

PRACTICE

## Persuasive Visual: Body Language and Semantic Relationship Patterns in Press Commercials

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**Abstract.** Contemporary popular culture is closely related to visual communication and its standing out phenomenon – advertising. Theorists and various researchers agree about the impact commercials have on individuals, economics, and culture. However, the question, why advertising is so effective even when the message receivers are aware of the deliberate intentions of these communicative items, still has no clear answer. Nationwide it has not been researched yet. The aim of this article is to find out semantic patterns of body language that function as communicative strategies while consuming visual discourse. The semiotic analysis is applied as the research method of commercials. Advertisements from the press that cover women and men magazines, professional and entertainment publications, and national as well as international editions are investigated. Five-year period samples allow to present universal body language use and human body depiction classifications. The main conclusion is that body in visual discourse of commercials is reduced to the instrument of persuasion: body

*figures simultaneously generate the meaning of the message and inscribe certain values. Because of this constant figurative overshadow and overlap of discursive levels of utterance and annunciation the offering of prescribed benefits and pleasures is so simple and so effective.*

**Keywords:** *annunciation, advertisement, advertising, body, body language, commercial, decoding, discourse, encoding, meaning, model, pattern, persuasion, press, relationship, semiotics, sense, slogan, strategy, utterance, value, visual.*

### **Introductory statements**

Contemporary media discourse combines journalism and advertising enabling the political to be challenged by the commercial; serious by fun; the sources by the audience; and the verbal by the visual: “a ‘reader’ of media texts can easily combine, for instance, the experience of a programme with that of advertisements inserted in it, or with adjoining programmes” (McQuail, 1994: 238).

In line with this convergence, media scholars try to deal with the topic from perspective of methodologies of various disciplines – pop culture history, philosophy, sociology, marketing, arts. Despite the variety, the main two examining attitudes, both on the global and on the national levels are cultural anthropology and semiotics. The first one focuses on emerging entertainment industries (Betts, 2004), commercialization of public space (Balčytienė, 2009), decline of social norms and values in democracy (Sverdiolas, 2006), and transformations in reality comprehension (Baudrillard, 2002), while the second one concentrates on modern mythology analyses (Barthes, 1991), effects of the message and ‘meaning’ issues (Greimas, 1989), media performance and decoding studies of ideology (McQuail, 1992, 1994; Fiske, 1995).

American historian Raymond F. Betts thinks that the visual is the principle channel through which popular culture is rendered. He dates the era of visual back to the late XIX century, when photography made the alliance with the printing (Betts, 2004: 55). Betts argues that digital photography and reproduction techniques reduced artistic

value to curiosity which satisfaction led to the realm of visual: "(...)" ours has become see-all culture in which it seems that little has been left to the imagination, and not much has been excluded from economic exploitation" (Betts, 2004: 56); "(...)" our daily encounter with images, both as sources of information and elements of entertainment is inescapable. Contemporary popular culture is one of individual gazes and collective displays, one in which the dominant demand is expressed in three imperatives – 'Show me', 'Let me see' and 'Let me be seen' – all subsumed under familiar injunction 'Picture this'" (Betts, 2004: 62); "(...)" advertising inspired industrial art, where shape and form seduced. In conjunction with appearance, advertising created a new literary genre, lyrical product poetry; and introduced a new art form that gave vibrancy to what was hitherto artistic still life" (Betts, 2004: 63).

The spread of the phenomena was accompanied by further investigations of visual discourse and communication. Different researches of advertising highlight essential feature of this type of discourse – deliberate and paid encoding of the message for active appealing to the audiences realized by persuasion strategies in 'meaning generating' process. The fact that commercials are created to impact, already known to academic as well as ordinary public, do not prevent from consuming neither the advertising messages nor products advertised. As British sociologist Frank Webster puts it: "Baudrillard states that people like commercials not because of information they try to convey and certainly not because the audiences may be convinced to buy something after the watching the ads, but simply because advertisements give the pleasure. Commercials function as *spectacle* (Debord, 2006; italic and link to source of term – A. J.) and fascinates" (Webster, 2006: 254).

French theoretician Guy Debord criticizes such admiration of the visual in contemporary Western societies. According to him plenty of signs and ways of their communication indicate cultural and even social transformation. The thinker points out "(...)" that alienated images as well as easily to manipulation submitted representations become new social structures, new form of social relationship" (Debord, 2006: 19).

Such conclusion supports quoted French philosopher Jean Baudrillard who also traces the main features of visual thinking in the development of postmodern culture noting the promiscuity of stable contradistinction: “(...) formerly the history discourse strengthened itself in a fury conflict to the discourse of nature, discourse of desire gained its vitality opposing itself to the power discourse; and today these discourses exchange the signifiers and scenarios” (Baudrillard, 2002: 27).

Analysis of the new postmodern culture indicates that because of such an exchange commercials are dominated by entropy that won over all tropes at this type of ‘text’; that reasoning is changed by ‘silent analogy’ or by ‘infection.’ According to the thinker, the visual moves towards losing its sense: “(...) multiplying information excludes the sense; (Baudrillard, 2002: 104). It is pure game without any sense that’s why semiology does not fit to analyse commercials (Baudrillard, 2002: 110)”, – concludes the scholar.

Critical standpoint crosses the borders of methodology of philosophy, political economy and cultural anthropology and is found in the thinking trends of formalism and structuralism. For example, French theoretician Roland Barthes reveals the manipulating character of the visual discourse in his analysis of mythology. The scientist treats modern myth (usually one from media discourse) as a structure that gives eternity dimension to ephemeral things; as a form of narrative that seduces with the promise of happiness in the future; as the rhetoric that dresses artificial with natural and thus destroys the reality (Barthes, 1991: 11). Modern myth understood as a form is interpreted as a veil of sense: “(...) myth functions by double-dealing: it signs and says; suggests and refers simultaneously” (Barthes, 1991: 90); “(...) myth is based on hypnotism” (Barthes, 1991: 104); “(...) myth’s relationship to the audience is not that of truth but that of benefit” (Barthes, 1991: 119).

Such negative together with the normative attitude appears in the works of Lithuanian scholars exploring the visual in public sphere: for instance, philosopher Arūnas Sverdiolas equals advertising to political

technologies that presupposes subject without any autonomous will and thus incapable of decision-making: "(...) every decision is treated as an amount of its impacts" (Sverdiolas, 2006: 41); "(...) any norm is understood as violence, because it disturbs amusement" (Sverdiolas, 2006: 34).

Media scholar Aukšė Balčytienė states negative consequences of commercialization to media agenda. According to her, contemporary visual content instead of involving to civic participation forms passive audiences ready to consume entertainment: "television becomes entertainment media" (Balčytienė, 2009: 31).

Lithuanian philosopher Gintautas Mažeikis compares advertisements to propaganda – focusing on social advertising, he concludes that social propaganda (ads informing about the risk of illegal job, the lack of books, etc.) functions as an alternative to administrative management while classical commercials promote consumerism and serve the interests of capitalist economies and global industries (Mažeikis, 2006: 12–13).

