Abstract: Even though advertisements represent a world of its own, they are an inevitable part of different kinds of media. The purpose of advertising is not only to promote a product but also to transfer messages, values and ideas in order to make emotional connections with brands. By building emotional attachment, advertisers increase and strengthen consumers' responses. The promoting of the advertisements' images becomes much more important than promoting the product itself. Nowadays, an increasing interest in representing a human body along with different kinds of products and services has become a commonplace among advertisers. Representation of the body is a socially constructed phenomenon. In other words, social processes shape perceptions of our bodies and these perceptions (re)create human experiences of the body.

The authors' approach includes qualitative discourse analysis of advertisements. The objective was to identify the relationship between the human body and textual messages as integral components of the advertised item taken in consideration, as well as the ways in which they interact with the reader's overall experience. For this purpose, different advertisements that contain visual and textual messages representing human bodies have been analysed. They were all published in the following lifestyle magazines: *Cosmopolitan, Playboy, Men's Health*, during 2012 and 2013.

The authors conclude that media representations of a human body as social phenomena perceive value and treat the body in different ways depending on the relationship between the advertisement, the textual message and the human body.

Keywords: discourse analysis, advertisements, human bodies' representations, textual messages

I. INTRODUCTION: ADVERTISEMENTS AS A FORM OF DISCOURSE

Media constitutes an increasingly important feature of society and everyday life. All contemporary social and cultural issues directly implicate uses of media (Fornäs, Becker, Bjurström, Ganetz, 2007: 1). Thus, advertising has become one of the most recognizable and appealing form of communications to which everyone in society is exposed. The images and messages that advertisers promote daily represent the contemporary social life. Advertising no longer serves just to commercial interests. It has become a common strategy adopted by anyone in the society who wants to persuade people to do something. Business firms, politicians, social organizations, interest groups and
governments advertise in various media to create favourable ‘images’ of themselves in the minds of people (Danesi, 2002: 179).

Danesi indicates that “advertising marks any type or form of public announcement or representation intended to promote the sale of specific commodities or services”. During the twentieth century, advertising evolved into a form of persuasive social discourse intended primarily to influence how people perceive the buying and consumption of goods. Today, the increasing sophistication of information gathering and statistical techniques allows advertisers to target audiences on the basis of their place of living, their income, educational background, etc. in order to determine their inclination towards certain products (Danesi, 2002: 180).

Advertising is an “integral part of twentieth-century consumption” and simultaneously an “important form of representation in the contemporary world” (Nava et al. in Hackley, 2005: 5). As a form of representation, advertising takes signs and meanings which are present in non-advertising culture and transforms them. In that way, it creates new representations in juxtaposition with marketed brands. Thus, the ways in which consumers interpret advertisements can reflect their own “culturally-derived values as well as culturally-learned fantasies and aspirations” (Hackley, 2005: 5).

The ways people interpret advertising, as well as the attitudes they form towards portrayed brands, are views borrowed from the social worlds around them. In other words, references and elements of identity are not fixed or given by nature. They are culturally learned in interaction with the surrounding social worlds. So advertising seeks to create meanings that will in some way resonate with the sense of social identity and culturally derived values of possible audiences (Hackley, 2005: 37-38).

Meanings of advertisements draw on the cultural environment within which they are framed. Understanding of advertisements and the brands which they promote is formed under the influence of the social contexts within which such communications is conveyed. Brands and their advertising cannot be properly understood as self-evident entities. They must also be considered as entities that exist in the realm of social interaction, through the way they are talked about and used. In other words, brands can be seen as social constructions. Marketing activity has a socially constructed character in the sense that it has an existence that is sustained in the social world beyond the tangible realities of its features, packaging and price. A brand’s meaning as portrayed or implied in advertising subsists in the social space between the organization, the advertising and its interpretive communities of consumers (Hackley, 2005: 37-40). In that sense, as El-daly (2011) points out, advertising can be referred to as a form of discourse. It is not influenced only by the structure of language and the modality of lifestyle, but also by the content of daily acts of communicative exchanges. In that way, the advertising messages have permeated the entire cultural surrounding.

