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The Illusion of Consumer: Ads Influence for Agent of Intelligence

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Abstract
This article will describe the influence pattern from ads, by analyzing the case of an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) namely Aldrich Hazen Ames. Ames was arrested because of selling information to other parties (double agent) to make money. The author assumed that his act was influenced by ads. Therefore, the Jaguar XJ6 Sovereign car ads driven by Ames at arrest were used for sample. The author uses Roland Barthes semiotics theory to explain the denotative and connotative meanings and myth of the Jaguar car ads and then relates to Jean Baudrillard concept. The research used a descriptive approach, that makes systematic, factual, and accurate, characteristics and relationships of the phenomena studied. By using this method, the author analysis and observes signs, and describes every meaning of the ads Jaguar that influenced Ames (an agent of the CIA). The result is that the Jaguar car ads have influenced Ames to become consumers' illusions, which affects consumerist acts. This act drives a high lifestyle (e.g., celebrity, Hollywood) to obtain a social position, status, and prestige (sign value). For Baudrillard, this is a fundamental element in a capitalist society, there is a social and cultural significance in consuming the product which he calls sign value.

Keywords
Semiotics, Intelligence, Consumer Illusions, Consumerist

Introduction
In theory, the presence of intelligence is part of realism which seeks to strengthen national security. According to realists, the state is an integral part of a large system that does not recognize a higher authority than the state, which is called sovereignty. This characteristic system is known as the anarchic nature of world politics or competitive interstate relations. The role of intelligence and every facet of it (e.g., collection, analysis, and production) has played a significant factor in the state. But who would have thought, reality shows that intelligence activities do not always run smoothly. The agent of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for selling hundreds of secret information to the Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (KGB). Aldrich Hazen Ames was arrested for spying in 1994, the CIA counterintelligence officer got $2 million from Russians, starting in 1985 (Powell, 1999). In February 1994, Ames was arrested by the FBI when
driving his Jaguar (Atmojo & Awaludin, 1996).

From the news that Ames was arrested while driving a Jaguar, the author assumes that the ads of the Jaguar car have influenced his act. Based on this assumption, the author has a question, namely how do the ads of Jaguar car influence CIA agent Aldrich Hazen Ames? This article takes Ames’ case as the object and uses the concepts of Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard.

Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) said that sign is divided into signifier and signified. For Saussure signifier is the material aspect and signified is the concept of thought or mentality capture. Barthes said the new concept about signs has denotative and connotative concept. This concept is based on Saussure’s dichotomic structuralism developed by Barthes. Saussure just classified the stage on the sign as denotative, but Barthes developed the connotative concept. Denotative is the first meaning system that conventional agrees. Denotative explained relations with signifier and signified on reality, the result as explicit meaning, direct, and empirical. Connotative is a second-meaning system that is hidden. This stage describes the interactions that occur when the sign meets feelings or emotions. Besides that, Barthes said that in the concept of semiotics there is a myth. Myth is a form of message that is believed to be true but cannot be proven. Myth has an ideology (Sobur, 2016).

Baudrillard in the concept of simulation says that something related to myth cannot be seen as true in reality. Everything can attract human interest such as art, houses, households, and so on through various media with ideal models; this is where the boundaries between simulation and reality get mixed up, creating a hyperreality where what is real and what is not real becomes unclear.

Baudrillard believes that it is through objects that each individual searches out his or her place in an order. The function of commodities, then, is not just to meet individual needs, but also to relate the individual to the social order. Consumption is not just the endpoint of the economic chain that began with production, but a system of exchange, a language in which commodities are goods to think about within a semiotic system that precedes the individual, as does any language. For Baudrillard there is no self-contained individual, there are only ways of using social systems, particularly those of language, goods, and kinship, to relate people differently to the social order and thus to construct the sense of the individual.