Such criticism of the visual is opposed by semiotics and media field practitioners, both on theoretical and research levels. For instance, American media scholar John Fiske and Russian media author Sergey F. Lisovski mark the boundaries of the impact explaining that the visual is medium limited: "(...) reader [of the press – A. J.] has so called 'freedom' of choice: reading text and perceiving visual print message is regulated by the reader himself according to his will, sequence, speed, and rhythm" (Lisovski, 2000: 133).

In addition to the quotation, Fiske spotlights the difference between 'reader', 'viewer', and 'spectator'. According to him publics attending the cinema, concerts or theatre are spectators as they are limited by surroundings and frames of time and concentrated on the show. Viewer and reader comparison reveals that a press reader is pure embodiment of the production of meaning while viewer enters to the sphere of action (from cognitive to pragmatic). Besides, viewing is specific only to television audience: "(...) a viewer is engaged with the screen more variously, actively, and selectively than is a spectator" (Fiske, 1995: 17).

Positive evaluation of the visual is also present in analyses of the phenomena from the position of the audience and works that apply 'reception theory'. For instance, in Dutch theoretician of mass media Dennis McQuail's opinion, the essence of reception model is preferential encoding and differential decoding, enabled by both, the viewer and the media: "(...) intertextuality is not only an accomplishment of the reader but also a feature of media themselves, which are continually cross-referencing from one medium to another, and the same 'message', story or type of narrative can be found in very different media forms and genres" (McQuail, 1994: 238).

The chameleonic nature of the visual in advertising is justified by the goals the commercials have to reach: "(...) in the case of commercial advertisements, while they are intended to achieve a long-term goal benefiting the product advertised, the form of advertisement can range from the playful and ambiguous to the one-dimensional 'hard sell' or simple announcement" (McQuail, 1994: 239).

It should be reminded that the aim of any advertising message is to induce the need and arouse audience to concrete action. Lisovski also stresses that the period of time between the message sent and the result expected also counts and should be as short as possible (Lisovski, 2000: 13).

To sum it up, those scholars who relate discourse and meaning deal with the problem of quality; when treating visual information as physical phenomena the problem of sense is out of scope, and while determining visual messages in economic terms – the price comes to first place and heterogeneity of the visual media content is lost (Webster, 2006). However, the brief survey of the exploring of scientific problems related to the visual discourse in media and advertising exposes three key elements – 'meaning' / 'sense'; 'persuasion' and 'pleasure'. Distinguished elements together with the fact, quoted by Betts, that each American sees some 16,000 advertisements every day, regardless of how many he or she considers (Savan, 1994 in Betts, 2004) and the statistics "(...)" that teenagers account for about \$458 billion of the annual purchase of consumer goods in the United States, either through their own

income or through an allowance, the latter now at a \$50 weekly (...).“ (Betts, 2004: 72) demand to ask, what is depicted in the pictures of advertisements that they have such cultural and economic impact on society as a whole and on separate individuals? Where does the pleasure come from? Does it spring from the rendered ad message, designer, constructing the message, or is it encoded by the customer or inscribed by the viewer? How is enjoyment and amusement encoded and decoded in general? What is the role of the context to the realm of pleasure? These questions need concrete answers that only the semiotic analysis of the visual discourse is able to provide.

The aim of the article is to identify the communicative patterns in advertising that are background for prevailing persuasive strategies. Body depiction is a starting point as it allows grasping the interaction scheme between the visual message and the viewer<sup>1</sup>.

The object of the research is limited to commercials in printed press. Such selection is argued by Betts pointing out that the era of visual started in press as the consequence of the invention of digital photography. Political posters are also excluded as they refer to the ‘image’ and ‘identity’ issues while the article deals with the ‘pleasure’. Besides, excluding personalities makes the analysis more coherent as the aimed to study bodies are of the professionals trained to become personages – characters in the visual narrative of the product advertised. The same logic applies to the photographs of celebrities. In order to find more universal communicative patterns of persuasion, periodicals that were targeted to men as well as to women were selected. The selection covers national and international newspapers and magazines for the same purpose. Classifications were made by sorting out the selected commercials according to the product and the depicted body relation criteria at different levels of ‘meaning generating’ process as well as the criteria of relation between the verbal and the visual expressed in corporal images.

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<sup>1</sup> Further elaboration of this hypothesis is presented in the next section of the article.

## Why body? Survey of Semiotics as Scientific Method of En/ Decoding the Indirect Message

Dividing phenomena into process and result is fundamental in epistemology. This pattern is also identified in the field of information and communication science, i.e. American communication professor John Fiske makes distinction between *School of process* and *School of semiotics* (Fiske, 1998). The latter one is treated proper methodology in cultural studies, especially to research popular culture as *television culture* producing pleasure and meaning to heterogeneous audience (Fiske, 1995). Application of semiotics is a background for concluding that: "(...) the wide variety of codes all cohere to present a unified set of meanings that work to maintain, legitimate, and naturalize the dominant ideology of patriarchal capitalism. Their ideological affectivity appears irresistible" (Fiske, 1995: 13).

In this light Fiske determines the discourse "(...) as a language or system of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings about an important topic area" (Fiske, 1995: 14).

Discourses are socially produced. Structuralism treats the speech (oral as well as written speaking language would it be verbal, visual or body language) as a flesh of a subject: "(...) discourse not only makes sense of its topic area, it also constructs a sense, or social identity, of us as we speak it" (Fiske, 1995:15).

This conclusion allows claiming of the relation between the anatomical frame of corps and the discourse that makes the social body visible. As Barthes puts it: "(...) every text is frigid as any necessity, until there is no desire or neurosis" (Barthes, 1991: 275); "(...) a word can be erotic in presence of two alternative conditions: if it is repeated exaggeratedly, or, in contrast, if it is unexpected, juicy and rich in its newness (...)" (Barthes, 1991: 298).

He is supported by the Swiss visual art semiotic Felix Thürlemann indicating visual-cognitive and corporal elements as important sense effects (Thürlemann, 1994: 166). Even scholars representing contrary

investigative tradition, for instance, American cultural anthropologist George Steiner marks the relation between the Eros and the aesthetic as crucial for constituting the mutual communicative situation between the piece of art and the addressee, thus making the construction of the meaning process possible, implementing the perception, and making viewing the art an undergoing experience: "(...) Eros and aesthetical experience are in close congeneric" (Steiner, 1998: 172).

The differences between those contrasting methodologies are the further steps that the researcher needs to take. As those remaining in hermeneutic paradigm are quite sure that discourse's comprehension may be reproduced in a new creation act (an interpretation) by getting used to historical conditions and intentions of the author: "(...) love does not argue its needs" (Steiner, 1998: 174), the goal of semiotic analysis is to remain a neutral observer of the signifying process generated by the play of the discourse signs: "(...) the aim of semiotic analysis is to change effects of sense into elements of meaning or signifying. The meaning is reproduced by description based on methodology of interaction between the signifier (rhetoric) and the signified (content), which may be intersubjectively repeated and critically verified" (Thürlemann, 1994: 217).

The general conclusion about the body and the discourse relationship is that either it can be traced in speech as embodiment of social subjects, or it appears as a power of Eros (sensual and emotional rather than cognitive comprehension) in perception of the message.