Discourse is described in various ways. It can be approached to as a way of seeing the world, way of describing things and a thing that can be described. At the same time, it refers to the sets of communication conventions and practices that characterize a particular kind of social phenomenon (such as advertising) in a given context in which practices and conventions are constantly in negotiation (Hackley, 2005: 40-41). Since
discourses consist of texts in context, advertising as a form of discourse acquires the meaning not only by its content but also by its context. Thus consideration of the context of communication is an important part of understanding the way meaning is construed through advertising (Cook, 2001: 3).

For Cook (2001) the context of advertising discourse comprises many interconnected elements which are constantly in interaction. It includes the physical material or medium which carries the text, pictures and the music accompanying the text, gestures, facial expressions and other elements that constitute the ‘paralanguage’ of the text. It also refers to the location of the text in time and space, as well as other texts connected to it, for instance, other advertisements in the same magazine. Furthermore, it encompasses the connections with other social discourses implied in the advertisements, for example through the phenomenon of intertextuality. The participants or the intended audience, the originator or the sender of the advertisement and their respective assumptions, intentions and communicative idioms are also important elements of the context in which the meaning(s) of advertisement discourse reside (Cook, 2001: 1-2).

The meaning of advertisements is created in encounters between subjects, texts and contexts. It is produced in the contextualized encounter between the reader and the text. The meaning that a text conveys is produced in the reading of it which is framed by the intratextual, intertextual and extratextual contexts of that relationship (Fornäs, Becker, Bjurström, Ganetz, 2007: 54). Thus, to create the personality for a product, advertisers construct a signification system for it. This is achieved by giving it a brand name and by creating a visual symbol for it known as a logo. By assigning it a name, the product can be recognized in terms of its name (Danesi, 2002: 184). But the “social power” of brands (Feldwick in Hackley, 2005: 2) refers to the meaning that goes beyond functionality and is a symbolic reference point among consumers and non-consumers alike. This symbolic meaning is powerfully framed by advertising and sustained through other forms of communication such as public relations, product and brand placement in entertainment media, sponsorship and design of package (Hackley, 2005: 2).

II. Body Representation in Advertisement

Advertisements disseminate a huge number of messages about identity and other forms of self, as well as the way people express gender, sexuality and lifestyle. Advertisements influence people’s lives and perceptions both positively and negatively. The promoting of advertisement images becomes much more important than promoting the product itself. Nowadays, an increasing interest in representing a human body along with different kinds of products and services has become a commonplace among advertisers. Representation of the body is a socially constructed phenomenon. In other words, social processes shape perceptions of our bodies and these perceptions (re)create human experiences of the body.

Some authors have stressed the importance of advertisements in constructing body ideals (Frederick, Fessler, Haselton, 2005) and generating body dissatisfaction (Wykes, Gunter, 2005). In other words, there is “a great interest in the symbolic significance of the body, the use of the body as representation and importance of the body in metaphorical discourse” (Featherstone, Turner, 1995: 2).
Thus, contemporary culture provides us with discourses about body images and body ideals and “advise” us on how to become thinner or healthier, look younger, etc. Consequently, men and women compare their own bodies with body images that on a daily basis emerge in all sorts of media. In other words, idealized body has never been more present in our daily life as at the beginning of the 21st century (Kuhar, 2005: 98). Advertisements in men’s and women’s magazines fill significant amount of space in which the emphasis is placed on physical appearance, wherein their “definitions” form ideas about what people should look like (Kuhar, 2005: 98). It is interesting to notice that not only advertisements present attractive female bodies, but they are increasingly presenting appealing men’s bodies as well (Kuhar, 2005; Elliott and Elliott, 2005). The influence of body images and textual messages in media is a common theme of social and humanistic disciplines and has thus become a significant subject matter of recent research endeavouring in these fields. Magazines constantly disseminate body images and textual messages that influence the production of discourses on men’s and women’s bodies. Therefore, advertisement as a medium plays an important role in the dissemination of idealized body images, offering also information on how to achieve ideal physical appearance (Kuhar, 2005: 100).

III. Methodological Aspects of the Study

The research aims of the study were to identify the characteristics of advertisements with body images such as their position and size, type of product, elements of advertisements (further referred to as “ads”), etc. in lifestyle magazines. Another aim was to assess how ads in men’s and women’s magazines represent the body through specific visual and textual characteristics and to analyse relations between product, body image and textual messages through physical appearance and language use, the mechanisms of persuasion, etc. in textual messages accompanying the ads. Since the research sample included international magazines published in Croatia, it provided the possibility to contextualize ads in the contemporary Croatian society and in the society in general, by comparing the way ads create the meanings of body and how such meanings interact.

