for culture in particular on the Internet or in reality under the influence of globalization. It shows that more than a change has been made. For instance, the censorship for publishing nudity in public media compared with the range before the Internet took dominance for public speech, has been adequately loose due to the fact that Internet offers every netizen a free platform to express their opinions as discussed in chapter 2.1.3. Furthermore, the discourse about sex and sexuality and the scale for the acceptance has become more flexible and agile because of the booming freedom people have gained through the Internet. As we can see, Habemas's notion of the "public sphere" has been widely challenged and modified until this day, as I mentioned in my introduction. Yet, the advertising agencies use models for

considerably nude photo shoots or TV commercials. Newspapers, magazines and TV have to follow stricter regulations, for instance, no nipples and no sexual genitalia or pubic area can be seen on any of the forms of the media mentioned above. Diverse standards of appreciation for beauty including a beautiful face, body etc. differ in ideology from the 60s to the 80s. Despite the blind spot for the regulations on the internet, massive amount of images, videos, games etc. which are violating the restrictions, find their free breathing space on the Internet.

Recently, the state purchased a piece of software called Green Dam-young escort. This software is an internet monitoring and blocking product and it was obtained for a price of 40 Million RMB for a year's subscription nation-wide. Although this product was bought "for the good of the nation" it has caused a certain amount of controversy. "Green Dam-young escort" raised immense attention and arguments from the citizens, especially netizens, as from July 1, 2009 onwards, all personal computers on the market were supposed to have "Green Dam" software installed, including the imported ones. Installing was compulsory for all stores and consumers at first, but later the government changed the policy to optional under huge social pressure for privacy and human rights. (Wang, Z., Du, R., 2009) The governmental behaviour shows the clear intention from the state to control contaminated information/ sex and violence related material. On the other hand, the strong conduct proved that the excessive amount of pornographic content (Here I am referring to showing sexual genitals including nipples, pubic hair, vaginas, penises and the full picture of sexual intercourse in public media.) on the Internet can mislead the young generation and the ideology of healthy sex and sexuality can be severely twisty and distorted. However, the denial of the weakness on sex education from the state and the conducts for controlling information are fairly paradoxical which can be harmful for the real education as discussed in the chapter 2.1.3.(p.19)

Under this sensitive institutional pressure in this specific cultural phenomenon, the selection of sex signs in "Perfect fit" commercial has all sorts of boundaries to

encounter. The girl appeared in the commercial with the tight dresses, her well proportioned buttocks, slender arms, strong thighs, slim waist etc. I have mentioned before that these characteristics, shown in Image 9 fit the general standard for beauty developed until today and the standardized leisure class's taste of appreciating the bodily aesthetics.

According to Lang and Li in their article, *Aesthetic objects and contemporary female body* (2007), the way in which female bodies are presented in contemporary cultural atmosphere indicates that observation and aesthetic ideology for bodies from normal spectators have been consented by the whole society. Additionally, the meaning of the body as a new aesthetic object is gradually changing and the values of the people, especially about female bodies, are changing too. However, the masculinity hegemony has existed in the society for a long time and has dominated the ways in which people read female bodies. Additionally, the female has had a weaker role in history and has been passive and obedient for the pseudo-natural rules which were secretly constructed by the values of a male perspective. Some women have liked to be anorectic because of pursuing for slimness or doing a plastic surgery for instance.

The myth of bodily culture nowadays in China exists as a part of popular culture, and consumerism gives the body the main role for consumption while the visual culture mass media created makes the body as one element from a commercial video and the post-modern aesthetics functions the body as one vehicle of it. (Jin, D., & Wang, Y., 2006) According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy<sup>4</sup> post-modern aesthetics here refers to an emblem of a sublime sensibility in which there is something non-presentable demanding to be put into a sensible form and yet is overwhelmed by all attempts to do so. "But where modern art presents the unrepresentable as a missing content within a beautiful form, as in Marcel Proust,

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<sup>4</sup> "8. Postmodern Rhetoric and Aesthetics" from "Postmodernism" (Sep.30, 2005) defined by Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/>

postmodern art, exemplified by James Joyce, puts forward the unrepresentable by forgoing beautiful form itself, thus denying what Kant would call the consensus of taste.” which quotes from the appendix of Jean-François Lyotard’s *La Condition Postmoderne* in 1979 (English: *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1984) That is, the body as the main vehicle of consumption plays a role representing the meaning of a non-presentable or subversive protest speaking for the information that a commercial want to transfer or connect with its products in mass media. Hence, it is undeniable that the mainstream ideology of standards valuing the aesthetics from human bodies derives from some embedded social reasons and it is paradoxical to set particular strata for aesthetics under the materialized atmosphere.