Semiotics comes into being as semiotics of narrative (*Paris school* funded by Algirdas Julius Greimas) that treats the discourse as completed and isolated utterance. The relationship between the subject and the object is a mechanical circulation of values and the communication springs from the situation of lacking something (Greimas, 1989; Giroud, Panier, 1991; Thürlemann, 1994). The second stage is that of semiotics of senses and passions. It states that a meaning is a discourse that presupposes the speaker and the addressee as a body and thus accepts not only the semantic, but also the sensual capturing. The subject is appreciated as a figure of autonomic status, though in the frame of utterance (Landowski, 1989, 2004). And the third one is the

semiotics of experience that deals with the problematic of annunciation. The focus moves from the relationship of subject – object in the text to the possible text – to reader interaction (Landowski, 1997, 2004).

From the point of view of semiotics of utterance, bodies presented in the commercials must be treated as pure characters which act in the frame of discourse and have no impact on extra-linguistic, in case of the article – extra-visual reality. Cultural anthropology contradicts such thinking: “(...) the appearance of the product is the important element of contemporary advertising, a visual association of object and setting. (...) The illusion becomes allusion, the visual means by which to qualify the virtues or benefits of the product.” (Betts, 2004: 66).

In semiotic analysis attention is paid to the relationship between the products or the services that are offered by the commercial and the figures of people who advertise the products or services. Semiotics neither identifies nor measures what effect the publicity has on the audience. However, it explicates what kind of addressee discourse presupposes and tries to construct.

In Lithuania there were several attempts to apply semiotics to the issues of flesh dimension in various discourses. Body rhetoric in contemporary social discourse was analysed by the members of Greimas' Semiotic Center (*Kūno raiška...*, 2007). Art critic Gintautė Lidžiuvienė focused on the possibilities of the impact of image – she explored the role of life-style advertising in socialization of individual into society and formulated some fundamental findings about the relation of the verbal and the visual in commercials (Lidžiuvienė, 2007). Literary critic Jurgita Katkuvienė explored corporeality on the theoretical level in the works of Roland Barthes and Algirdas Julius Greimas and enriched the semiotic theory with the answers to criticism of phenomenology (Katkuvienė, 2012). It should be noted that the investigations carried out by Lithuanian scholars did not cover communicative models of the visual discourse in advertising.

The study of Irmina Valiulytė “Exploring of Visual Communication in Advertising” should be mentioned as it focuses on the research of persuasion means that help grab the attention of the target audience and promote purchase (Valiulytė, 2010). Nudity, sexual behaviour,

and physical attractiveness are distinguished as main imagery means of sexual content in visual messages of advertisements: “sexuality has imbedded meanings of pleasure, thus seeing a sexual model might produce a pleasurable experience which means that a viewer will look at the advertisement longer” (Valiulytė, 2010: 24).

Though, despite the close relation between the advertising of fashion and sexual appeal, the research failed to designate schemes of use of these elements in persuasion and impact. The reason of the partial disclosure could have been the chosen research object – *Diesel* branding campaign “Be stupid”. Moreover, it could have been due to the analysis being oriented to situations of utterance and encoding rather than decoding structures.

Historical and cultural surveys and recent research let to conclude that the body as means of expression – the medium – enters the popular culture with unrestrained spread of such phenomena as museums of wax figures, fashion commercials, body building sport, beauty contests, and many others: „(...) the woman’s use of cosmetics as a widespread practice in European countries and the United States became popular only at the end of the nineteenth century. Prior to this time, painting one’s face was widely understood as the prostitute’s advertisement of profession“ (Betts, 2004: 74).

British sociologist Frank Webster distinguishes fashion industry in the context of information revolution as the most significant daily routine’s change that renders meanings together with the body: “(...) if we think about delicacy of fashion, about complicated ways and means, which we enlist on everyday scale in order represent ourselves, it comes clear that the contemporary social interaction content is much more giant than ever before. Body is decorated for a long time, clothing and cosmetics is very important way to tell about position, power and relationship” (Webster, 2006: 26).

Cosmetics and fashion, on the one hand, represent the everyday of women’s discourse, business and financial affairs, on the other hand, stand for the discourse of men. These discourses in printed commercials become sets of meaning meant to communicate. Planned

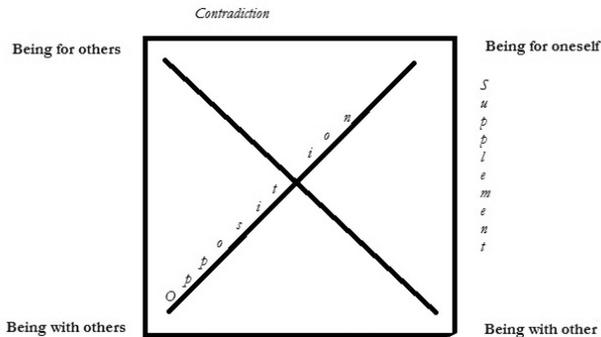
communication should be agreeable. How to hide such encoded intensions? Maybe body becomes such shelter? If so, then how? Fiske thinks that “(...) pleasure results from a particular relationship between meanings and power”. (...) [Power of being different – A. J.]; (...) pleasure requires a sense of control over meanings and an active participation in the cultural process” (Fiske, 1995: 19).

Do the commercials confirm this statement? Do the audiences realize this?

Before moving on to the more extensive analysis, it should be said that after all, even in semiotics human activity is treated as a constant search for sense, both conscious and unconscious, and is understood as a constant gain or loss of the value objects whose significance lies in the symbolism that constructs their meaning to the people (Greimas, 1989: 12).

### Frames of Utterance: Depicted Body Implications with the Product Advertised

The variety of commercials could be classified according to the relationship between the subject of utterance (depicted body) and the object of value (product) on the base of rhetoric of the representation (Figure 1):



**Figure 1.** Relation between Depicted Body (Subject of Utterance) and Advertised Product (Object of Value) According Visual Rhetoric of Representation

The relationship model is constructed within the frame of utterance:

- a) the categories of horizontal axis (on the top – *Being for others* vs. *Being for oneself* – and below – *Being with others* vs. *Being with other*) are related in contradiction;
- b) the categories of the diagonal (*Being for others* and *Being with other* or *Being for oneself* and *Being with others*) are related in opposition;
- c) the categories of vertical axis (on the left – *Being for others* and *Being with others* – and on the right – *Being for oneself* and *Being with other*) are related in supplement.

How does it look like in the pictures? The category of ads *Being for others* may be illustrated with the publicity of the telecommunications company Bite GSM (Picture 1).



Picture 1

It depicts four men representing various age groups who belong to the same family. However, it's not a social family; it's a family of mafia. The slogan declares: "the most important is to belong to a family". The ad publicizes national telecommunications company's "Bitė" service named *Family* that allows the client to talk-free with a number of people he/ she chooses. Subscribers are supposed to choose people from their home circle. To make the ad more interesting and to attract clients' attention the designer chose not direct but figurative meaning of the family. Such

decision of visual design complements the service publicized with additional value of fortune and power (rich surroundings, jewelry, a cigar, face expression of content, extraordinary life, success, etc.). Also, such imagery gives the product the guaranty of duration: changing generations symbolize stability and safety. Close circle of romantic mafia fam-

ily evokes the feeling of exception and the desire to belong to it, in such a way the addressee of the commercial may be convinced to order the service publicized. It must be said that the chosen design functions as hegemony (Althusser, 1993), and this meaning is implicitly inscribed – the picture associates the loyalty to the “Bitė’s” company by the analogy with the mafia family. Remembrance of the real mafia (Vilnius’ brigade, Kaunas’s doctors, Princes of Šiauliai) period or associations with popular cinema production and film stars helps justifying the costs of the services provided in the unconscious level of the receiver’s psyche.

