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Deconstructing Adulthood through Multimodal Representation: A Study of LEGO's Adults Welcome – Flowers Advertisement

Senja Aprela Agustin [1], Christabel Annora Paramita Parung[2], Atsilia Hasna Nabilah[3]

[1]Visual Communication Design, Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember, Surabaya
[2]Product Design, Universitas Surabaya, Surabaya
[3]Visual Communication Design, Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember, Surabaya

E-mail: senjaaprelaagustin@gmail.com, christabelapp@gmail.com, atsilia@its.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Adulthood is commonly associated with rationality, productivity, and self-control, whereas play is often associated with childhood. Examining this distinction reveals how advertising navigates the tension between playfulness and the normative expectations associated with adulthood. Although previous studies have explored LEGO fandom, brand communities, and consumer engagement, less attention has been given to how multimodal advertising represents and destabilizes conventional meanings of adulthood. This study examines the representation and deconstruction of adulthood in LEGO's Adults Welcome – Flowers advertisement through an interpretive qualitative approach. Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's representational, interactive, and compositional metafunctions, combined with a deconstructive reading, the analysis investigates the relationships among visual, verbal, auditory, and gestural modes. The findings reveal tensions between optimistic narration and visuals depicting chaos, clumsiness, and emotional instability. Centred on Bryce, the advertisement traces a narrative progression from chaos through flow to resolution, depicting how LEGO building offers a moment of absorption amid everyday tension. These multimodal tensions destabilize binary oppositions such as child/adult, play/work, and stable/chaotic, positioning play as a potential practice of adult emotional regulation. Retro aesthetics further connect childhood memories with adult consumer culture. This study contributes to multimodal communication and visual culture scholarship by showing how audiovisual advertising simultaneously reproduces and destabilizes conventional meanings of adulthood through the interplay of narrative, visual representation, and cultural associations of play

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INTRODUCTION

LEGO originated as a toy company founded by Ole Kirk Christiansen in 1932 and developed its interlocking brick system in 1949. Mazzarella and Hains (2019) describe how The LEGO Group has expanded its brand from traditional building-block toys into a multimedia and multi-experiential phenomenon encompassing theme parks, retail stores, video games, board games, movies, television shows, books, magazines, and LEGO wear. Previous studies show that LEGO increasingly functions as a cultural and experiential medium for adult consumers. Zhou (2023) examines LEGO's "story making and telling" strategy as a marketing approach that fosters emotional resonance and consumer identification, alongside a bilateral relationship model between the company and its customers. Ardley et al. (2019), through a *netnographic* study of eight Facebook communities of Adult Fans of LEGO (AFOLs), propose a brand culture typology comprising four elements: symbolic representation of self, story iteration, brand curation, and expressive network solidarity. Wang, Zou, and Hou (2025) find that community belonging partly explains how user value co-creation builds LEGO brand loyalty, while mind-flow experience strengthens this relationship. Together, these studies highlight consumers' active roles in producing and circulating brand meanings.

Nostalgia plays a significant role in LEGO's brand culture. Lubiński (2020) examines the relationship between nostalgia-based advertising, consumer loyalty, and brand equity, highlighting the role of childhood brand experiences and the positive influence of consumer nostalgia on LEGO's brand equity. Heljakka (2013) challenges the view of toys as objects primarily associated with childhood, highlighting adults' growing engagement with toys as creative, visual, material, and communicative artefacts across physical and digital environments. This perspective provides a broader context for understanding LEGO as a site of intergenerational play. While LEGO studies have focused on fandom, consumption, and brand communities, how advertising constructs adulthood remains underexplored. This study examines how LEGO's adult-oriented advertising positions play against conventional expectations of rationality, productivity, responsibility, and emotional control, revealing and questioning cultural meanings of adulthood.

To examine how these meanings are constructed, this study draws on visual culture and the representation of the body. Drawing on Mirzoeff (1999), visual culture provides a framework for examining how meaning is constructed and contested through visual representation and everyday encounters with visual media. From this perspective, audiovisual advertising can be examined not merely as a means of promoting products, but also as a cultural site where meanings of adulthood and play are represented and negotiated. Bodily representation likewise functions as a site for producing social and cultural meaning. Agustin et al. (2024) demonstrate how visual media construct bodily representations through signs and binary oppositions associated with social and cultural identities. In advertising, bodily gestures, facial expressions, and physical actions can communicate cultural values and negotiate social expectations. This perspective provides a basis for examining how audiovisual advertising represents adulthood through bodily expression and culturally established meanings of play.

Drawing on Derrida's (1976) deconstructive approach, this study examines how binary oppositions such as child/adult and play/work structure meaning and how their apparent stability and hierarchy are destabilized through audiovisual representation. Chandler (2007) argues that signs and cultural meanings can become naturalized through visual representation. Semiotics denaturalizes signs by revealing apparently self-evident

meanings as social and cultural constructions. Chandler also notes that binary oppositions organize cultural sign systems. A deconstructive perspective therefore provides a critical approach to examining how binary oppositions organize meaning in the LEGO advertisement. Rather than treating categories as fixed, it foregrounds the relational tensions through which adulthood is constructed and negotiated in audiovisual advertising.