In recent years, with aesthetic influences coming from the western world and neighboring countries such as Japan and South Korea, as well as districts like Hong Kong and Taiwan, there have been two leading ideologies for the appreciation of women in public media: for the model of skinny body figures with white skin basically and for the model of healthy body figures with certain muscle and wheat skin. The first ideology was basically influenced by the countries from the Asian-pacific circle and the second was influenced by the western ideals, e.g. stemming from admiration for American cinema including the dress and the body figures from Hollywood superstars. Inevitably, both ideologies are immensely modified from the blind admiration of Caucasian race due to various economic and cultural reasons since the beginning of modern history. For instance, after the second industrial revolution, the technological and economical power from the western world has been always stronger than that from Asia. Until recently, the global economic crisis gradually weakened the political, economic and cultural hegemony of the developed countries including the United States, Britain etc. On the other hand, it also enhanced the rise of some eastern developing countries such as China, India and etc. which resulted in the appreciation of the value and aesthetics from society which has been changing with the effects of globalization.

From image 9 and image 13, it is fairly obvious that the chosen female role well-represents the general standardized taste of the audience to have the perception that the character is carried by a beautiful sexual female body. In image 13 the full frontal female body can be perceived from the scene while the plumber and the girl are observing each other. Her slim body is more inclined to the Asian mentality in that it combines the old-line rigid endeavor for a rather anorectic effect with the recent popular vigorous fit style since her role here in this commercial is of a sporty girl going out for jogging. With the tight yellow vest top, long, black hair tied back in a ponytail, ivory smooth skin, proper-sized breasts, flat abdomen and half-shown navel, her bloom and abundant energy are vividly portrayed within the realm of propriety in a conventional sense.



Image 13. TTK LTG Ltd . (2008, March). The Durex Commercial of “Perfect fit”.

Image captured by writer on September 25, 2009. Podcast retrieved from

<http://www.durex.com.cn/Ad/TVAd.php>

Images 14 and 15 depict the gaze between these two young people. Apparently they are attracted to each other; however, what we can observe from the scene is only the gaze. There is no flirtation or hand gestures so except for the long gaze; or, gazing as an eye contact, the two do not exchange any words or other flirtations. Perhaps this is the best way for them to express themselves. The gaze here, which can be

seen as a speech mode between these two, is also an ambiguous sexual sign in an oriental context. The eye movement and the eye contact are a communicative presentational code and the gaze itself, as the denotation, signifies the connotation of flirtation and sexual interest / attraction.

The myth behind the gaze is related to the erotica culture embedded in Chinese society. Eastern countries have a rich history of erotica culture, for example like Japanese Ukiyoe / Yamato-e and Chinese erotic art works such as paintings, snuffboxes, and accessories on which sexual organs were illustrated via all sorts of art form. Additionally, sexual intercourse used to be a natural element existing in people's daily lives as an indispensable entertainment, especially for young couples when they first got married and having one or two volumes of the erotic paintings as the trousseaux was seen as part of their sex education. Sex is still a flushing topic in modern art history in China after this republic country was established.

Hence, the way how they look at each other in image 13 -slightly rotating their backs, gazing at each other with sidelong glances, standing behind the noticeable road-block with the red and white stripes - especially the last position and the way they stand behind the road-block - implies the significance of their cultural background of restricted sex and sexuality. The gesture and the speech as different modes appearing in this multimodal scene, as well as the symbol of restricted sex, are signifying the contradiction of needs/desire and reality. In particular, the gazes between these two, the eager facial looks full of implicit desire, and the positions in which they stand are all vague sexual signs signifying the natural chemistry young people have when they get interested in the opposite sex. The signs in the video are telling the audience that sex is fairly dangerous, somewhat forbidden, but tempting inducing the need for protection, as seen in the later scenes.