The example of *Being for oneself* is the ad showing a girl in her room (Picture 2) who is choosing which slip to wear.

The ad publicizes sanitary napkins and the slogan advises to choose slip of whatever colour because new *Libresse* pads with transparent holders/ wings are not visible anyway. The trick of this ad lies in the false variety of assortment and the ability to pick. It’s not very evident that whatever your decision about the slips is, it is the *Libresse* you are forced to choose. Besides, the girl in the picture has to behave alike because otherwise she can’t be sure she would be comfortable.



Picture 2

In order to illustrate the category *Being with others* three examples of ads will be demonstrated. The first commercial is that of the wine (Picture 3), which depicts four people, to be precise – two couples (friends, as the image implicates), gathered for light conversations during an evening outdoors.

The commercial propagates the idea that a glass of wine helps people socialize: to get acquainted, to spend their leisure time together, to celebrate, to link (pay attention to the glass and the bottle), to get



Picture 3

closer to each other, etc. In contrast to the category of ads *Being for others*, the suggested relation between the people is based on voluntary recoupling and expressed through the shape of the advertised product. The first category of ads (*Being for others*), through the depiction of the group of people, hide the obligatory relations and associations with the product or service advertised.

The second poster is akin (Picture 4). it advertises a game where you can win a free holiday and represents four guys – this time the visual discourse does not suggest the claim of two couples, even despite the fact that the parallel slogan

states: “take part in the Maggi game and win free holidays for you and your family”.



Picture 4

This poster is intriguing because the relationship between the look of it and the product publicized is that of similarity, a kind of parallel that is quite evident: “Maggi” is a company that sells spice, dry food and things like that; one will say, helps make our food more delicious, spicy, gingery or even exotic. And the people are dressed in the following manner: you may see them wearing an American flag, a Japanese kimono, an Indian shirt, an African necklace, and holding an African mask. Such wardrobe may symbolize the countries where one could go if he or she won the lottery.

Exotic associations interpellate the addressee that is supposed to dream of a magical vacation while buying and consuming “Maggi” products.

And the last picture of this category is the advertisement of perfume – Calvin Klein Eternity (Picture 5).

The image portrays two people in love and a happy and calm family below that. They are like photos from an old album and cause the addressee warm feelings towards the ad and thus, towards the perfume. The motif of changing generations is typical for the expression of the idea of eternity that partially corresponds (because the ad exaggerates good features of the product) with the scent of perfume flowing in the air. What is untypical about it is that it is quite problematic to decide under which category the picture has to be placed – to this or to the next one we will cover – the category of *Being with the other* (Picture 6).

The example portrays only one couple having a little festival. The commercial advertises ready-to-cook potatoes “Aviko”. The relation between the product and the figures in the picture comes through the catchword – “be together for longer” – using consciously old and trivial truth – the way to man’s heart goes through his stomach. To spice up the everyday life situation, the couple in the picture is celebrating, though the girl’s dress resembles



Picture 5



Picture 6

an apron. It may be interpreted as a hint at the traditional roles of the standard heterosexual family and casual duties of women, where wife prepares the food and washes the dishes after the party. Thus the circle



Picture 7

of potential consumers of the presented food is broadened from young girls to middle-aged women, suggesting to them that satisfying husband's needs makes them younger, and brings back to the romantics of the beginning of their relationship.

The next example (Picture 7) is to prove that not only cheap products are advertised in such a way.

However, the poster is also related to cooking and it draws a parallel that can be formulated as follows: “Siemens” oven is suitable for preparing food and “Siemens” company is concerned about you as much and as dearly as the boy that takes care of the girl.

A couple often appears in the commercials advertising cosmetics that fit both sexes as the poster of “Oriflame” scents (Picture 8).

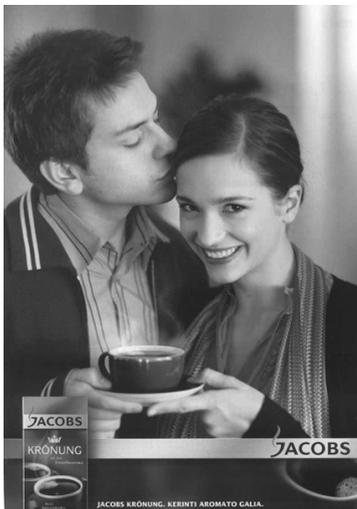
The figures of human body correspond with the form of the product. This poster is quite sharp to notice that, despite the two figures, they are composed in such a manner that they may be treated as those from category *Being for oneself*. The couple in the picture is so interested in one another that you may forget that some visual details in this ad are oriented



Picture 8

to involve the observer, to invite the addressee and to convince him/ her to buy the product, as it is in publicity of “Jacobs Krönung” coffee (Picture 9).

The glance of the girl presupposes someone intervening in the discourse, someone that enables the subject of utterance, that is the character depicted in the ad, become the agent of annunciation. To say it in other words, the figures of human bodies on the level of utterance may be identified with the object of value – with the product that is advertised by attributing people the features of the product. It may happen through the text like in the ad of “Aviko” potatoes, through similar visual representation as in the ads of “Oriflame” or “Bitè GSM”. Thus the subject is reduced to the object; body becomes an instrument of persuasion.



Picture 9

### **Decoding Message at the Stage of Annunciation: Functions of the Body**

The second part of the article will focus on the communicative situation of annunciation. These frames enable to point out the role of the body and to show the main tendencies of body representation in the press commercials. Coming back to the ad of “Jacobs Krönung” coffee (Picture 9), the girl’s glance introduces the inter-subjective relationship: not only that between her and the boy, but also between the visual and the observer. The girl herself gets triple satisfaction (positive sanction) – that from the coffee, that from being with the boy, and that from being viewed and seen by the audience. The relationship between the product, the body and the viewer (the addressee) defines the strategy of



Picture 10

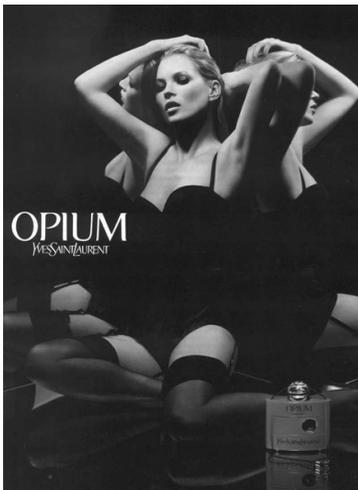
persuasion the disclosing of which is encoded by the sender of the message of visual.

In the ad of the “Garnier” body milk (Picture 10) the girl that publicizes the product demonstrates the skin that the product helps to preserve.

She has no direct contact with the product, but her image is necessary to convince the viewer to believe the product has magical power and to force him/ her to desire the product (the object of desire does not matter: be it the girl or the product itself) and later to buy the product. Such a strategy of making product desirable

French socio-semiotician Eric Landowski calls *the effect of cosmetics* (Landowski, 1997, 2004). The body becomes a source of pleasure for the viewer and evokes the desire to please oneself. Of course, it

is stated implicitly that the pleasure may be achieved only with the use of the product advertised and the evidence is given by associations of visual elements – small part of winter costume (only a cap with a scarf) and sunburnt warm body promise the happy end.