Audiovisual advertising is a visual-cultural text shaping identities and social relations through images, sound, and narrative. LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* campaign thus functions both as product promotion and as a site for representing meanings of adulthood. It is particularly significant because it explicitly targets adult audiences. As shown in Figure 1 and the official catalogue (2024), the campaign positions LEGO as a focused, mindful, and emotionally restorative activity for adults. Phrases such as "find your flow" and "creative recharge" frame LEGO as a medium for relaxation, self-regulation, and adult identity formation. This positioning provides a productive point of comparison with the advertisement's depiction of Bryce's everyday disorder, bodily vulnerability, and attempts to regain composure through play.

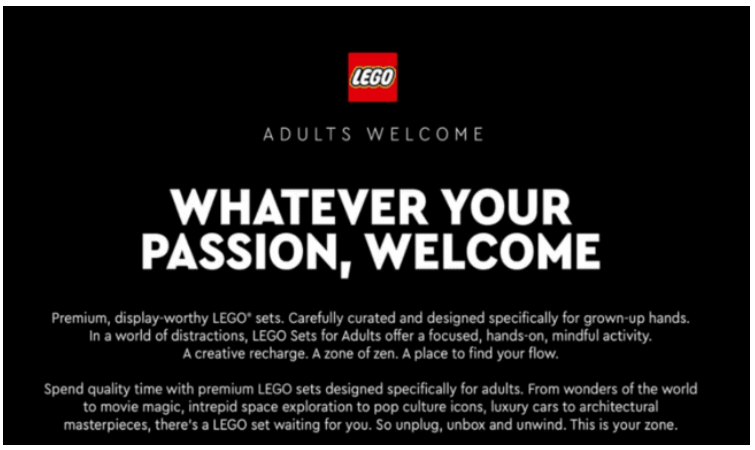


Figure 1. LEGO's statement in its official catalog indicates that LEGO *Adults Welcome* is a product line designed for adult consumers.
(Source: LEGO *Adults Welcome* Catalogue, October 2024).

LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* advertisement portrays Bryce, an office worker who encounters a series of minor mishaps throughout his workday. Although the voice-over maintains an optimistic, affirmative tone, it contrasts with visuals depicting failure, clumsiness, and frustration, producing multimodal tension. The advertisement constructs meaning through visual, verbal, sonic, and gestural modes. Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) conceptualize multimodal communication as semiotic modes representing the world, establishing relations, and organizing socio-cultural meaning. Adapting Halliday's *metafunctional* framework, Kress and van Leeuwen identify three interconnected dimensions of meaning-making, namely representational, interactive, and compositional meanings. Kress (2010) likewise treats images, writing, music, movement, speech, sound, and objects as socially shaped semiotic resources. The advertisement's modes construct adulthood through tension rather than unity: the affirmative voice-over contrasts with Bryce's vulnerability, failures, and disorder, destabilizing normative expectations of adulthood.

The relationship between multimodality and deconstruction is central to this study. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2021) framework enables analysis of how semiotic modes

organize and communicate meaning, while Derrida's (1976) discussion of binary oppositions provides a basis for questioning the stability of seemingly opposing categories. This study examines how the advertisement constructs and unsettles distinctions such as adulthood/childhood, work/play, and control/chaos through interactions among modes. The contradiction between voice-over and visual representation is therefore examined not merely as an advertising technique but as a site where cultural assumptions about adulthood become visible and open to critical examination. Through this combined perspective, the study examines how the advertisement constructs adulthood through tensions that appear to contradict it. Accordingly, it addresses two research questions: (1) How is adulthood represented through visual, verbal, audio, and gestural modes in LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* advertisement? and (2) How do multimodal tensions and binary oppositions contribute to the deconstruction of conventional meanings of adulthood in this advertisement?

This study examines how multimodal interactions in LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* advertisement represent adulthood and how contradiction and deconstruction unsettle conventional meanings. It contributes to multimodal and visual culture studies by integrating Kress and van Leeuwen's framework with deconstructive perspectives, while offering insights into how nostalgia, bodily experience, and emotion shape the communication of play in adult-oriented branding.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs an interpretive qualitative approach and multimodal analysis to examine how LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* advertisement represents and negotiates adulthood through interactions among visual, verbal, audio, and gestural modes. The 45-second advertisement, published on LEGO's official YouTube channel in 2021, was purposively selected because of its adult-oriented focus and contrasting representations of control and everyday disorder. Data were collected through repeated viewing and frame capture, focusing on narration, bodily gestures, facial expressions, camera angles, visual composition, and background music.