The sample was structured in the way which allowed us to compare elements of masculinity and femininity in different audience magazines. Thus we included Cosmopolitan as a female-audience magazine and Men’s Health and Playboy as male-audience magazines. We selected and analysed all ads containing body images in these magazines published from January 2012 to December 2013. The overall sample included 656 ads with body images (404 ads in Cosmopolitan, 124 ads in Men’s Health and 128 in Playboy) and 409 product slogans. After gathering the data, we analysed them applying various strategies of qualitative discourse analysis in combination with content analysis. Some of the analytical categories were pre-constructed while the others emerged during the analysis.

The analysis has shown no significant difference between ads in different magazines in terms of the proportion or the size of the ads. Most of ads with body image(s) are full page size (81% of Playboy and Men’s Health ads; 70 % of Cosmopolitan ads). There is also no difference in the position of ads with body images between female and male-audience magazines. More
than half of ads are placed in the first third of the magazine pages.

According to the type of ads (products, services, objects) the analysis indicated a difference between the two types of magazines. Body images were used in 39% of cosmetics ads of in Cosmopolitan, while the percentage is much lower in male-audience magazines. On the other hand, body images are present in 31% fashion and accessories ads in Playboy and 24% of such ads in Men's Health, while in Cosmopolitan there are 17% of such ads. Body images are also used in 17% of food, drinking and supplements ads in Men's Health, 15% in Playboy and 7% in Cosmopolitan. Shopping centre ads and medical services ads using body images are mostly published in Cosmopolitan, while car and motorcycles ads with body images are mostly present in Playboy.

IV. BODY IMAGES

The analysis of advertisements in selected magazines indicates differences in presenting mostly male or female bodies, what was expected regarding the magazine target audience because “advertising is sold on the basis of the demographics of the audience expected to view the ads” (Wolin, 2003: 111). Therefore we noticed that almost half of the ads in Playboy and more than half in Men's Health magazines present male bodies. Although our analysis showed that female bodies appeared more frequently in Playboy (more than a quarter of ads), in Men's Health we observed less than a quarter of the ads with female bodies. On the other hand, female bodies appeared in most of ads in women's magazine (Cosmopolitan). At the same time, the percentages of male bodies presented in Cosmopolitan ads were insignificant.

The analysis of certain characteristics of body images such as masculinity, firmness, slimness, attractiveness indicated that ads in both men's magazines represented mostly firm and attractive bodies without noticeable differences between magazines. However, we observed that slim bodies occurred more frequently in Playboy (around a half) than in Men's Health magazine. Apart from that, muscled bodies in ads appeared more frequently in Men's Health (around a half) than in Playboy magazine. Ads in woman's magazine (Cosmopolitan) also embody mostly firm and attractive bodies, but more than half of the ads in Cosmopolitan present slim bodies as well. On the other hand, the percentages of the muscled bodies presented in Cosmopolitan ads were insignificant. Although the conventional definitions of femininity and masculinity over the years have been questioned, the differences in embodied characteristics may indicate that “ideal” physical appearances of men and women are still seen in specific ways. Consequently, we observed that women's bodies were slimmer while men's bodies more muscled.

Our research interests were also focused on the relationships between the body and the product (service or object) in ads. What kind of relationship does men's and women's bodies indicate? Are there any differences between men's and women's magazines?

This relationship on the other hand indicates that the messages (visual or textual) about body images in ads were imposed in “body frames” of those men and/or women. For that purpose we specified four categories qualified as:
Besides body images, we have analysed textual elements in the advertisements as well, in which one of the key issues is a slogan. The slogan “is often a brief sentence or expression that enables the company to say in very few words what it intends to achieve or what its products can bring to consumers. The role of
the slogan is to attract the attention of readers. The slogan is like the signature of a company: It is most often the element through which the brand is remembered.” (Christelle, 2012: 25).