**Literature Review**

Baudrillard explored the other perspective in *The System of Objects* (1968) from a neo-Marxist perspective, stating that the possibility of consumption has become the chief basis of the social order (Baudrillard, 1968). He argues that consumer objects constitute a classification system and that they have an effect on structuring behavior. Ads code products through symbols that differentiate them from other products, thereby fitting the object into a series. The object has its effect when it is consumed by transferring its “meaning” to the individual consumer. A potentially infinite play of signs is thus instituted which orders society while providing the individual with an illusory sense of freedom.

There has been a movement away from regarding goods merely as utilities having a use-value and an exchange-value which can be related to some fixed system of human needs. Baudrillard has been particularly important in this context, especially his theorization of the commodity sign. He argues that the commodity has now become a sign in the Saussurian sense, with its meaning arbitrarily determined by its position in a self-referential system of signifiers. Consumption, then, must not be understood as the consumption of use-values, but primarily as the consumption of signs.

A journal article titled “Jean Baudrillard’s Simulacra Theory in the Communication World of Mass Media” said in the current postmodern era, society is known as a society that prioritizes prestige. Contemporary society is bound and inseparable from
technology and has a high awareness of communication. This article looked at major societies, but not specific people.

Regarding this literature, this research has a research proposition that the Jaguar car ads have been creating consumer illusions for Ames and as a result taken all way for making money.

Research Methods

The author uses Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard’s theories. Barthes semiotics theory is based on the dichotomic theory of Saussure. Barthes theory used both denotative and connotative (Rusmana, 2014). For Barthes, denotative has real meaning, and a significant system of first order, while connotative is a significant system of second order. Connotative describes direct interaction while sign meets feelings or emotions and their cultural values. Connotative is subjective, and denotative is objective. Besides that, the semiotics theory of Barthes has myth as a meaning system of second order (see Table 1).

Table 1. Myth Position in Barthes Semiotics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Connotative Sign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Langue (code)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denotative Sign</td>
<td>Connotative Signified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signifier</td>
<td>Signified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Barthes perspective, myth is unreasonable or unspeakable, but communication systems or messages can function to express and provide justification for the dominant values in a certain period. Myths can be changed or destroyed because they were created by people. Myth depends on the context in which it exists. By changing the context, one can change the myth’s effect.

The second concept is Baudrillard’s hyperreality. Simulation is a representation of the original reality and over time experiences reality duplication called simulacrum. So, the authenticity and all of them cannot be distinguished and recognized because they have become a lived reality, especially for today’s postmodern society. This unity of reality is conveyed by Baudrillard as a simulacrum or in its plural form simulacra. Simulacrum is the creation of a real impression that has no reference to the actual reality that occurs so that the result seems to be a kind of second reality or what is also called a simulacrum. Hyperreality is the result of the final process of simulacra and simulacrum in which these concepts are integrated with one another. Hyperreality generates reality from the reproduction of objects with unreal object references so that signs have their own life, separate from reality, and float freely. In short, hyperreality can be interpreted as the inability of people’s awareness to distinguish the real reality from the fake reality in the postmodern era.

The approach used in this text is descriptive, which makes systematic, factual, and accurate descriptions, characteristics, and relationships of the case studied. The author looks at ads’ influence and describes ads Jaguar that influenced Ames (agent of CIA).

Results

Aldrich Hazen Ames, a career CIA officer, spied for nearly 10 years while living in an upper-middle-class house that had been purchased with money received from the KGB. When driving to his CIA office in 1994, he was boxed in after stopping at an intersection a few blocks from his home. Pulled from behind the wheel, he was thrown over the hood of his beloved maroon Jaguar, handcuffed, and arrested see Figure 1 (Wallace & Melton, 2017).
It is known that Ames had driven a 1992 Jaguar XJ6 Sovereign. The data source is taken from the ads of Jaguar car. The Jaguar is a brand of car made in British. Jaguar is one of the most famous marques in motoring, with an illustrious history dating back to the 1920s. The company started building sidecars for motorcycles and even then, the two owners – William Lyons and William Walmsley – had an eye for style and sophistication. The XJ6 series which ran from 1968 to 1992 was one of Jaguar’s most successful cars. One of the most iconic Jaguar cars and even one of the greatest British cars of all time, it was a car that set a very high bar for the luxury car market (Discovery, 2022).