Picture 11

Another strategy is what Landowski calls *the effect of narcotics* (Landowski, 1997, 2004). In such publicities the satisfied body is depicted, the satisfaction comes because of the product. Such posters send the implicit message of the possibility to experience the same

satisfaction with the help of the product. The examples may be the poster of perfume “Opium” (Picture 11) and tequila “Sauza” (Picture 12).

A question how the viewer is involved, if the model in the ad has her eyes closed in satisfaction, may arise. The answer is not a simple one. As all the advertisements are designed for public use, they are supposed to be exposed and, naturally, to be seen. Such demonstrative nature of the publicities, when the model and the product are in erotic/ ecstatic relationship, implicates the secret/ obscene viewer. The double nature of the commercial must be emphasized. The aim of every advertisement is to introduce the product to the market and to make it desirable, to force consumers to evaluate it by testing it. Introduction to the public goes through the public sphere and includes some social aspects. The desire is a totally private thing. The intrigue of the advertisements comes from the way how they manage to combine the maximum publicity with the maximum of secrets of private wishes.

Another question that arises is, whether it is possible to convey unbiased messages to consumers through advertising? Are there any advertisements without implicit manipulation? The answer is “yes”. Such are the ads where only the product is represented and the text stresses the positive fea-



Picture 12

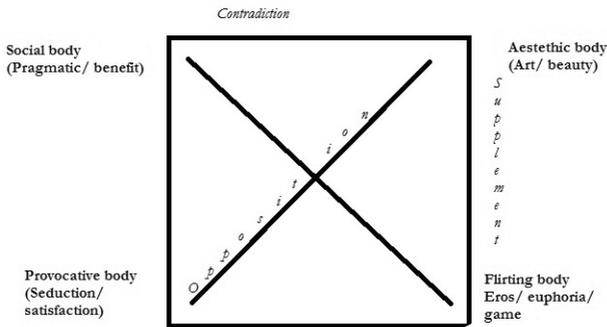


Picture 13

tures of the product. Examples of fair commercials may also be found among those where the human body is depicted like in the picture of pear juice (Picture 13).

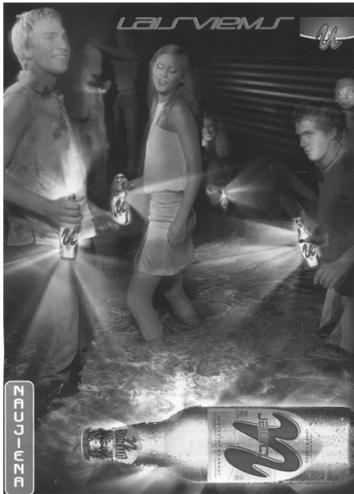
The boy demonstrates naïve euphoria rather than erotic satisfaction.

In conclusion, another body language and relationship pattern may be derived from the classification of analysed commercials. Figure 2 presents the classification of the publicities based on the type of persuasion strategy deduced according to the relationship between three main elements of the advertisement – the product, the body depicted and the viewer to whom the message is addressed.

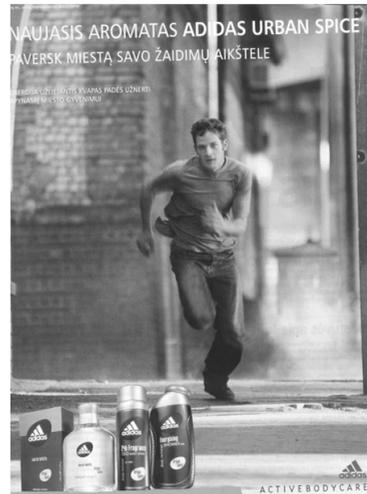


**Figure 2.** Persuasion Pattern Deduced from the Relationship between the Depicted Body (Subject of Annunciation) and the Advertised Product (Object of Value)

- a) At the top (horizontal axis) left corner we have *Social body* with persuasion model exploiting pragmatic reasoning, stressing the common values of society/ subculture or separate individual, and/ or emphasizing the pragmatic use of the product (ad of alcoholic summer drink “U” (new *Utenos*) bear (Picture 14) and perfume for men “Adidas Urban Spice” (Picture 15)).
- b) In contradiction to it – at the top right corner there is *Aesthetic body* and the persuasion scheme, using pattern of art/ beauty that emphasizes the quality of the product, expresses its inner



Picture 14



Picture 15



Picture 16

qualities, and/ or underlines the correspondence between the product and the body; not only on the level of figures, but on the plastic rhetoric and also on the deeper semantic level. The example could be the ad of “Salamander” shoes (picture 16), yet the postmodern consumers that have read *The Hunting of a Sheep* by Haruki Murakami could argue that this publicity may be treated as sexually appealing.

The better example is the poster of Perfume “Flower by Kenzo” (Picture 17).



Picture 17



Picture 18

The group of *Aesthetic body* is supplemented with the picture of “Grant’s” whisky (Picture 18).



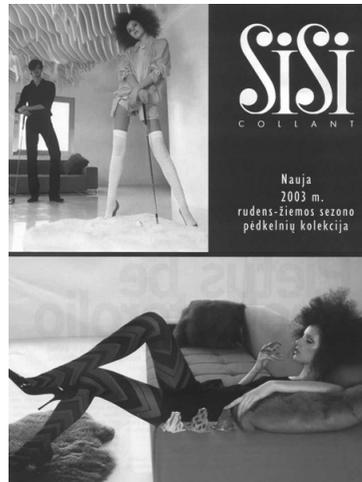
Picture 19

c) though another poster from the same series (Picture 19) is much worse and clearly belongs to the category of *Provocative/ seductive intimate body* that in the model is treated as private element supplement to *Social body*.

The part of the advertisements of *Provocative/ seductive body* uses the strategy of desire and sexual satisfaction. Some similar pictures: the ad of “Krekenava’s” meat and sausages (Picture 20) that had a huge nationwide resonance and was prohibited of demonstration.



Picture 20



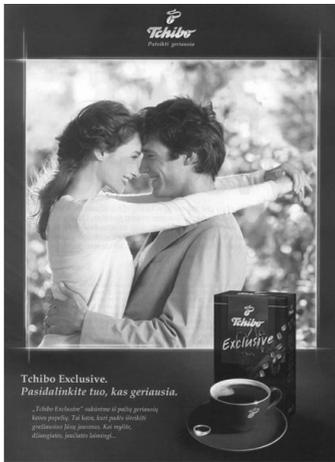
Picture 21

The slogan asks: “what are you thinking of? And answers: right, it is time for lunch.” Conclusion: when the meat or/ and woman is desired/ preferred. Other appealing examples are the posters advertising stockings (Picture 21) and perfume (Picture 22).

d) And the last group – *Flirting intimate body* – and the pattern of inviting/ playing, the possession of Eros/ and the domain of euphoria and astonishment. Examples and illustrations of afore mentioned cases are “Tchibo” coffee (Picture 23), services of “Tele 2” (Picture 24), perfume “Echo” (Picture 25), and the wardrobe “Mexx” (Picture 26).