Frames were selected based on narrative transitions, changes in visual composition, camera perspective and framing, bodily gestures and facial expressions, intermodal interactions, and their relevance to the representation of adulthood. Frames depicting the same narrative event or multimodal configuration were grouped into a single analytical scene. Visual analysis draws on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2021) three *metafunctions*: representational, interactive, and compositional. The representational *metafunction* examines participants, actions, objects, and circumstances; the interactive *metafunction* examines contact, social distance, attitude, camera perspective, and framing; and the compositional *metafunction* examines information value, salience, framing, and visual hierarchy. These *metafunctions* guide the visual analysis, while relationships among visual, verbal, audio, and gestural modes are examined to identify patterns of reinforcement, complementarity, and contradiction.

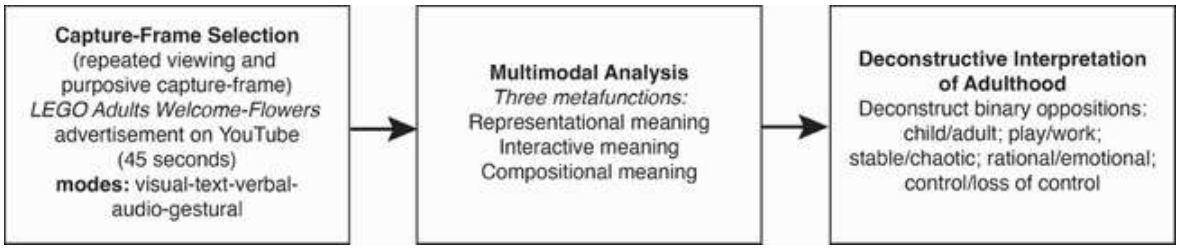


Figure 2. Analytical procedure for multimodal analysis and deconstructive interpretation of LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* advertisement.

The analytical procedure comprised three stages: **(1)** repeatedly viewing the advertisement and capturing relevant scenes; **(2)** analyzing the selected scenes using Kress and van Leeuwen's three *metafunctions*—representational, interactive, and compositional—and examining relations among visual, verbal, audio, and gestural modes; and **(3)** interpreting these multimodal relations through deconstruction. Drawing on Derrida's approach to deconstruction, as discussed by Haryatmoko (2016), the analysis examined binary oppositions underlying cultural meanings of adulthood, including child/adult, play/work, stable/chaotic, and rational/emotional. It explored how the advertisement reproduced, destabilized, or complicated these oppositions. Interpretations were based on identifiable audiovisual evidence. The official *LEGO Adults Welcome Catalogue* (2024) provided contextual information about LEGO's positioning toward adult consumers but was not treated as a primary unit of analysis.

DISCUSSION

Multimodal Analysis of the LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* Advertisement

The analysis of the LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* advertisement demonstrates that meaning is constructed through multimodal interactions involving visual, verbal, audio, and gestural elements, which frequently produce contradictions across modes. The structure of the advertisement follows Bryce's journey from a series of chaotic everyday experiences toward a state of relaxation achieved through building LEGO, thereby constructing a narrative transition from chaos to flow.

Representational Meaning

Representational meaning refers to relations among participants, processes, and circumstances. In multimodal analysis (2021), design is understood as a system that represents active relationships: participants function as represented elements (human beings, objects, or concepts), processes refer to actions or events taking place, and circumstances indicate the contextual settings in which those actions occur. Bryce functions as the primary participant and actor representing an adult white-collar worker. His shirt, suit, trousers, tie, and formal shoes function as signifiers whose meanings are shaped by cultural conventions. Applying Barthes's (1968) account of signification, these clothing elements can be interpreted as signifying professionalism and an office-based occupational identity within the advertisement. This interpretation is reinforced by the office setting and Bryce's activities. Meanwhile, everyday objects such as bedsheets, spoons, pens, cars, and printers function as non-human actors that trigger a series of actions and events leading toward particular outcomes. The circumstances are represented through domestic and professional spaces—bedroom, kitchen, street, and office—which serve as the settings for the protagonist's activities.

The retro atmosphere of the LEGO advertisement is constructed through warm lighting, dominant brownish tones, grain textures, and image qualities resembling classical analog films. Kodak explains that tungsten film possesses spectral characteristics dominated by red and yellow energy, producing the warm and cinematic visual impression now commonly recognized as the analog "movie look" (Eastman Kodak Company, 2007). In addition, the emulsion structure of analog film generates distinctive grain and texture effects that differentiate it from excessively clean and sharp digital imagery. These visual characteristics reinforce a sense of past temporality and function as markers of nostalgia within contemporary visual culture.

From the perspective of Kress and van Leeuwen (2021), these visuals function symbolically in constructing a nostalgic and affective atmosphere. This corresponds with Sielke's concept of retro aesthetics (2017), in which past visual styles are reproduced to generate nostalgic effects within contemporary visual culture. This visual nostalgia is also relevant to the AFOL (Adult Fans of LEGO) phenomenon discussed by Jennings (2019), which suggests that LEGO is no longer understood only as a children's toy, but also as a medium of emotional attachment and cultural memory for adults. Thus, the retro aesthetic does more than reproduce a visual style of the past; it connects the memory of childhood play with the present identity of adult consumers. Nostalgia becomes a bridge between childhood experience and contemporary adult consumption, allowing LEGO to reposition play as something that remains culturally and emotionally relevant in adulthood.