Our corpus includes some well-known examples of the slogans coming from English-speaking markets. They are self-descriptive, mainly because their meaning is based on the brand tradition and on the period of time when the product has been used. These slogans are usually used in English and no one has tried to translate them, like, for instance, as 'Just do it' (Nike), 'Sense and simplicity' (Philips) or 'Drive the change' (Renault). There are several reasons why companies choose to use English in their advertising campaigns in countries where it is a foreign language. These can be: a) financial reason: by preserving the same widely recognized slogan the company does not have to invest in its adaptation or translation; b) attention reason: the English slogans may stimulate the audience in non-English speaking countries to try to find out the meanings and by doing it to be more attentive; c) image reason: by using English slogans the company tries to create the international image for the brand (Hornikx and Starren, 2006: 126-127). The use of English is said to give the company an international and contemporary orientation.

Nevertheless, some of the slogans from our corpus have been translated or adapted for the particular market: Brini o sebi – Take care of yourselves (Garnier); Jer Vi to zaslužujete – Because I’m worth it (L’Oréal). Some of them have been made for the Croatian market exclusively: Zagrlj život (Vip), I ove i novce (TELE2) or Simpa štima svima (T-Mobile).

For the purpose of this paper, slogans are recognised as the text of a message accompanying the product and relating to it, while the slogans of brands (as defined above) and the text parts which include technical and other information of the product/service were not discussed. We analysed how the textual message relates to the human body/a part of body shown in the ads. The objective was to identify the relationship between the human body and textual messages as integral components of the advertised item taken in consideration. Regarding human body and textual message relationships we have analysed how and to what extent they are interrelated. For that purpose we adopted three categories’ scheme in order to observe the semantic equivalence between textual messages and body representations. The body image and the text may create different relationships:

- **Complete equality**: The body image and the text represent the same idea; textual information is amended, exemplified and concretised. Redundancy is also possible, since both levels express the same. The text can also provide additional information about the product.

- **Interdependency**: The body image and the text are inseparable, the text without the image is syntactically complete, but cannot be understood without it, which means that the body image and the text are integrated as a whole. The body image helps to understand the text and vice versa.

- **Inequality / independence**: The image and the text are fully independent and not related in any sense.
Table 2: Relationship between the body and the textual messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cosmopolitan</th>
<th>Men’s Health</th>
<th>Playboy</th>
<th>Σ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>complete equality</td>
<td>253 (404)</td>
<td>76 (128)</td>
<td>80 (124)</td>
<td>409 (656)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interdependency</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inequality/independency</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than a half of analysed ads show complete equality which means that the text shows what the body represents, i.e. the text follows the body image representation (see Table 2).

VI. CONCLUSION

Acquiring a whole picture of an advertisement means taking into consideration all of its components: body image, textual message and product representation and putting them in a joint relationship. Only then can we get the complete picture that might be a true account of what the actual advertisement represents. The triangle relationship: body image – textual message – product is seen as a constant fluctuation of observed characteristics and interaction between them (see Figure 1).

The analysis of the way in which the body image is constructed and represented in magazines stresses the importance of relationship between the body, the textual message (product slogan) and the product. Therefore, our analysis of advertisements in two men’s magazines (Men’s Health and Playboy) and one women’s magazine (Cosmopolitan) indicates that the body is represented through two kinds of relationships: one that shows the body as a consumer of the product and the other that shows the complete equality between the body and the textual message (product slogan), in other words, the textual message is concretized on the body image.

Figure 1: Triangle relationship: body, text and product

ENDNOTES

[1] Elliott and Elliott (2005) claim that since 1980s advertisements have increasingly been presenting idealized body images for men as well. Furthermore, according to Patterson and England, advertisements in magazines usually present mesomorphic type of men’s bodies (strong and highly muscled). Representation of ectomorphic bodies (slim and lightly muscled) was, according to Patterson and England study, limited to the advertising of products that may look more attractive on the slimmer men (like clothes). In contrast to that type of body, endomorphs were typically used with tendencies to humour (Patterson, England in Elliott and Elliott, 2005: 4).
We are interested in the message that refers to the advertised product/service, while simultaneously becoming the slogan of the product, as in case of some Samsung products – life companion. Since it is the slogan of the product and not of the brand it was included in the list of analysed messages.

The language of advertising has been comprehensively studied in Leech (1966), Dyer (1988), and Cook (2001).

REFERENCES