Image 14 and image 15. TTK LTG Ltd . (2008, March). The Durex Commercial of “Perfect fit”. Image captured by writer on September 25, 2009. Podcast retrieved from <http://www.durex.com.cn/Ad/TVAd.php>

From images 13 and 14, even image 17, the pure heterosexual masculinity from the male man is well signified by the actor’s facial look, hair style- butch haircut, muscles, dress and his occupation of physical worker/hard laborer. The male actor’s style and the body language are all denotations of the masculinity and male beauty from a more or less oriental heterosexual perspective. For instance, in image 16 and 17 his strong muscular body has obvious brawny biceps brachii (simply biceps in common parlance) and his pectoral muscle can be perceived under his tight white vest top which is not too much like a western best-built man or a heavy boxer. This oriental fitness from a man with certain amount of proper muscle mass on his chest as well as biceps on his upper arms in some way exceeds the normal standard of a man on the street in daily life. All these denotations convey a similar connotation that the actress’s female body signified-properly sexy- he is not a well-muscled, sexually appealing male in the western notion, nor a skinny guy in an Asian context either. However, it is worth mentioning that such image of a fine young male body, which does not necessarily fit the image of a normal heavy worker on the street that we perceive everyday, reveals certain female fantasy of a male image of construction workers for the sake of satisfying the audience’s preferences.

Moreover, the dress code and the way he shows his partial nudity have obvious

westernized traces can be seen in image 17. Without showing his face in front of the camera, no one can recognize this stateless body and he can be an utterly perfect model seen in other western commercials for other hardware products where they need strong manhood and masculinity as well. The plumber has an adequately courageous occupation in that his job is somewhat risky and protection is (condom) needed which makes it easier to bring up the correlations of the denotation and connotation of dangerous work and safe sex. In image 16, the actress starts to use the baluster by the street to do warm-ups while the plumber tries to put his helmet on his head and get ready for drilling. Sequentially, from image 17, it can be observed that the plumber starts to pose in professional gesture using two hands when holding the excavator as a symbol which can represent the connotation of phallus in front of his crotch which signifies sexual intercourse. Additionally, the motion of drilling as an icon signifies penetration during intercourse. Immense free imagination from the spectators is here triggered and provoked in that a simple gesture can bring up diverse correlated sexual signs.

The myth of male body aesthetics which this commercial emphasizes is closely related to sex and sexuality from a gender perspective as well as some social judgments and policies in Chinese society. In contemporary Chinese society, the expression for bodies as objects has broken the old phenomena in which the female body is treated as the main object to fulfill satisfaction from male spectators and a new era for enjoying male bodies is prospering. Jin and Wang stated in their article *The Aesthetics and Rationality of Modern Body Culture under the Post-modern Consumption Language Situation* (2006) that more and more men's magazines and TV programme focused on men have emerged in public media due to more females controlling power (including knowledge and social position) and therefore creating a bodily culture vision is moving towards male and female bodies from a female perspective. The gaze does not only broaden meaning of the pure body, but also makes a breakthrough with regards to egalitarian gender relations from a brand new angle.

While talking about bodily aesthetics in China, one way or another, it is an undeniable fact that China is very different from the post-industrial western society. Even though China has developed a lot in many aspects since the implementation of the Reform from 1978 and the affiliation with the WTO, the situation in China varies immensely, geographically, in that pre-modern, modern, and post-modern coexist in different districts which causes them to face that the attention and openness for bodily culture, and bodily aesthetic standards in particular are fairly complex. For instance, the coastal big cities have a more open attitude and tolerance which is closer to western society, however, in the vast villages without Internet and those small towns far away from globalization, the conservative mentality remains and changes rather slower.

Nevertheless, the mass media is affecting and changing the whole of Chinese society. There are two major ideologies for male attractiveness in Chinese media, the same as for women. One is deeply influenced by cultures from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong; the other is significantly influenced by Europe and North America, especially Hollywood. In recent years, role models having Asian-Pacific distinctions have the tendency that the male images are usually more feminine. On contrary, the westernized images are more muscular and masculine.

Since the bodily aesthetics, especially the appreciation for male beauty has been widely discussed above, it is fairly important to mention the history of the development of sexuality in modern China as a significant cultural myth while decoding the masculinity and femininity that appeared in the commercial.

Unlike heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality in China are still facing an awkward situation. In 1997, the Criminal Law of People's Republic of China deleted the article which used to punish homosexual behaviour and in April 20<sup>th</sup> of 2001, the third version of Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders (CCMD-III) removed the item homosexuality as one of the mental disorders. (Hu, Chen, Zhou, 2003)

Although the decriminalization of homosexuality in Chinese society made big progress for both marginal human rights of gay people and was complemented by the legal system, misjudgment and discrimination still exist in society nowadays. The “Do not ask, Do not tell” rule infiltrates the whole gay and heterosexual community. The legal protection for pre-marital cohabitation and marriage for gay people has not been put on table for the government to discuss in public and the law enforcement has not been implemented in the same way as for heterosexuals.