From 0:00 to 0:11, the opening scene portrays Bryce struggling to arrange his bedsheets with frustration, despite the voice-over narration stating that *"fresh sheets make him feel at ease."* This contrast between the verbal narration emphasizing calmness and the visual depiction of failure establishes irony from the outset through intermodal contradiction. This ironic pattern continues during the breakfast scene, in which Bryce's spoon sinks into the soup while the narration claims that he can *"connect body and mind,"* followed by a scene where leaking pen ink stains his shirt pocket, accompanied by the phrase *"spotless mind."* In the following sequence (0:12 to 0:0:23), the series of misfortunes continues as seen in Figure 3 below, stepping on chewing gum on the sidewalk, detached car mirror, and finally a falling printer, while the voice-over repeatedly delivers affirming phrases such as *"aware of all that lies ahead"* and *"keep him on track."* These voice-over narrations consistently maintain an image of adulthood as controlled and orderly, although the visual events reveal the opposite.

The contradiction is therefore not merely humorous; it places two competing constructions of adulthood within the same audiovisual text. The voice-over associates adulthood with control, awareness, productivity, and emotional stability, whereas the visual mode repeatedly presents vulnerability, failure, disorder, and loss of control. In this sense, the advertisement unsettles the binary opposition between stable/chaotic and rational/emotional, because the supposedly "adult" subject is simultaneously represented through both conditions.

At 0:24 to 0:28, the tension reaches its climax when Bryce loses emotional control and throws a flower vase that accidentally hits a cat in the kitchen *("never loses control… well almost")*, marking a turning point toward the narrative resolution. The multimodal irony consequently becomes a mechanism through which the meaning of adulthood is reconsidered. Rather than presenting adulthood as the opposite of childhood or play, the advertisement makes vulnerability, failure, and play part of the adult experience itself. The opposition between work/play is similarly destabilized, although Bryce begins within the disciplined environment of professional and domestic routines, the LEGO activity becomes

the means through which he regains focus and emotional balance. Play is therefore not positioned outside adulthood but incorporated into its everyday practices.



Figure 3. Screenshots from the LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* (0:00–0:28) show Bryce experiencing a series of chaotic everyday events, including struggling to make the bed, leaking ink, stepping on chewing gum, printer malfunction, and emotional frustration. These scenes are contrasted with a calm and positive voice-over narration, creating multimodal irony.
(Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_QDjbAgTpw)

Referring to the representational meaning proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2021), the scene in which Bryce assembles LEGO demonstrates not only an actional process, but also a reactive process. Bryce's gaze, intensely focused on the LEGO bricks, forms a visual vector that establishes a reactional process. In this context, Bryce functions as the *reactor*, namely the participant who responds, while the LEGO bricks become the *phenomenon*, or the object toward which attention is directed. His increasingly relaxed and concentrated facial expressions indicate that this response extends beyond mere observation, reflecting mental and emotional engagement that reinforces the transition from chaos toward a state of focus and flow.

In the floating-body scene (0:29–0:35; see Figure 4), the climax is represented through the metaphorical floating-body scene accompanied by the voice-over narration *"find your flow,"* which signifies the release of mental burdens and the attainment of a flow state, while simultaneously positioning LEGO as a medium for restoring balance between mind and body. The interaction between the visual mode and the voice-over narration emphasizes that this activity is not only 'play', but a way of coping with the pressures of everyday life. This representational meaning aligns with the official statement of the LEGO Group (2024), which describes the "Adults Welcome" series as sets designed for focused,

mindful activities, as well as spaces for creative recharge and opportunities to "find your flow" amid the distractions of adult life.

This floating scene may also be understood through Paul Schrader's concept of *transcendental style* (1972), which defines transcendence as an experience that exceeds ordinary reality through cinematic devices such as rhythm, composition, and lighting, rather than solely through religious themes. In this scene, the slowed rhythm, dark background, and concentrated lighting create a visual condition detached from everyday reality, allowing Bryce's body to function as a medium for this unreal experience. Thus, transcendence is domesticated into a psychological experience associated with flow and relaxation in everyday life. The floating scene itself is therefore not realistic, but imaginary.



Figure 4. A scene depicting Bryce floating immediately after successfully assembling the first LEGO piece, representing a psychological experience of *flow* and relaxation after experiencing a series of misfortunes throughout the day.
(Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_QDjbAgTpw)

In addition to functioning as a narrative structure, the advertisement also constructs conceptual meaning that LEGO is no longer a children's toy only but as a medium that enables focus, calmness, and self-control. At the representational level, LEGO therefore functions as a symbol of order and an alternative space offering stability amid the uncertainty and chaos of everyday life. However, this stability does not simply restore the binary between chaos and order. Instead, the advertisement suggests that order can be achieved through an activity culturally associated with childhood play. The adult subject therefore regains control not by suppressing play, but by entering it.