Picture 22



Picture 23



Picture 24



Picture 25



Picture 26

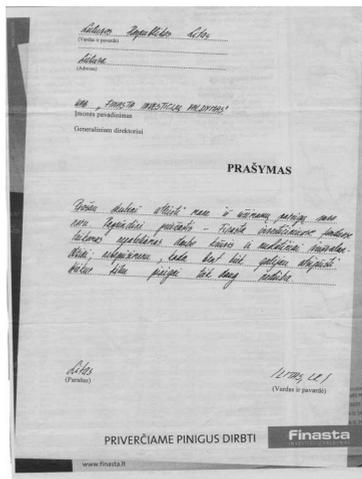
To sum it up, the illustrations that were discussed allow concluding that types of persuasion may intertwine in single visual discourse.

## Communicative Value of the Verbal in the Visual Discourse

The advertisements of pension, investment funds, portfolio management, and equity brokerage, etc. fill the pages of financial journals. Majority of the publicities of this kind of press are pure texts without any illustrations like the ad of the Sentinel Real Estate Corporation (Picture 27) or Finasta Company (Picture 28).



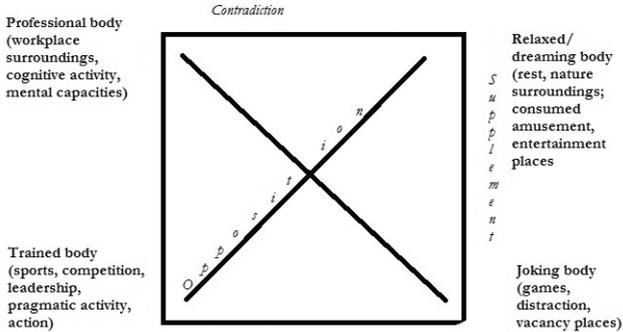
Picture 27



Picture 28

Since the object of this article's research is the meaning of the body language (a set of communication patterns of portrayed bodies) in printed, only those pictures that contain human body figures were selected, despite the dominated trend of purely verbal commercials (Pictures 27, 28).

Analyses of the relationship of the body with the fund/ service it publicizes draws a conclusion that, what seemed to be quite unimportant in the ads of women magazines – the background, that is the surroundings – obtains significant importance in the ads of the funds. According to this factor, activity of body changes as well as the features of the companies advertised. Such a classification of the fund ads criteria develops a different communication pattern (Figure 3).

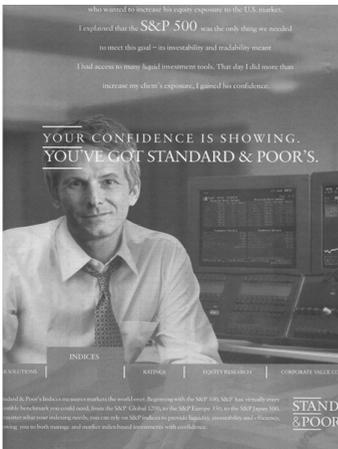


**Figure 3.** Relationship between the Depicted Body and the Advertised Product according the Body Activity in the Surroundings of the Picture

The main contradiction is that between *Professional* (job/ work environment) and *Relaxed/ dreaming* (leisure activity/ the time of rest) body.

- a) *Professional body* may be associated with the process of thinking that is cognitive activity. Typical example is the ad of “Standard and Poor’s” company (Picture 29).

The figurative imagery of the picture corresponds with the title of corporation of such type. Visual discourse in this case depicts a man who is looking sincerely at the addressee; there are two computers behind him. On their monitors, when staring or looking carefully, one may see columns of various numbers and some charts. The grey symbolizes routine, standard and tiredness of the worker, the text confirms the impression: “It was the end of the week and I got an urgent call from a client”. The confidence is gained through the simplicity and serious analytic work that is made whenever the client requests.



Picture 29

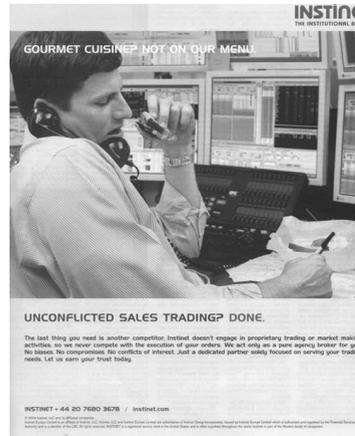
Another commercial also stresses the readiness to work day and night without any breaks for the clients' interests (Picture 30).

Such a difficult work brings results that help to earn clients' trust.

- b) Professional body has a contradictory image – *Dreaming body* that is related with the relaxation and entertainment. Intermediate representation of those two types may be illustrated with the publicity of the “Bank of New York” (Picture 31) that portrays a working elegant woman maybe dreaming or maybe ruling the work-team serving the racer's driver.

Again the text explains the idea of the commercial: “Would you like to spend more time on investment performance and less on operations?” Together with the double slogan (in black and red colors) “Let our team of experts help you stay on track” it leads to interpretation that provided services of the bank of New York give an extra award – leisure time in racing and even more – the first place in championship.

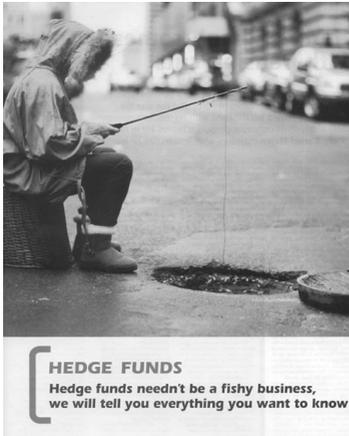
We may conclude that the visual (depicted body) is not enough to generate the meaning the sender has encoded. Another example from this category – publicity of “Hedge funds” (Picture 32) – offers fishing.



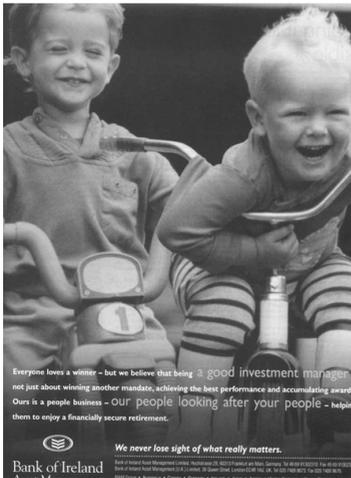
Picture 30



Picture 31



Picture 32



Picture 33

The meaning of this ad’s visual discourse also requires a verbal explanation – “Hedge funds needn’t be a fishy business, we will tell you everything you want to know.” The orientation or agitation of the message receiver ranges from small to universal company’s goals and values, from hidden to transparent activity and organizational communication while serving the clients.

Relaxation may be reached by return to happy and safe childhood as in the ad of “Bank of Ireland Asset Management” (Picture 33).