Culturally, it is easier for homosexuals to have a comfortable life in bigger cities than in rural areas. An article from *The Economist* argued that no matter how big breakthrough homosexuals have made, through all sorts of activities declaring their rights or via establishing secret networks for gay people to communicate on the Internet underground.

*Traditional values emphasize conventional family life and the continuation of blood lines. The government, meanwhile, has shown a willingness quietly to tolerate homosexuality, but has failed to do much in the way of providing explicit protection. Tentative legislative proposals to expand gay rights have died swift unnoticed deaths. Always wary of rocking the boat, the government routinely quashes attempts at social-activism and rights promotion. Lawyers and activists advocating gay rights have been harassed, and, though many gay websites are accessible, some are blocked.*

*(Anonymous, 2009)*

Statistically, in 2008, Chinese sociologist Lee Yinhe made an estimate that the gay population had exceeded 48 million in China. (Long, 2008) One way or another, encountering the enormous amount of infectious STDs, especially HIV/AIDS, among homosexuals and bisexuals through unprotected sexual behaviours, the state was forced to pay more attention to gay communities as they would have to facing up to the high risk of the prevalence of the disease if it continued in its the

ignorance. Major official Chinese media such as China Daily and People's Daily started to report on homosexual related content and even featured some in-depth interviews exploring the real life for homosexuals in the past two to three years. Countless gay websites and NGOs have taken on the responsibility for educating in safe sex. It is obvious that the fulfillment of free speech for gay people has been accelerated by the expanded notion of the public sphere the Internet has offered.

The history of the existence of homosexuality has been quite long in China since B.C. 1562, or even earlier according to some unofficial history and it reached its peak in Ming Dynasty around A.D.1573. The social tolerance was actually stronger for homosexuality rather than heterosexuality in that the declamation from Neo-Confucians of sexual repression was aiming at heterosexual women. Yet, with the political and social conventional development until this day, queer topics are more like taboos than heterosexual sex and sexuality from an economical or cultural perspective. Furthermore, it is fairly reasonable that there have been no homosexual- related commercials published on TV yet for China.

Hence, femininity and masculinity are maximated where the act of penetration is emphasized for the legitimate mainstream heterosexual intercourse in the commercial. A healthy, positive, heterosexual oriented image of a man and a woman for sexual purposes is what this commercial needed and can afford in the cultural context.

### 5.2.2 Observers & other objects

After the discussion of the importance of the cultural background for stressing the heterosexual-oriented purposes from the producer we now go back to the commercial scenes. In image 16, for the first time we can observe observers inside the video.



Image 16 and image 17. (From left to right.) TTK LTG Ltd . (2008, March). The Durex Commercial of “Perfect fit”. Image captured by writer on September 25, 2009. Podcast retrieved from <http://www.durex.com.cn/Ad/TVAd.php>

Between images 9 to 17, the spectator might wonder where this story takes place because the location, the street, the architecture, the landmarks, and the road-block are profoundly ambiguous in that they only indicate the scenes are taken in a foreign country or a rather international neighborhood.

Inasmuch as the sign on the road-block is written in English “ROAD CLOSED” in image 17. Furthermore, the road signs in image 18 and image 19 are clearly written in English with extremely vague names such as “St Baynne” and “St Greenwich”. Obviously it is a common sense that most of the road signs in China are written in Chinese and Pinyin, with only some big international cities having road signs which are gradually changing to a bilingual Chinese and English format. The landmarks as a visual mode may serve the purpose that editor and producer intentionally blurred or mixed the spatial and time cognitions of the spectators’, in order to transfer the avant-garde idea of safe sex from a sex commodity to the society without a fixed socialistic context.

Images 18 and 19 narrate the scenes while the plumber is drilling holes into the ground with the excavator and his unfitting helmet keeps falling in front of his eyes

which blocks his sight and makes him have difficulties to keep drilling in the same place. The too-big helmet leads to the accident of holes being made everywhere and the whole ground shakes and trembles. Even the road signs dramatically sway in the air and the scaffolding drops on the ground - a whole big mess and damages are caused. Here, the swaying road signs, the motion of drilling and the falling helmet all serve as the connotation that the misguidance of penetration produces a lot of troubles.

Also, the ground, the earth represents the role of the female body. Van Gulik mentioned in his *Sexual life in Ancient China: A preliminary survey of Chinese sex and society from ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.* (2003, p.37) while he was elaborating *I-Ching* and the basic *Yin Yang* theory, that conventionally in China the earth which cultivates all the plants and vegetables, feeding animals and human beings is like a great mother to all living creatures in the world. Both the ground and the earth take the feminine “Yin” role that in this context, while the excavator signifies a phallus, and the drilling signifies penetration, the ground signifies the vulva. The whole construction work signifies sexual intercourse.