The floating body, with its apparent lightness and vertical elevation, recalls a longstanding visual convention in Western visual culture, historically associated with transcendence, as seen in Renaissance paintings depicting the Ascension of Jesus by Raphael and Rembrandt (Figure 5). Rather than implying direct references to these paintings, the resemblance highlights the persistence of this visual convention across historical and contemporary contexts. In the advertisement, this convention is recontextualized through Bryce's levitation to portray his experience of flow through LEGO play, potentially parodically juxtaposing spiritual transcendence with everyday relaxation. Rather than portraying adults as rational subjects who have outgrown play, the

advertisement presents play as a means of restoration and reconnection with childhood memories. Through retro aesthetics and nostalgia, LEGO is repositioned from a childhood toy into a cultural and emotional resource for adult relaxation and reconnection with the past.



Figure 5. Representations of Bodily Elevation in Religious Painting: Raphael's *The Transfiguration* (1516–1520) and Rembrandt's *The Ascension* (c. 1636). (Sources: https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berkas:Transfiguration_Raphael.jpg and https://scotland.op.org/painting-the-ascension-rembrandt/)

Interactive Meaning

Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) identify three dimensions of interactive meaning, *contact*, *social distance*, and *attitude*. In this advertisement, contact functions as an *offer* rather than a *demand*, as the protagonist does not directly gaze at the camera, allowing viewers to observe his experiences. Social distance is constructed through framing, ranging from close-up (head and shoulders) and medium shot (waist-up) to medium long shot (full body) and long shot (body within the environment). These variations in framing establish different relationships between the represented participants and viewers. Social distance is determined by the proximity of the camera to the participant, and in this LEGO advertisement, it dynamically follows the narrative progression. In the opening sequences, the use of medium shots, medium long shots, and long shots creates greater distance, positioning viewers as observers of Bryce's series of misfortunes across different settings. In contrast, at 0:29 to 0:31, when Bryce begins assembling LEGO, the camera shifts to close-up shots of his hands, face, and the LEGO pieces, reducing social distance, fostering emotional intimacy, and inviting viewers into a more personal experience of concentration and flow. In the floating scene, the long-shot framing presents Bryce's state of mindfulness and happiness after completing his LEGO construction. The shift from observational distance to intimacy therefore parallels the movement from everyday chaos toward emotional restoration, positioning LEGO play as an experience that viewers are invited to share rather than merely observe.

In LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* advertisement, *attitude* is constructed through camera perspectives that regulate viewer involvement. Early scenes use oblique angles and bird's-eye views, particularly during breakfast, positioning viewers as detached observers of Bryce's chaotic condition. When he begins assembling LEGO, close-up shots of his hands, face, and LEGO pieces reduce social distance and foster emotional intimacy. This shift invites viewers to engage more closely with his concentration and experience of flow (Figure 6). This visual shift moves viewers from observing Bryce at a distance toward a more intimate engagement with his play experience. Eye-level angles position him on equal footing with viewers, while closer framing during LEGO building strengthens emotional intimacy. In contrast, elevated framing in the floating sequence conveys a heightened psychological state associated with flow. The advertisement's interactive meaning thus shifts from observational distance to intimacy, and from everyday experience to an intensified psychological experience.



Figure 6. A scene (at 0:29 to 0:31) depicting Bryce reaching for and assembling the LEGO *Flower Bouquet* set in close-up shot.
(Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_QDjbAgTpw)

Compositional Meaning

Compositional meaning functions to connect representational and interactive meanings through three main systems, namely *information value*, *framing*, and *salience* (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2021). The information value within this advertisement demonstrates a tendency toward a triptych compositional structure that divides the narrative into three stages: (1) the initial chaotic condition (*given*), (2) the transitional moment when Bryce begins assembling LEGO (*mediator*), and (3) the final state of calmness and focus (*new*). In terms of vertical composition (*ideal–real*), the floating scene may be interpreted as representing an idealized and desired mental condition, while the act of building LEGO functions as the concrete action situated within the *real* level below. As shown in Figure 7, the floating-body scene (at 0:31 to 0:35) employs concentrated lighting, spatial isolation, and vertical elevation to emphasize salience and symbolize Bryce's transition into a state of flow and psychological release. Thus, composition not only organizes the scenes but also directs meaning from everyday reality toward an ideal psychological state.