In the Jaguar XJ6 Sovereign ads, the motorcars were designed with the latest technology and all the style, passion, and value that Jaguar had to offer. As people fell in love with them, their reputation grew. In fact, today they are among the most coveted cars in the world (see figure 2).
Ames Case in Barthes Concept

Table 2. Myth in the Ads Jaguar Car

| Car with the brand of Jaguar made in British | Luxury car/Passion/Style/Reputation grew |
| (Sign) | (Signified) |

Denotative meaning: Car with the brand of Jaguar made in British
Connotative meaning: Luxury car/Passion/Style/Reputation grew
Myth: Capitalist economy influences consumerism (see Table 2)

Economic liberalism is most associated with the study of markets. Many liberal values and ideas are the ideological foundation of the globalization campaign. They are derived from notable thinkers such as Adam Smith, David Ricardo, John Maynard Keynes, Friedrich Hayek, and Milton Friedman. The laissez-faire principle, that the state should leave the economy alone, is attributed to Adam Smith (Balaam & Dilman, 2004).

Smith was writing at a time when the production system known as capitalism was replacing feudalism. He was the first to develop a comprehensive portrait of capitalism in The Wealth of Nations, originally published in 1776. What follows is a brief overview of some of the ideals and tenets of capitalism based on Smith’s work – or at least the way many economic liberals today interpret his work.

The five main elements of capitalism are as follows (Balaam & Dilman, 2004). First, markets coordinate society’s economic activities. Second, extensive markets exist for the exchange of land, labor, commodities, and money. Third, competition regulates economic activity; consumer self-interests motivate economic activity. Fourth, freedom of enterprise; individuals are free to start up any new business enterprise without state permission. Fifth, private property; the owner of a resource is legally entitled to the income that flows from the resource.

The first three tenets address the nature and behavior of markets. In the modern market, products and services are commodified – that is, a market price is established for goods and services as a result of producers setting prices for their goods and buyers paying for them.

Under pure market conditions (i.e., the absence of state intervention or social influences), people are assumed to behave “rationally.” That is, they will naturally seek to maximize their gains and limit their losses when producing and selling things. They have strong desires to exchange and generate wealth by competing with others for sales in local and international markets.

In a capitalist economy, self-interest drives individuals to make rational choices
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that best serve their own needs and desires. However, it is a competition that constrains and disciplines self-interest and prevents it from becoming destructive to the interests of others. Under ideal circumstances, producers must compete with others, which forces them to charge reasonable prices and provide quality goods to their customers or lose their business. Consumers also face competition from other consumers who may be willing to pay more for a product (Balaam & Dilman, 2004).

What Smith is most known for, then, is the view that ideally a capitalist economy is self-motivating, self-coordinating, and self-regulating. Consumers determine how resources will be allocated; self-interest motivates entrepreneurs to develop and firms their workers to produce the goods and services consumers desire; the market coordinates economic activity by communicating the ever-changing tastes and preferences of consumers to producers. Producers use ads to communicate their products to consumers.

Ads are one of the media that produces spectacle as products in many signs, images, and meanings. Guy Debord said in Society of the Spectacle that spectacle is “...social relations among peoples that are mediated by image” (Barthes, 1967). Image and spectacle, collectively formulate and control symbolic relations among social groups (social class relations, status, lifestyle). Every person shows their social reality through many spectacle media (objects, fashion). Spectacles are a way of interpreting life or defining the purpose of life.

Ads offer images based on values and society’s morals (good/bad, true/false). Haug said that images were a series of illusions that were injected into commodities, for consumer control, like a drug. Consumers will become “consumer illusions,” namely consumers who provide illusions rather than goods and consume social relations (status, prestige, class, social position) rather than product functions.