Image 18 and image 19. TTK LTG Ltd . (2008, March). The Durex Commercial of “Perfect fit”. Image captured by writer on September 25, 2009. Podcast retrieved from <http://www.durex.com.cn/Ad/TVAd.php>

In Image 20 and 21, the fire hydrant as a significant key sexual sign is brought out in the scene due to the misconduct of the construction work from the previous images. There are two layers of meanings for it to signify. If we read the fire hydrant as a simple object randomly apparent in the scene, various assumptions of the history of the hydrant can be assumed such as what is the story of the fire hydrant and when was it made etc. However, in this context, the fire hydrant is not just a simple fire hydrant anymore. Meaning is given to it by the producer because no single sign is made for no reason and the order of the signs are always arranged intentionally and consciously. In the commercial, the fire hydrant put in the plot can be decoded as the symbol of the male sex genital and the rushing water coming out of the fire hydrant signifies semen or unsafe sex (which can cause the unexpected pregnancy or STDs). In the binary myth system, the substances of the fire hydrant and the running water are signifying the process of ejaculation as well as putting out a fire which designates the male orgasm. Due to the fierce action which signifies sexual intercourse and high pressure from the mother earth which signifies the female genital, the motion from the fire hydrant as a mode serves the semiotic purpose that it signifies that ejaculation is an inevitable result of sexual intercourse because the function of a fire hydrant is usually for the purpose of extinguishing a fire.

Meanwhile, the signification that “fire” designates in Chinese context is desire, or specifically sexual desire. When the process of ejaculation is accomplished, an orgasm is reached and sexual desire vanishes. They are all fairly ambiguous scenes for a regular audience to glance at on a subway LCD screen, whilst perceiving the information without giving too much extra thought that it could as well be read as a funny story in daily life. Inasmuch as the later plot is disposed in a much more hilarious way that when the high-pressure water coming out of the fire hydrant, it pushes the cars and boxes on the street away like image 24 illustrates where bigger accidents are caused and damages are exaggerated due to the non-fitting helmet.



Image 20 and image 21. TTK LTG Ltd . (2008, March). The Durex Commercial of “Perfect fit”. Image captured by writer on September 25, 2009. Podcast retrieved from <http://www.durex.com.cn/Ad/TVAd.php>

Images 22 and 23 depict the effect from the drilling where the observers that I mentioned before are officially involved. Image 11 shows the Asian faces of the passengers waiting at the bus stop. These passengers include two males and two females. From the denotations of their appearance, including their hair style such as a typical office lady look and the butch haircut of the male passengers (They do not have a punk or hippie hair style; instead, a butch haircut is one of the typical business man looks in China.) and their professional suits, they signify a group of people who are all well dressed and well-educated and probably work in a big corporation which differentiates them from the blue-collar class. Most likely they have a decent income and bourgeois ideology that includes caring about the quality of life including high physical and mental quality. From the description, it can be easily distinguished that the passengers or the observers inside are exactly the major target consuming group. However, this conclusion may have the risk that it narrows too much the target group for condom users in China since Durex’s ideology from the first page of its international official website is “Sex plays a fundamental role in our physical and emotional wellbeing. We believe that a healthy and rewarding sex life should be everyone’s to enjoy. ”

The myth behind this scene mainly concerns consumers' social identities and their sense of belonging, regardless of social status or a certain compatible service of their choices for consumption. Media functions significantly by manipulating or guiding a consumer's ideas on decision-making. Moreover, a person's judgments about realism may simultaneously compare media portrayals to real life and may evaluate the portrayals according to his or her expectations of media. (Barriga, A.C., & Shapiro, A.M., & Jhaveri, R., 2008) Here in this slogan, it is obvious that "everyone" is emphasized while the commercial neutralizes the democratic face of the commodity; instead, elite who might more easily accept the ideology of the commercial and have more independent thoughts about sex and sexuality takes the place and plays a fundamental role for the product. Paradoxically, in the beginning, the meaning of using condoms during sexual intercourse, signified in the plot between the actor and actress is fairly personal, intimate, exclusive and user-specific. Nevertheless, when the observers are added in the scene to be observed by the spectators in front of the screen in public, it makes the meaning public, inclusive, personal and stimulating. The audience in the story is involved in the intimate behaviour and interacts with it by nodding their heads to the rhythm of the drilling. Thus, the feeling of enjoying and at the same time worrying about the unfitting helmet- protection deeply infiltrates everyone's minds in the scene and makes it feel personal, as well as making clear that this issue is public.