Figure 7. Bryce appears solemn and joyful after assembling a LEGO flower piece, floating above his chair accompanied by choral church music (at 0:31 to 0:35). The scene emphasizes salience through warm lighting and a blurred background.
(Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_QDjbAgTpw)

Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) distinguish connected and disconnected framing. In the advertisement, connected framing emerges through recurring orange, red, brown, and blue tones across Bryce's clothing, furniture, and interior settings. The voice-over's consistent tone also creates continuity, contrasting with the changing events depicted onscreen. This connected framing is built through visual rhythm generated by the repetition of warm color tones, subtle grain textures, tungsten lighting, and soft image transitions that resemble the characteristics of classical analog film. Kodak explains that tungsten lighting at 3200K is dominated by long wavelengths that produce warm and cinematic visual qualities, while the structure of analog film creates distinctive graininess within visual imagery (Eastman Kodak Company, 2007).

Similarly, the repeated appearance of red objects throughout the advertisement emphasizes the red associated with the LEGO logo identity (see Figure 8). This corresponds with Slade-Brooking's (2016) argument that logos function as highly effective devices formed through combinations of shapes, colors, symbols, and lettering that communicate the values, qualities, and promises offered by a product or service provider. Red in this advertisement functions as a strategy reinforcing LEGO's association with creativity and nostalgic play experiences. The visual continuity is particularly significant because it links the adult protagonist's present experience with an aesthetic associated with the past, reinforcing nostalgia as part of the advertisement's construction of adult play.



Figure 8. The LEGO logo, featuring its distinctive logotype and red color scheme. Red also appears repeatedly in various objects throughout the LEGO *Adults Welcome – Flower* advertisement.
(Source: www.lego.com).

In the floating scene (Figure 7), disconnected framing (*disconnection*) signifies separation from reality and operates together with *salience* to direct visual attention. Bryce's body, elevated from the floor, creates a sense of detachment from the surrounding environment (*disconnection*), while at the same time emphasized as the central point of attention through brighter and concentrated lighting, slow motion, and calming choral background music, all of which reinforce the emotional visual climax. The simplified background and minimal visual details reduce distraction, thereby intensifying the contrast between Bryce's figure and the surrounding space. Accordingly, *disconnection* functions as a strategy for isolating the subject, while *salience* emphasizes the significance of the moment, positioning the condition of flow as the core visual meaning of the scene. In the following sequence (0:36–0:41), the advertisement highlights the LEGO constructions completed by Bryce (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. After the floating scene, at 0:36–0:41 Bryce continues assembling the LEGO set and remains immersed in a state of *flow* throughout the activity.
(Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_QDjbAgTpw)

In the final sequence (0:43–0:45; Figure 10), the symmetrical composition, centralized LEGO logo, and black background direct visual attention toward the brand identity. The phrase "Adults Welcome" and product displays featuring city sets, bonsai, flowers, shoes, and the Taj Mahal reinforce LEGO's relevance across age groups. The closing narration, "Build with LEGO bricks," unifies the message by positioning building as a response to everyday pressures. The completed LEGO flowers and product displays provide compositional closure, emphasizing creativity, relaxation, and adult self-regulation. The transition from chaotic everyday scenes to a centred, symmetrical brand composition visually resolves the earlier instability. However, this resolution emerges through play rather than the restoration of complete control. Play and adulthood are therefore presented as complementary rather than mutually exclusive, challenging the conventional assumption that play belongs exclusively to childhood.



Figure 10. The final scene shows Bryce completing the LEGO *Flower* set, followed by the LEGO logo, the phrase "Adults Welcome," and several LEGO product lines representing the *Adults Welcome* series.
(Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_QDjbAgTpw)

Overall, the analysis demonstrates how visual, gestural, and audio modes construct and negotiate meanings of adulthood through multimodal relationships. The contrast between bodily vulnerability and idealized verbal messages, alongside the transition from everyday chaos to *flow*, challenges conventional assumptions that adulthood requires constant control and that play belongs exclusively to childhood. Table 1 synthesizes these findings through Kress and van Leeuwen's three *metafunctions*, providing a basis for examining how the advertisement reproduces and destabilizes normative meanings of adulthood.

Table 1 Multimodal *Metafunctions* in the Deconstruction of Adulthood in the LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* Advertisement.

Modes	**Representational Meaning**	**Interactive Meaning**	**Compositional Meaning**	**Adulthood Deconstruction**
Visual Modes	Chaotic adult routines are represented through scenes of frustration, clumsiness, and emotional instability. Opening and assembling LEGO represents Bryce's transition toward happiness, focus, and metaphorical *flow*.	Eye-level and bird's-eye-view shots create intimacy while emphasizing Bryce's vulnerability. Close-up shots strengthen emotional focus, while long shots highlight Bryce's floating body and the significance of LEGO.	Organized in a triptych structure moving from chaos to *flow*. Warm visual rhythms and soft cinematic transitions create connected framing, while salience, slow motion, and disconnection framing emphasize Bryce's symbolic transition toward an idealized mental state.	The adult body appears fragile and unstable, as the ideal of controlled adulthood is disrupted through scenes of failure.

