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Writing I Advertisement Analysis Essay Second Submission

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This Is Not an Advertisement: An Artistic Transformation of a Fuel-Efficient Vehicle

When people find the advertisement of Volkswagen promoting its energy efficient vehicle while they are browsing through magazines, they might assume it as an art work because the advertisement has a posh ambience as if it is reminiscent of the works painted by surrealist painter Rene Magritte or Salvador Dali. Surprisingly, however, it is actually an advertisement of Polo Bluemotion, which is known as a fuel-efficient vehicle. The Polo Bluemotion model had the second highest sales record in 2013 which enabled the company to achieve incredibly high rates of growth. The major reason for the popularity of this vehicle was its low consumption of oil. **With the adaptation of surrealistic images along with the signs and symbols, the advertisement underlines the strength of the vehicle with unbelievably low fuel consumption of oil, which represents the breakthrough technology in case of oil depletion.**

**The advertisement contains several denotations that the company designed to proclaim that the vehicle has absurdly low consumption of fuel.** Specifically, an oil tanker inside the glass bottle is located in the middle section. On the left side of the advertisement, a figure of a man in working clothes is holding a lubricator where a spider is dangled with a string of spider web. The amount of sand in the top section of the hourglass issues a warning against the elapse of time. A chessboard in the lower middle part on which the oil casks and oil feeder play a game with the trees catches the eyes of the consumers. A closer looking of the game reveals that the trees are winning the game because they outnumbered the oil cask's team and trapped opposing team's king. Also, on the right hand side, a picture which has a

hole in a car's shape is placed on an easel. In the background, the sky is flecked with many clouds and the blue sea seems to melt into the sky at the horizon. In addition, right beside the company's logo, "Absurdly low consumption. The Polo BlueMotion" is written in white letters at the lower right-hand corner of the advertisement. The overall style of the advertisement that reminds of the art works of surrealist painters, especially Rene Magritte's, is labeled as "parody advertisement" because it parodies the paintings of surrealism. Also, the advertisement is categorized "Tech-art marketing" because of the combination of art work and advertising strategies to enhance the company's brand image.

**The signs and symbols in the advertisement emphasize the salient strength of the car's performance: absurdly low consumption of oil.** Before moving on to the low fuel consumption of the vehicle, the advertisement builds a plot around the impending oil shortage to effectively persuade the customer that the vehicle is an eco-friendly solution to combat the problem. In short, the advertisement says that the exhaustion of oil is imminent and using Volkswagen's vehicle could be a solution. For instance, a rusty oil tanker inside the glass bottle symbolizes the condition where there is no need for transporting oil around the world. Accordingly, an oil tanker is a synecdoche in that it stands for the whole process of carrying oil or worldwide consumption of oil. Additionally, the rustiness of the ship is an index because it implies the relationship between the rust and disuse of the ship that has been left for quite a long time. Plus, the string of the spider web at the end of the lubricator is a symbol and an index that indicates the discontinued consumption of the lubricator for a long time since the world has been running out of oil.

**Along with the forthcoming oil shortage, the chessboard and the game symbolize the possibility a fuel-efficient car is able to alleviate the distress caused by the exhaustion of fuel.** For example, by observing the chessboard, tree's team is ahead because the king of tree's team trapped opposing army's king, which is called "checkmate". Thus, this inference

could lead to the conclusion that the eco-friendly approach will win over the oil consuming machines that caused the problems of oil depletion. In other words, the ongoing game on the chessboard is metonymically related to the comparison or competition between oil usage and the eco-friendly vehicle to defeat the problems. In this structure, an oil feeder, a tree and oil casks could be interpreted as a synecdoche for eco-friendly vehicles and fuel-guzzling machines each because they stand for a whole processes or meaning. Also, the small amount of sand left in the upper section of the hourglass signifies the urgent problem of oil shortage or forecasts the new era of low consumption vehicles that puts an end to the process for pumping gas. In both analyses, the hourglass or the sand left in it is a metonymy because they are metonymically related with the passing of time. The sky and the ocean are not only associated with the mood of bright future as an index but also they could be interpreted as a synecdoche because each of them represents nature. The outer design of the Polo BlueMotion is not clearly depicted in detail, but the image of a car is filled with the image of the sky. Thus, the car portrayed as a part of nature forms a link between its fuel efficient performance and eco-friendly alternatives for current vehicles. In addition, the written letters “Absurdly low consumption. The Polo BlueMotion.” at the corner briefly summarizes the key strength of the vehicle as “low consumption” with the company’s logo to provide information regarding the manufacturer as an index.

**Like the advertisement uses the notion of surrealism such as “absurd” and “dreamlike” to highlight the vehicle’s strength, by parodying the works of surrealist painters, especially Rene Magritte, the advertisement itself is an index of the technical revolution.** To be more specific, as the motivation of surrealism is to liberate the unbridled imagination to realize human being’s full potential beyond reason, the vehicle is the product of revolutionary breakthrough when it comes to combat oil depletion. On the other hand, a painting on the easel implies that the fuel-efficient vehicle is similar to an art work that has

been skillfully made by an artist. Predominantly, Volkswagen's advertisement is constructing the association between the images of the "unrealistic" art work and the unbelievably good performance of the car as the works of surrealist painters are usually considered as a symbol of "unrealistic, absurd, surreal" concepts. Additionally, parodying the works of famed artist not only catches the consumer's attention but also, it shows the common auto mobile advertisement from a novel perspective. In short, the parody advertisement shows familiar products in unfamiliar formats, which contributes to establishing an association with the vehicle and the idea of unprecedented technological innovation.

**Overall, this advertisement invites the images of surrealism to underline the necessity of energy efficient vehicle which is the product of technological revolution to defeat upcoming oil shortage.** Heretofore, an art work and an advertisement represented opposite poles of the cultural styles. Unlike the art works that freely adds and even distorts the images, the advertisement is completed as soon as it resolutely deleted flashy or superfluous rhetoric to straightforwardly promote the product. Recent trend of contemporary art and advertisement, however, reflects the fusion of the two realms. The advertisement approaches the level of a majestic work of art with a keen sense of aesthetic and improving technology while the art works seek ways to engage with the audiences detached from their noble positions. Just like one piece of a painting, a song, or an art work that has fascinated the audience, a single advertisement nowadays strives to take on the aura of an enchanting work of art. In conclusion, the advertisement of Volkswagen not only uses signs and symbols to emphasize Polo BlueMotion's strength, which is low consumption of oil, but also, it develops the idea of "absurdly good" and "surreal innovation" by injecting the art work of surrealism into the parody advertisement.