Image 22 and image 23. (From left to right.) TTK LTG Ltd . (2008, March). The Durex Commercial of “Perfect fit”. Image captured by writer on September 25, 2009. Podcast retrieved from <http://www.durex.com.cn/Ad/TVAd.php>

On the other hand, the Asian faces of the observers are worth discussing in that this subverts the aim that the producers wanted to distort the location of the scenes to avoid unnecessary discourse about misconducts and violations of certain regulations in a sensitive Chinese cultural context. As it successfully accomplished the purpose, the Asian faces and more fake observers Fuwa –one kind of Chinese mascot as symbols representing happiness on the shelves from the shop windows by the road destroy it. Anyhow, it pulls back people’s attention from mixing the concept of time and space and creates the new assumption for the audience that it might have been in China all the time or maybe not. The confusion and dimness of the intention caused for the spectators becomes the intention from the producer. It signifies the connotation that sex is personal and intimate in any social context; however, when it comes to the public health matter, it is public and closely linked to everyone in the society, including China.

The fire hydrant and the helmet are both denotations for the idea of public safety. When the observers inside play their roles, the intention is the emphasis of general public safety, and this is upgraded to public health specifically where more attention for the prevention of the broader prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other STDs should

be paid.

### 5.2.3 Music

When the whole plot comes to the end, the water destroys the cars as well as public facilities and wets the girl in the face as images 25 and 26 illustrate. The girl is shocked and she closes her eyes and opens her mouth. From image 26 we can distinguish from her grin at the end (the corner of her mouth is slightly raised) that sex is a pleasant experience that girls enjoy very much. Yet, with an unfitting condom, problems may be caused and pleasure might be reduced for each sex partner which makes it reasonable to find themselves comfortable protection to have safe and pleasing sex.

Image 27 puts the commodity inside of the picture to indicate the real signified product and meanings. From which we can observe that words for promotional purposes on the poster are gone, only the characteristics of the product “stylish”, “fit” and “comfortable” are left alone together with the shape of the condom as well as the blue and pink puzzle shaped image behind stressing the idea it wants to convey for “fit”.



Image 24, image 25, image 26 and image 27. (From left to right.) TTK LTG Ltd . (2008, March). The Durex Commercial of “Perfect fit”. Image captured by writer on September 25, 2009. Podcast retrieved from <http://www.durex.com.cn/Ad/TVAd.php>

Moreover, the background music as one distinctive mode in the multimodal case can be substantial for the mood of the commercial. It can be easily recognized as similar as one kind of Latin dance. Generally speaking, Latin dance has the reputation that it needs passion, temptation and cooperation. Especially dance for couples requires a lot of mental connection and communication, afflux of enthusiasm, and mostly importantly, collaboration between the two partners. A successful dance consists of the perfect connection of similar sensations of the music from both of the dancers. Equally, sex which needs both the partners' efforts, requires the same mental connection and collaboration, no matter whether referring to the act or ideology. Safe

sex, as the connotation within the commercial wants to convey, needs both male and female's attention that only if the same cognition of sexual behaviours is conceived with the perfect product, sex can be joyful and healthy which would do no harm for public health either.

## 6. Conclusion

This thesis constructs the relationship between sexuality, social policies, contemporary culture and semiotics through a Chinese Durex condom commercial and by employing semiotic analysis methods. The chosen theory is fundamentally based on the binary construction of meanings of Barthes' *Mythologies* which was built on the linguistic structural sign system developed by de Saussure that when the sign as a totality itself signifies meaning, the meaning together with its denotation constitute a higher level of meaning- myth. This pattern can be expanded and upgraded with multiple strata and the general social meanings as background signification can be seen a myth as a wholeness. The ideology is clearly within the regime of Structuralism which made it necessary for detailed demonstration. Meanwhile, inasmuch as the multimodalities are addressed in this multi-media case, applying the multimodal discourse to the commercial is the most appropriate methodology for the thesis in my understanding.