The value of money is supported by other human values: portraying the happy children associates with the service that is careful, precise, and safe, oriented towards relationships among people. “Beloved by parents” and “loving father” remembrance also assures perfect performance. Thus visual commercial’s message, together with the verbal, though, is to prevent clients from bothering with their fortunes themselves.

c) Another contradiction lies between ads emphasizing *Trained body* and commercials stressing *Joking body*,

that is contradictory relationship between serious sport and simply games situations. Active physical activities may be compared with working and job surroundings because it is also intensive, though not cognitive but pragmatic activity that requires certain human efforts, sometimes even brain use. That is why *Professional body* and *Trained body* pair

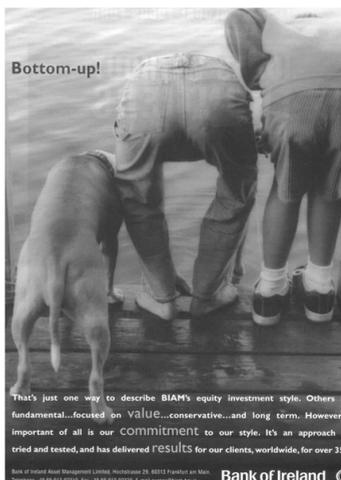
elements supplement each other. Game fury implicates fun, distraction, light riot. A doubt whether there is a contradiction between sport and game may occur, but examples of commercials (i.e. publicity of “GFAS” organization (Picture 34)) allow to generalize that depiction of intense, tight body, suffering lookor serious facial expression convey the message that sport should be decoded as a visual metaphor for hard work, which has nothing in common with a pleasant spare time spending – just playing and socializing. Such conclusion is strengthened by the text message of the discussed ad that stresses the ability to make fast transactions.

- d) In business press ads of distract and *Joking bodies* that also advertise such serious institution as the “Bank of Ireland” (Picture 35) might be observed.

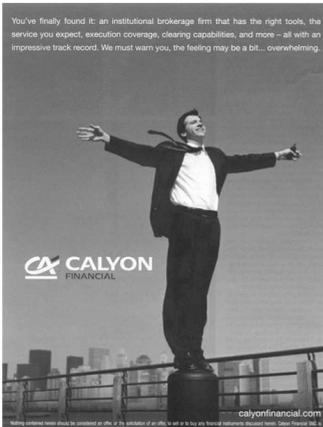
This ad coincides with quite a long slogan below the picture, referring to a distinctive style of investment of the bank mentioned. Thus it symbolizes novelty and might be targeted to younger audiences, new clients. The publicity of “Calyon financial” (Picture 36) depicts a man in euphoria for the same purpose – to emphasize exceptional style of work.



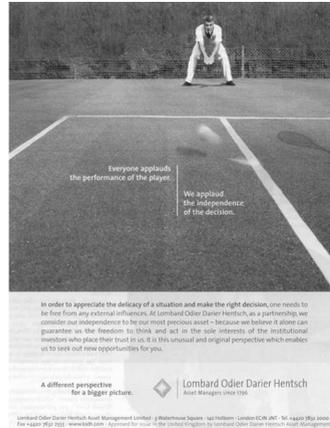
Picture 34



Picture 35



Picture 36



Picture 37

That a contradiction between a body in exercise and sports training truly exists prove the “Lombard Odier Darier Hentsch” ad example (Picture 37).

It depicts a referee, who is watching the tennis match. However, only the tennis ball and a shadow of a racket may be seen. This publicity is a good example of supplement relationship between *Trained body* and *Professional body* ad groups, as the text of the ad also emphasizes the cognitive action: “everyone applauds the performance of the player; we applaud the independence of the decision.”

To sum it up, the body figures of business press ads are oriented towards the slogan and serve only as better or worse illustrations of verbal message. The visual discourse only supplements the utterance, decorates it; the presented view does not produce any clearly independent effects of the meaning. On the other hand, such visual-verbal strategy not only introduces abstract services by easing the process of comprehension, but it can also never be false; the verbal context confirms truth of its visual message. Thus it helps the encoder to assure bigger confidence in a company/ product/ services advertised.

## Relation with the Verbal and Glance Role in the Persuasive Pattern of Visual

There are three types of relationships between the utterance and the image/ portrayal/ simulacrum (Baudrillard's term, 2002):

- a) that of support like in the ad of "Lombar Odier Darier Hentsch" and tennis (picture 37);
- b) that of ruling: much more often the case when visual meaning and image interpretations are guided by verbal message like ads of "Ireland bank" (Picture 33);
- c) that of serving: or the verbal serves the visual to associate product with the result or preferred behaviour like in ads of women press (Picture 2).

Analysed set of business press advertisements follow quite the same pattern (Figure 4), but perform another function and thus generate different meaning as visual discourse from women press do.

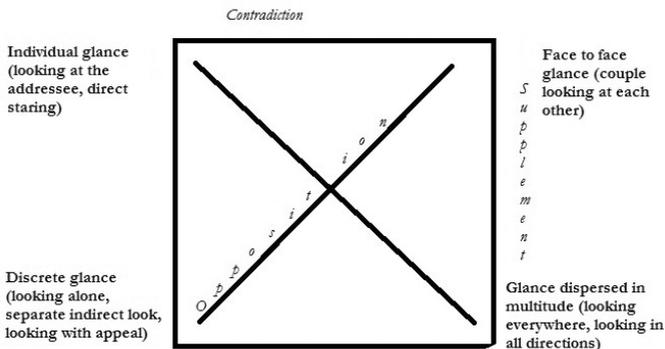
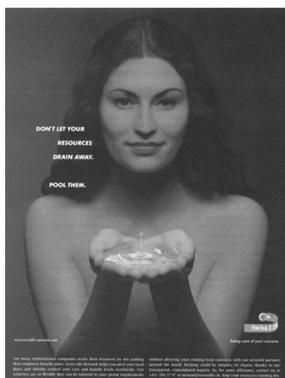


Figure 4

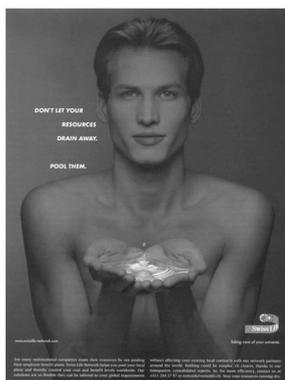
In business journals' commercials, depicted glance does not invite to have any affairs or adventures, but tries to establish relation of a mutual trust and to convince of having enough competence to perform certain operations with the asset and fortune. These roles do not change despite the portrayed figure and features of the glance: no matter the couple



It may be asked whether there are any commercials using naked body to advertise the funds and other serious business products and vice versa – any ads of cosmetics, for example, which explain in detail the use of the product? Of course, there are – like the publicities of “Swiss Life” Company (Pictures 43, 44) or the ads of pills Neurozan (Picture 45) or Vichy cosmetics (Picture 46) that use the strategy of scientific argumentation, and yet they are untypical and rare.



Picture 43



Picture 44



Picture 45



Picture 46

To sum it up, identified glance depiction strategies are used to capture the attention of the addressee and to direct it to the verbal text in order to fulfil planned rendering of the message of the commercials.

## Conclusions

Commercials by their nature (deliberate and paid content) are exclusive phenomenon and a popular research object in visual communication studies. Despite the various methodological approaches that are applied, three elements of impact may be distinguished as the repetitive ones. These key items are: meaning (message), persuasion (process), and pleasure (outcome). The relation between the three units allows disclosing body language patterns of visual discourse.