Ads are a spectacle system that is mainly in the production-consumption of consumer society. It is a formulated image of a product, and social relations it is hidden (status, prestige, social class). Ads are creating illusions about sensuality, celebrity life, exclusive lifestyle, Hollywood lifestyle, etc. This illusion is called “the space of lifestyle” (Piliang, 2003).

Moreover, ads are a part of the piece from the creation of lifestyle. Ads formulated lifestyle. Lifestyle can be explained as a pattern of mass group characteristics taken time, space, money, and goods. The patterns contain signs and symbolic means, that create differences between one group and another group. Consumption is like a social theatre, where the consumer plays as the actor (lifestyle) on a social stage with many historical themes (Hollywood fantasy, Madonna myth). Ads play a role in naturalizing these themes. The ads will construct society into lifestyle groups. Life was arranged based on theme, image, and symbolic meaning. Every lifestyle group creates a social space, that in a lifestyle construct.

That description shows that Ames has become a consumer of illusions. The Jaguar car ads have been creating illusions about passion/style/luxury/reputation, as a result, Ames has taken it all the way to making money. Money is used for the exclusive lifestyle, Hollywood, celebrities with information selling to other parties (Russians). This lifestyle then gives sign value to pride (status, prestige, class, social position).

Ames Case Relations with Baudrillard Concept

Ames has become a consumer of illusions, creating illusions about the lifestyle that gives social position. According to the myth result, a capitalist economy results in consumerism. Baudrillard highlights the idea that two fundamental elements in a capitalist society, there is social and cultural significance in consuming the product which he calls sign value. He said, “It is a matter of the passage of all values to exchange sign value, under the hegemony of the code.” Baudrillard believes that in the postmodern era, information technology and cybernetics have produced so many
simulations due to their dominance in our lives that we cannot distinguish the original from the copy. Proffering four sorts of simulated images, he asserts that hyperreality is the last kind of simulation in which the sign is no longer related to any external reality. The process of sign exchange in this kind of simulation continues without any reference to reality and hence generates hyperreality. The suffix “hyper” indicates that the simulated images claim to be more important than reality per se.

The common ground between Baudrillard and postmodernism is the concept of “image.” The social effect of images is undeniable and every day we consume simulated images through the internet, television, and different media. These images are tools of power that deviate us from our real image and give us new ones. In the capitalist world, image per se can be considered as considered as consuming goods. Baudrillard deals with this concept in his book The Mirror of Production where he boldly calls the end of modernism and points to the sign value of the objects and states that images have equal or sometimes more value than the product itself, hence, the business of images are more profitable. In the postmodernist world, any realistic event turns into a play or a simulated image.

Baudrillard in Golf War Did Not Take Place pointed to the fact that the rules of war are changed in a way that they are totally different from past war experiences. They are merely reduced to TV screens and images in media channels. “Everything is therefore transposed into the virtual, and we are confronted with a virtual apocalypse, a hegemony ultimately much more dangerous than real apocalypse.” Baudrillard in his book Simulacra and Simulations refers to the fact that these simulations are designed according to no external realities. These rootless, non-referential, unattainable simulations give us new identities and they are designed for specific purposes such as imperialistic or capitalist goals. He said that ideology cannot explain new social development in the postmodern era and dealt with the notion of sign value in addition to the system of production and consumption in a capitalistic society. He maintained that it is impossible to scrutinize capitalism in economic and political contexts alone. Due to the ever-growing notion of simulation, capitalism has sneaked into the cultural texture of society.

Thus, media is not a mere passive tool that has no effect on our social interaction. It is a propelling force that shapes and distorts the crowd’s perceptions. Every moment, people consume simulated images broadcasted by ads (media channels) which deviate us from our real identity and give us new ones. Lifestyles, perceptions of beauty, sex, and citizens’ beliefs are under the direct images that are shown by mass and social media.

According to Baudrillard, capitalism has turned a commodity into a fetishized product. Capitalism introduces information as a commodity and puts emphasis on exchange value rather than the use value. This is the true notion of simulation where signs exchange with other signs in spent happy societies and this chain never stops.