According to Barthes (1995) from his *Image-Music-Text* in 1977, the relationship between image and text can be either complementary or auxiliary. Equally, the relation between image, text and music for moving images in this vision era, can have the same provision for one intention - transferring the communicative information between the viewers and the visual design. This controversial commercial is made within a specific cultural context. Therefore the following questions were raised "what are the meanings behind the sexual signs, why and how are they designed in that way, did they successfully convey the meaning" etc. Furthermore, the research of the whole analysis is based on these questions. All the sexual denotations were addressed one by one and the connected connotations were elaborated. Since Barthes' *Mythologies* is the main theoretical foundation, a cultural introduction to the brief history of the development of sex and sexuality in China becomes one of the most fundamental elements of the myth. The gender and social policy perspective made the case unique and exceptionally study-worthy. Meanwhile, the myth of bodily aesthetics, sexuality (femininity/masculinity), related state regulations or laws and the new phenomena of the internet, which made a huge impact to real society, construct the whole myth of all the sexual signs which vaguely appeared in the commercial. Additionally, the severe situation of the lack of proper sex education and the wide prevalence of STD/ HIVs has become the biggest

motivation of implementing this research.

Throughout the case study chapter, my hypothesis of applying the theory of mythologies and making the potential connection between the denotation of the sexual signs in the Durex “Perfect Fit” commercial and the significations of gender, social policies, aesthetics, and history have been fulfilled. The interpretations were made based on my knowledge and related studies in the deep social and cultural background embedded in a Chinese context.

During the whole process of the analysis of the Durex commercial, several categories were created by means of different physical existence, modes such as gesture, music, costume and other objects and so on due to their diverse characteristics and usages. Semiotic data from the TV commercial was collected and the distinctive features of various sexual signs of different modes were examined. The significations of the sexual signs are well expatiated according to Chinese contemporary culture, as the theory of mythologies indicates that myths are inverted realities. Because of the intricate cultural phenomenon and district differentiations in China, subtle analyses of ideologies are made. Nevertheless, with the impact of the media and global influence, myth does not only reflect the real phenomena in the society, but also the arrangement of signs and the design of the speech have influence to the spectators as well.

With regards to the purpose of the application for the theory of mythologies, the Chinese censorship for sex related products such as condoms is worth discussing in early chapters on cultural context. Anyhow, the long history of the development of ideologies concerning sex and sexuality from worshipping, being open- minded to being repressed in China, reveals the deeply embedded conventional mentality and the contingency for different historical, economical, political and cultural reasons. Moreover, the prevalence of STDs and HIV/AIDS facilitates necessity for the public discussion of a public health issue. It enlightens the whole society to reach a common cognition for a healthier way of gaining natural sex joy in daily life through using condoms as a globally acknowledged tool for giving the best protection.

In this transitional time, for both China and Chinese citizens, the power of speech and the freedom for criticizing public speech have significant meaning for not only democracy but also for the process of self-cognition as well as the assembled value of

re-creating and constructing the inner self.

In particular, considering the notion of Habermas' (1974) "the public sphere"; he refers to a space where all private individuals can freely deliberate public interests. These indispensable but too ideal opinions can be regarded neither from an economic nor bureaucratic intention. This has been mentioned in the introduction and through the related case analysis. Nonetheless, it is a fact that the information explosion in the era of web 2.0 on the one hand gives users infinite space for imagination and recreation; on the other hand, it endangers the usual hierarchies for education of a comparatively more appropriate knowledge for juveniles who are risking being lost in a blind passion fetishism for information technologies.

From a political aspect, the notion of the public sphere has been enormously expanded to include the Internet. Technological progress has led to demonstrations of private speech within diverse forms in multimedia without the limitations of guarded reality. The disappearance of the commercial in the public space touched the boundary of sensitive censorship, the conventional ideology for mainstream appreciation and the tolerance for bodily aesthetics in the society. Citizens showed their resistance for free speech making by means of possessing the anonymous status as netizens through posting and criticizing the Electronic version of the same commercial shown on the webpage. The discussions and comments for the controversial phenomena raised by the event reflected the immense strike from a newly established notion of "the public sphere" and the urge for re-gaining the power of deliberation from free will to the old constitutional notion for the states in China.

Misguidance and misunderstandings can easily result from the attitude of denial the government showed in front of the media in public. Yet, the harm from blocking the access and acquisition of free information is fairly obvious and fatal no matter whether for the state or for each one of the citizens which gives this thesis a necessity to study the media content as well as the influence it caused, for the whole society. The Durex condom commercial "Perfect fit" touches the bottom line of the normality which the traditional notion of the public sphere tried to set, although on the contrary, it gained more space for individuals to discuss in the virtual world. The commercial successfully presents sexual signs within the realm of conventional aesthetics and ideologies for sex and sexuality which invert social reality. Nevertheless, the strike it made for giving a

public speech under the surface of intentional promotion of the product itself enhanced the power of the influence from the brave ideology pursuing a quality life for individuals via publishing a designed arrangement of signs shown on multimedia.

