# **Connotative Imagemaking: Definition & Applications**

## **What Is Connotative Image Making?**

When was the last time an advertisement or billboard caught your eye? Did it have an image on it? We are surrounded by pictures and images in digital and print media that ask us to support causes, buy products, or become more aware of issues. Many of the sources trying to connect with us use connotative images.

A **connotative image** is one that has layers of meaning, beyond its face value. For example, an advertiser for a life insurance company might use an image of a child playing with a toy to convey ideas of family life, safety, and security, or perhaps childhood and nostalgia. The image is indeed of a child and toy, but it's also about deeper ideas, that relate back to the security of owning a good life insurance policy.

| example of connotative image  ***Connotative images convey ideas. This billboard is not just about a bridge. Instead, it tells how moving from city to suburbs will improve your life*** |
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Connotative images are used in a process called **graphic design**, where words and pictures are combined to convey ideas. Graphic design is done by art professionals called graphic designers, who are trained to use images in many different ways. These designers work in fields like advertising, where companies try to attract customers to buy products or services. Graphic design is all around us. If you think about it, many ads you see use pictures, perhaps many small ones or a large central figure. They're powerful tools in graphic design and can convey many things.

Connotative images are the opposite of **denotative images**, straightforward pictures that stand for no other meaning than what you see. A denotative image would be a picture of a juicy steak on an ad for a steakhouse. The message is simple: the steak here is good.

Connotative images are more complex. They give the viewer more information and provide a broader context. They're used in works where advertisers want to create an atmosphere, tell a story that relates back to a product, or evoke an emotion that sparks a connection.

## **Uses of Connotative Image Making**

Designers use connotative images to convey ideas and make connections between us and potential products and services.

Look at advertisements for industries like beauty and skin care, healthcare and many kinds of insurance. Often companies in these fields will use connotative images to connect abstract ideas like success, enjoyment, and security, to their products.

For example, in an ad about a brand of soap, the image won't simply be a bar of soap. Instead, it will portray people in an inviting atmosphere of well-being and pleasure, which connects to the idea of using the soap to produce such a result.

| ***Cexample of connotative imageConnotative images tell stories and connect us to emotions or evoke feelings*** |
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But connotative images have to work within a cultural understanding. Different images and objects mean different things in some cultures. The designer needs to know about, and be aware of, these cultural differences. If necessary, they have to make sure that the image they are using conveys an idea that people within a culture understand. Otherwise, it's just confusing.

Connotative images are all around us. The next time you leaf through a magazine or drive by a billboard on the highway, look carefully. Does it use a connotative image to tell a story, or evoke an emotion?