In the postmodern era, society has turned out to be so dependent on models and maps that it is going to lose all contact with reality. Reality itself, paradoxically, has simply started to mirror the model which rules over it. Baudrillard maintains that regarding postmodern reproduction and simulacra, it is no longer an issue of mimicry, duplication, or parody; it is an issue of substituting reality with models. He does not just propose that postmodern society is manufactured, on the grounds that the idea of imitation still requires some feeling of reality against which to recognize the fake. His point, rather, is that due to technology and mass media, we have lost all capacity to comprehend the refinement amongst nature and manmade objects or concepts. To elucidate this point, he contends that there are four phases of simulacra through which gradually reality is replaced by hyperreality. In this hyperreal society, he argues, history gets eradicated, and the notion of apocalypse is a mere illusion due to the
overabundance of hyperreal information and lack of meaning.

This case is about Ames, and he is from America. The social changes in America of the fifties were a decade marked by extraordinary changes in the class structure, particularly in the growth of the white-collar class. Preoccupation with “self” and “status” that has brought to the fore not only psychoanalysis but the mirror of popular sociology.

Discussion

After World War II a new kind of society began to emerge, labeled in several ways depending on the way it is analyzed: consumer society, post-industrial society, society of the spectacle, postmodernist society, etc. An American neo-conservative, Daniel Bell, made a powerful critique some years ago of modernity (Bell, 1976). According to Bell modernist culture had infected the values of everyday life. Because of the forces of modernism, the principle of unlimited self-realization, the demand for authentic self-experience, and the subjectivism of a hyperstimulated sensitivity have come to be dominant. This unleashes hedonistic motives irreconcilable with the discipline of professional life in society.

Bell spoke in his book The End of Ideology (1960) regarding the bankruptcy of ideology that is relevant to today’s conditions. Today the position and role of ideology seem to be being challenged, if not undermined by the zeitgeist called the “global century”. One of the salient features of today’s globalized century is that knowledge and competitive abilities are more valuable than natural resources, and the meaning of sovereignty is becoming more obscure or more diffuse. All of this is clearly mapped out by Anthony Giddens in “Entering the global century” with an emphasis on the role of cosmopolitan values. Thus, ideology or ideologies seem to have begun to lose their claim to absolute control over the organization of values, and individual and societal awareness. It is said that the center of modern societal awareness and civilization is technological perfection to support global market capitalism which is rooted in an "electronic herd" of stocks, securities, anonymous currency trading, and multinational investor groups, connected by screens and networks. In other words, people’s awareness itself has become an "ideology": it is anatomized and disseminated according to physio-economic and electronic terms. The organization of awareness and its dissemination is relevant for further and in-depth studies of what is happening with the coordinates of today’s value system or the meaning of individual subjectivity as an appreciator of values.

The core of ideology in general is a representation of social reality in awareness, where every way of being implies and leaves space for non-knowledge so that its participants/adherents never reach its essence. Meanwhile, for Marx, the processes of formation of consciousness, or superstructure (religion, morals, ideology) and perceptions of value are fundamentally shaped by material or economic conditions (infrastructure).

Conclusion

Today is the era of "imagology" where reality (economy) defeats ideology, and reality is defeated by image. This is the period when commodity goods are shifted by cultural commodities. Information technology and knowledge industries are becoming the basis of mass consumption. Production is no longer for use value but for exchange value. Media communication (audio, video, visual) is at the heart of trade with advertising as the spearhead. People then talk about consumer culture. All things can be produced, and all things can be consumed without limit, as if people were given the freedom to choose what they need and what they do not need to buy. As if everyone is free to interpret a text (films, readings, music, and all things that have been produced).

The ads have an influence (direct or indirect) on perception, understanding, and
belief in people. The product (function, meaning, value) has a distortion element that herding on the pattern of deviant behavior. The negative influence of ads can be overcome with building of information quality, namely increasing objective knowledge about a product. Second, building media literacy by increasing analytical, critical, and selective attitudes towards media attacks. And Third, deepening research about social impact, culture, health, and psychology from the ads.

References