However, inevitable limitations are apparent when analyzing a modern commercial from the web 2.0 era, when choosing theories from *Mythologies*, since the theory of myth was written in 1957 which was still at an early stage for the whole development of the theories of semiotics. It differs from other schools of thought, such as the North-American Peircean genre whose theory has been applied in this thesis during the process of interpretation of sexual signs - specifically designating meanings from the indexical, symbolic or iconic perspective which I explained in chapter 4.2. Also, the illustration of the cultural background has its imperfections because it is so complex that not every detail or possible reasons are mentioned. The aim of studying sensitive media content is accomplished and the expansion of the range for speech making from individuals is exemplified by the case found on the Internet. The effect the media prompted the development of positive understandings of sexuality for ordinary citizens has been addressed and well demonstrated. The mainstream tendency is still waiting for a further future modifying, though the impact and the controversial arguments it provoked strides a necessary leading step.

Under the consideration of the Chinese cultural context, the form in which the signs are illustrated is less important than why they are arranged in this specific way. It emphasizes the significance of the utilization of the theory of mythologies regarding its focus more on the study of the meanings rather than denotations. Hence, applying other semiotic theories and categorization tools for all kinds of signs that emerged in the commercial, are not necessary. Furthermore, applying the methodology of multimodality gives the case analysis the undeniable advantage that it becomes more dynamic and vivid for the study of the signification behind all the different arrangement/codes of signs. Additionally, it fits more the main idea of Barthes' mythologies in that the myth has been put under a spot light and the distractions from distinguishing multiple modes or new media have been reduced.

There can be further future studies done focusing on the more recent tendency of people's understandings towards sex and sexuality influenced by new cultural phenomena or new technological changes. For instance, while writing this paper, there

was a secret change in people' cognition towards cosmetic surgery in that people's acceptance and tolerance for artificial beauty has been extended and aesthetic appreciation has been slightly distorted. Yet, I cannot cover all these changes and areas in this paper. The extension of the usages of new media technologies including 3G or 4G multimedia applications on all electronic devices and their prevalence in our daily lives in the global village, means more and more interesting or controversial issues are occurring and they will happen more often in this era which leaves us enormous space for future studies.

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## **Appendix : Related laws and social policies in China**

### 1. From the Advertisement Law, Chapter II “Norms for Advertisements” (1995):

*“Article 7: the contents of an advertisement shall be conducive to the physical and mental health of the people, shall promote the quality of commodities and services, protect the legitimate rights and interests of consumers, be in compliance with social morality and professional ethics, and safeguard the dignity and interests of the State.*

*An advertisement shall not involve any of the following circumstances:*

*(1) Using the National Flag, the National Emblem or the National Anthem of the People's Republic of China; (2) Using the names of State organs or their functionaries; (3) Using words such as the State-level, the highest-grade or the best; (4) Hindering social stability or endangering the safety of the person or property, or harming the public interests; (5) Hindering the public order or violating the sound social morals; (6) Having information suggesting pornography, superstition, terror, violence or hideousness; (7) Carrying information of ethnic, racial, religious or sexual discrimination; (8) Hindering the protection of environment or natural resources; or (9) Other circumstances prohibited by laws or administrative rules and regulations.*

*Article 19: An advertisement for foods, alcoholic drinks or cosmetics must meet requirements for public health, and shall not employ medical jargons or terms liable to confuse them with pharmaceuticals.”*

### 2. <Regulations on AIDS Prevention and Treatment> from National Decree, 2006

*“Article 28. The departments of health, population and family planning, industry and commerce, drug administration, quality supervision, inspection and quarantine, Radio, film, and television etc. of the people's governments at the county level or above shall organize the promotion of condom use, shall establish and improve the supply*

*network of condom.*

*Article 29. The public location managers, identified by the people's governments of Provinces, Autonomous Regions, and Municipalities, shall put condom vending machines or other tools for condom distribution in their locations.*

*Article 61. The competent health department of the people's governments at the county level or above shall order a warning and a change within a limited period of time to the manager of public locations, who fails to check the health-certification of the servants or to permit servant without a health certification to provide the serve, and to the manager of public location, who fails to put condom vending machine or distribute condoms in its location which is identified by the people's government at Provinces, Autonomous Regions, or Municipalities. The managers may also be imposed a fine of, not less than 500 RMB and not more than 5000 RMB; when the manager fails to make a change within the limited period of time, the business shall be ordered to stop, and when the circumstance is serious, its business permission or license shall be revoked by its issuing department."*