Body functions in visual discourse vary between two communicative levels of the visual text message: that of utterance and that of annunciation. On the level of utterance two main relationship patterns – the link between the depicted body and the product or service advertised (1) and the connection between the body and its activity depicting context (2) – occur. The level of annunciation discloses the main glance strategies: the receiver of the message is involved into communication by individual gaze, discreet look, conveyed face-to-face communication, and dispersed multitude of mob stares. Mysterious look supplements the direct glance strategy and face-to-face communicative values are augmented and communicated through a glance caught in every angle of the picture. Four main schemes – social, aesthetic, intimate and flesh body language patterns are used in this communicative level of visual discourse in order to render provided values. The pleasure effect is generated through the art and beauty of the body. Flirting erotic body adds value to this communicative scheme. Social body is associated with the benefit and becomes a tool for material bonus. As a result, this body language model serves as a source for delivering the deliberate effects of the visual message.

A link between the depicted body and the product or service advertised is usually expressed in two conflicting pairs: *Being for others*

vs. *Being for oneself* and *Being with others* vs. *Being with other* (presence of two). The first one helps to hide the artificial value inscription to the meaning while the other three are used to associate positive body features with the product or service advertised.

Connection between the body and its activity depicting context signifies either cognitive or affective body language pattern use and is aimed to reach different target audiences as well as to create various effects – from social capital as benefit utility to amusement delights and entertainment pleasures. *Professional body* in a workplace is associated with the brain capacities, intellectual power and other cognitive aspects. Sport context turns it into *Trained body* adding pragmatic dimension to the category. *Professional body* is opposed to *Joking body* that is involved in various games as well as *Relaxed body* is in opposition to *Trained body* and supplements *Joking body* with the context of nature, vacations, rest and entertainment.

All identified schemes and patterns lead to a conclusion that body in visual discourse functions simultaneously as means of meaning expression and as an instrument of persuasion. These overlaps make the commercials so simple in transmission of the message meaning and so effective in offering unnecessary benefits and pleasures.

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## Įtikinėjantis vaizdas: kūno kalba ir reikšminiai ryšio modeliai periodinės spaudos reklamoje

Aurelija Juodytė

### Santrauka

Populiariosios kultūros įsigalėjimas neatsiejamas nuo vizualios komunikacijos. Iš transliuojamų (jei prieš tai sakiniuose nevertotas šis žodis, jei vartotas, prašau palikti kintančių) vaizdų išsiskiria reklama – vizualus suplanuoto poveikio ir apmokėto rezultato pranešimas. Nors išankstinis šio tipo pranešimų tikslingumas jų gavėjams yra žinomas, tačiau tai nemažina reklaminio diskurso įtakos – reklama daro ir turi poveikį savo adresatams. Straipsnyje nagrinėjama, kaip vizualiame periodinės spaudos reklamos diskurse vaizduojamas kūnas: tiriama, kaip kinta kūno kalbos samprata pasakymo ir sakymo situacijose, kokiomis priemonėmis susiejamas kūnas, produktas / paslauga ir pranešimas bei kokiais keliais siekiama įtikinti adresatą; koks pranešimo gavėjas implikuojamas vizualiame reklamų žinutėse.

Tyrimas aprėpia laisvalaikio ir profesinę, pramogų ir akademinę, vyrams ir moterims skirtą, taip pat tarptautinę ir nacionalinę periodinę spaudą. Semiotinei analizei atlikti atrinkti 4 penkerių (2000–2004) metų laikotarpio leidiniai ir jų priedai (pirmų metų spaudos reklamos atrinktos iš visų prieinamų kiekvieno leidinio egzempliorių, vėlesnių metų – iš kiekvienais metais skirtingo sezono arba metų ketvirčio kiekvieno leidinio egzempliorių) užtikrina nustatytų komunikacinių modelių universalumą. Pasirinktas analizės periodas uni-

kalus tuo, kad tada Lietuvoje komerciniais pagrindais susiformuoja kasdieniu ritmu, t. y. be ilgalaikio rezonanso ar sisteminių pokyčių, dirbanti žiniasklaida. Toks periodas leidžia fiksuoti mūsų šalyje nenagrinėto reklamos pranešimų aspekto *status quo* (lot. esamą padėtį). Straipsnyje pateiktos reklamų analizės atskaitos tašku laikoma kūno raiška. Reklamos nagrinėjamos remiantis hipoteze, kad žmogaus kūno vaizdavimas funkcionuoja kaip komunikacinė schema, kuria reklaminius pranešimas išiuo reklamuojamą prekę ar paslaugą vartotojui (pranešimo gavėjui) ar pranešimo adresatui įteigia reklamos užsakovams aktualią pranešimo interpretaciją (perskaitymą).

Atlikus reklamų analizę nustatytos šios vaizduojamo kūno ir pranešimo reikšmės ryšio kategorijos:

1. Buvimas sau;
2. Buvimas su kitu;
3. Buvimas su kitais;
4. Buvimas kitiems.

*Buvimo sau* tipo reklamose dažniausiai vaizduojamas vienas į numanomą reklamos adresatą (sakymo dimensija) arba į reklamuojamą produktą (pasakymo lygmuo) žiūrintis žmogus. Šią kategoriją papildo *Buvimo su kitu* vizualių reklaminių pranešimų tipas, kai vaizduojama pora (teigiami dviejų žmonių santykiai) reklamuojamą dalyką paverčia adresato siekiamu vertingu objektu. Šiai kategorijai priešingas *Buvimo su kitais* reklamų tipas, oponavimą dviejų žmonių vaizdiniui sustiprinantis *Buvimo kitiems* tipo pranešimais. Šiose reklamose vaizduojama daug žmonių, tačiau jei pirmu atveju pranešimo reikšmė eksplikuojama žmonių sambūrio vaizdais, antru atveju vaizduojamų personažų draugė, juos siejantis ryšys padeda užmaskuoti įtikinėjantį pranešimo pobūdį / komunikuojamą paskatą. Straipsnyje padaryta išvada, kad vizualaus pranešimo reikšmei svarbus vaizduojamo kūno veikimo kontekstas – pagal veiklą vaizduojamus kūnus galima suskirstyti į dvi prieštaraujančias poras: profesionalus (darbingas) kūnas vs atsipalaidavęs (pailsėjęs) kūnas ir treniruotas (sportiškas) vs žaidimų (pramogaujantis) kūnas. Taigi reklamos adresatui siūlomas socialinės, estetiškos ar intymios, instinktyvios (fiziologinės) kūno vertės. Išanalizavus reklamas nustatytos *individualaus, diskretiško, akis į akį* ir *visa aprėpiančio* žvilgsnio strategijos, kurios į komunikacinį procesą įtraukia reklamų adresatą. Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad vizualiam diskurse pakinta tradicinis kūno kalbos supratimas: kūnas virsta įtikinėjimo įrankiu,

kuris tuo pačiu metu ir generuoja pranešimo reikšmę, ir maskuoja sutartinį konstruojamos reikšmės ir ja perduodamos vertės pobūdį.

**Esminiai žodžiai:** diskursas, iškodavimas, įtikinėjimas, kūnas, kūno kalba, modelis, pasakymas, periodinė spauda, pranešimas, prasmė, reikšmė, reklama, reklamavimas, sakymas, santykis, semiotika, strategija, struktūra, šūkis, vertė, vizualinis, užkodavimas.

### About the author

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