Gestural Modes	Clumsy gestures and frustrated facial expressions represent the pressures of adult life.	Facial expressions and bodily movements, particularly the absence of direct gaze toward the camera, function as an *offer* that invites audience empathy and emotional closeness.	The most salient aspect is the transformation of bodily gestures from tense to focused to light (floating), which becomes the visual climax.	The body shifts from control to disorder and ultimately toward liberation (*flow*).
Audio Modes (*Voice-over narration and background music*)	Idealized adulthood is constructed through voice-over narration that contrasts with chaotic visual scenes of frustration and failure. During the LEGO-building sequence, narration such as "everything clicks" and "find your flow" aligns with calmer visuals, culminating in the closing slogan "Build with LEGO bricks."	Viewers recognize contradictions between Bryce's chaotic visuals and idealized narration, while phrases such as "find your flow" and "Build with LEGO bricks" directly engage the audience during calmer LEGO-building sequences.	Contradictions between narration and visuals create multimodal irony, while slogans such as "find your flow" unify the overall meaning. Background music gradually shifts from tense to harmonious, reinforcing Bryce's transition toward *flow*, especially during the floating scene accompanied by choir-like music.	Language constructs the myth of stable adulthood, while contradictions between verbal and visual modes open new meanings of play as self-regulation.

Deconstructing Adult Embodiment and Play in LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* Advertisement

LEGO's *Adults Welcome* campaign specifically targets adult audiences, although the brand has long maintained a multigenerational fan base. As a sociocultural text, the advertisement constructs subjectivity through signs circulating within social systems. Piliang (2003) argues that signification commonly operates through binary oppositions. However, the advertisement blurs distinctions such as child/adult by presenting play as meaningful beyond childhood. Other oppositions, including play/work, joy/frustration,

leisure/busyness, and domestic/public, become fluid and overlapping. While previous studies examine LEGO brand culture through adult fan communities, storytelling, and consumer engagement (Ardley et al., 2019; Zhou, 2023; Wang, Zou, & Hou, 2025), this study investigates how adult play is constructed through multimodal representations in the advertisement.

This blurring of boundaries extends to masculinity and femininity. In the advertisement, Bryce, a male character, assembles LEGO flowers, reframing an activity conventionally associated with femininity. The flower arrangement may also evoke affection and domesticity, traditionally coded as feminine. Similar reversals appear in other *Adults Welcome* advertisements, where female characters assemble Adidas sneakers. Through these representations, LEGO challenges established gendered systems of signification while blurring distinctions between childhood and adulthood. Although preferences for particular LEGO series may remain shaped by gender norms and hegemonic expectations, the advertisements offer alternative possibilities for interpreting gendered activities and objects. This reading resonates with Williamson's (2007) argument that advertisements do not exist independently but operate through meanings continually reconstructed in subjects' minds across time and space. Audiences are therefore not merely passive recipients of advertising signs; they actively negotiate and produce meanings through their own cultural experiences and interpretive positions.

The LEGO advertisement simultaneously constructs a new identity for adult LEGO players, even though its narrative suggests that adults are "returning to play" as they did during childhood. In this context, the identity of adult LEGO players is not understood as fixed or stable, but rather as an identity continuously moving between past and present. This question of identity becomes particularly significant when related to Martin Heidegger's concept, as discussed by Piliang (2008), which understands identity and difference as a *step back*; a movement of returning to and dialoguing with the legacy of the past to rediscover foundations for thought that constantly shifts and transforms. In this sense, the differentiation of various LEGO product series presents LEGO as a timeless form of play that transcends age boundaries. Similarly, Gaarder (1998) argues that the LEGO interlocking brick system enables old forms to be dismantled into their smallest parts and continuously transformed into new forms that are never fully complete. In this study, children who once played with LEGO during childhood may return to LEGO in adulthood, making LEGO a metaphor for identity as both continuity and repetition through ongoing transformation.

The deconstruction of adulthood is further reinforced through the advertisement's retro aesthetics and nostalgic visual language, which connect childhood memories with contemporary adult consumption. While Lubiński (2020) examines nostalgia in advertising through consumer memory, emotional attachment, and brand loyalty, this study focuses on how nostalgia operates through visual and narrative resources. Nostalgia thus becomes more than an aesthetic device; it makes childhood-associated play meaningful within adult life. This interpretation resonates with Heljakka's (2013) discussion of toys as mediums of creativity, affective experience, and adult cultural engagement. Adult LEGO players are consequently positioned through continuity between past and present, reactivating childhood play as a contemporary practice of relaxation, creativity, and emotional restoration. Beyond product promotion, the advertisement symbolically offers adults a release from work-related pressures, presenting LEGO play as a means of mental relaxation and relief from bodily tension. However, this interpretation becomes more complex when examined through Haryatmoko's (2016) framework of deconstruction, which highlights the instability of meaning through the following dimensions:

First, deconstruction reveals contradictions within the advertisement. Adulthood, conventionally associated with self-control, rationality, and stability, is visually represented through clumsiness, misfortune, and emotional instability. This multimodal irony destabilizes the notion of adulthood as natural or fixed. While the affirmative voice-over maintains an image of adult control, the visuals expose failure and vulnerability. Rather than resolving this contradiction, the advertisement allows opposing meanings to coexist, presenting adulthood as an experience that accommodates vulnerability, play, and emotional release.

Second, the advertisement opens possibilities for reimagining relations previously considered incompatible. Adults who play are no longer necessarily viewed as atypical or childish, but as expressing alternative experiences of adulthood. The blurring of boundaries between childhood and adulthood demonstrates that meanings are fluid rather than fixed. Texts, contexts, and traditions can thus become spaces for reimagining social relations. Identity is not a fixed essence but an ongoing process shaped and reshaped through representation and cultural practices. Adult identity can therefore be understood as continuously negotiated through cultural meanings and social expectations.

Third, deconstruction encourages critical examination of how ideologies shape subjectivity through visual representation. As Synnott (2007) suggests, the body functions as a *locus* through which social values are produced and interpreted. Initially, Bryce appears tense, clumsy, and unable to control his movements, embodying the pressures of everyday routines. His gestures, frustrated expressions, and repeated mishaps challenge the ideal of adulthood as rational, stable, and self-controlled. However, his bodily expression changes when he begins assembling LEGO. His movements become calmer, and his facial expressions more relaxed, culminating in the floating-body scene. This transformation symbolically shifts the body from constraint toward liberation. The floating body suggests temporary release from everyday pressures and social expectations governing adult conduct. Thus, Bryce's body becomes a site where normative meanings of adulthood are questioned and reconfigured. Through this transformation, the advertisement presents play as a possible interruption of routines and expectations that constrain adult experience.

Fourth, deconstruction occurs when a text becomes unfamiliar to its reader, exposing contradictions beneath its apparent meaning. Initially presented as a motivational narrative about relaxation, the LEGO advertisement reveals irony and instability in the experience of adulthood. Values such as wisdom, control, and rationality become open to question through contradictory signs. The advertisement thus challenges established meanings of adulthood and opens possibilities for more fluid forms of identity. In line with Barker (2000), meaning remains relational and unfinished through *intertextuality*. LEGO's bricks, which can be dismantled and reassembled into new configurations, offer a metaphor for identity as dynamic and continually reconstructed. As both product and visual representation, LEGO embodies this open-ended quality, suggesting that identity, like its bricks, is never entirely complete but remains subject to change and reinterpretation.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* Advertisement constructs adulthood through multimodal interactions among visual, verbal, audio, and gestural modes that frequently contradict one another. The tension between verbal narration emphasizing control and stability and visuals depicting chaos, failure, and emotional instability produces multimodal irony that deconstructs the ideal of rational and controlled adulthood. Adulthood is thus represented not as a fixed condition but as an identity

negotiated through everyday experiences and cultural representations. The compositional progression from chaos to flow and resolution traces Bryce's transformation from pressure and disorder toward relaxation through LEGO play. Changes in his bodily expressions, from tension and clumsiness to relaxation and metaphorical floating, reinforce this transformation. Beyond tracing the character's journey, integrating Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal framework with deconstruction enables this study to examine how meaning emerges through both the interaction and contradiction of semiotic modes. This approach reveals how audiovisual advertising destabilizes binary oppositions such as child/adult, play/work, and stable/chaotic, presenting adult identity as a process of *becoming*.

Through multimodal contradictions between verbal narratives of control and stability and visual representations of chaos, bodily vulnerability, and emotional instability, LEGO's *Adults Welcome – Flowers* Advertisement deconstructs conventional cultural notions of adulthood. Through this interplay, play is repositioned from a childhood activity into a meaningful practice associated with emotional regulation and restoration in adult life, while nostalgic aesthetics blur conventional boundaries between childhood and adulthood. The LEGO interlocking-brick system further offers a metaphor for identity as dynamic, open-ended, and continuously reconstructed. From a visual culture perspective, this study demonstrates how audiovisual advertising participates in negotiating cultural meanings of adulthood by integrating multimodal analysis with deconstruction to reveal how the interaction and contradiction of semiotic modes destabilize conventional assumptions about adult identity and play.

In addition, the advertisement's retro aesthetics connect childhood memories with contemporary adult consumption. Warm tungsten lighting, brownish tones, grain textures, and compositions resembling analogue film evoke visual nostalgia, linking past play experiences with present emotional associations with LEGO. In dialogue with research on LEGO brand culture, adult fan engagement, and nostalgia, this study extends these discussions by examining how nostalgia and adult play are constructed through specific audiovisual resources. Rather than merely promoting a product, the advertisement frames play as a practice associated with relaxation, creativity, and emotional restoration, thereby challenging conventional understandings of adulthood.

This study is limited by its focus on a single advertisement and its use of textual analysis without direct audience involvement. It therefore examines the meanings made available by the advertisement rather than how audiences interpret or respond to them. Future research could compare additional advertisements and incorporate audience studies to investigate how representations of adulthood, play, and nostalgia are interpreted across different social and cultural contexts.

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