The language of advertising.

A qualitative study of gender representation in print advertisements.

(Images have been removed from the electronic edition due to copyright reasons.)

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay was to investigate and highlight the strengths and shortcomings of Critical Discourse Analysis and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis when used as an analytical tool. By comparing the representation of women and men in print advertisements, and how there may be a difference in language being used to describe both genders, including the use of sexist language, a critique of CDA and FCDA could be established. In order to establish this all areas of the advertisements had to be taken into account, including layout and images used. The ads were read and interpreted through CDA and FCDA in order to investigate and identify the strengths, and any shortcomings, of the theories. The investigation shows that, although CDA and FCDA scholars could argue that women tended to be described in a more sexist manner overall, a counterargument could also be made on most accounts. The argument which supported sexism was especially observable through how women’s bodies were more often fragmented in images and positioned in more sexual positions, but also how the advertisements not only reinforced stereotypes as well as using distinctly negative language in their descriptions. However, gender stereotyping against men in the ads was also prevalent, which allowed an argument against CDA and FCDA’s theories about existing power struggles. Although the investigation did manage to substantiate the critique regarding how CDA and FCDA view the differences in gender representations, therefore fulfilling its aim, perhaps a more accurate result would have been possible to achieve if more print advertisements had been used in the investigation. However, this was not possible due to the qualitative nature of the investigation.

Keywords: Print advertisements, gender representation, sexist language, Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, FCDA, CDA
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1. Introduction

The importance of how we interpret language as individuals is something which has been widely discussed within linguistics, resulting in many different theories. At the forefront of these theories is the concept of discourse. Discourse has been described as a concept which “works above the level of grammar and semantics to capture what happens when […] language forms are played out in different social, political and cultural arenas.”¹ However, it is how language should be interpreted in the different arenas that has been the topic of most discussion as theorists have different approaches on how to analyse language. Two theories, which are concerned with how power is perceived in language, are Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as well as Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis or Feminist Discourse Analysis (FCDA/FDA). CDA has been most concerned with “translating the notion of structure from the level of the sentence, i.e., grammatical relations such as subject-verb-object, to the level of longer text.”² In contrast, feminist theorists have used FCDA/FDA in order to further explore how power relations are portrayed through language, and hence they are “concerned with the analysis of inequality and the way that discursive means are used to maintain the status quo.”³ The “status quo” in this context refers to the overall gender differences between men and women, with the term “gender” in this essay referring to “the sexualized identity of each individual”⁴, and how men in today’s society tend to hold more dominant positions within social, political and cultural areas, as well as within language use itself.

This essay will, by investigating and comparing how language is used to portray men and women in print advertisements, establish a critique of the way in which CDA and FCDA can be used as an analytical tool when comparing how genders are represented in this particular medium. The overall aim of the essay is therefore to explore some of the complexities and difficulties which may arise when using CDA and FCDA in any analysis which aims to highlight fundamental differences between genders. This will be done by examining a carefully selected sample of ads which could all be argued to contain some form of gender inequality when viewed from a feminist perspective, resulting in a way of distinguishing qualitative differences in language. The essay will aim to take into account ads which highlight particular gender differences, whilst also aiming to use similar ads for similar products for both genders. The fundamental aim of the investigation is therefore to discover whether CDA and FCDA have limitations when examining the qualitative differences in the ads, with possible shortcomings when analysing adverts which are aimed at different genders, and which possibly aim to sell different products. In order to properly investigate the ads, this essay will begin with a background section which introduces the existing theories of Critical Discourse Analysis and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, but also a section which verifies how language is used to establish and reproduce power relations and social hierarchies in society. This is then followed by a section which introduces the methods by which linguistic analysis can be conducted on advertisements, and later the overall method of this essay, before presenting the advertisements which are to be analysed in this investigation in order to establish a critique of CDA and FCDA.
2. Background

This section will serve as an introduction to the concept of discourse, as well as to provide a discussion on the different discourse analyses which underpin the discussion on gender representation in print advertisements with which this essay is primarily concerned. The following sections will furnish the reader with an insight into Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as well as Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). Since the analytical methodology which is most central to the theme of this essay is FCDA, the main focus will be on the background and development of the theories which have influenced this analysis. To some extent, criticism of the two kinds of discourse analysis will also be touched upon in the sections which follow. This will tie in with the section which provides an overview of the methods offered by linguistics for analysing advertisements which will demonstrate how the purpose of print advertisements has changed, whilst also emphasising the features which are important to consider when analysing the adverts in terms of a FCDA approach. This in turn will be analysed in terms of its scientific validity.

2.1 Discourse

As previously described, discourse is “a connected series of utterances by which meaning is communicated, esp. one forming a unit for analysis; spoken or written communication regarded as consisting of such utterances.” Discourse is therefore concerned with how language reflects a society’s social, political and cultural stance, and is hence a concept which is made up of “a set of sanctioned statements which

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have some institutionalised force”⁶ that can influence how individuals react and behave when faced with different situations. Certain theorists therefore also believe that there can be multiple discourses at work since no two interpretations of language are the same and, hence, they support the view that “there is no single format for the analysis of word meanings and that different words may have meanings of different types.”⁷ However, because discourse analysts are concerned with the explanation of language meaning from all perspectives, they are forced to include the viewpoints and answers to all social questions which, in turn, compels them to combine different voices and positions and order “them in a particular way, for instance setting up hierarchical relations between them so that one voice is used to frame another or to inflect another.”⁸ This means that any questions concerning power in language is also a question of discourse, making relevant all questions regarding “social class, gender and race relations”⁹ within language.

Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak are prominent figures in the field of discourse analysis, as is Sara Mills, who views the topic from a feminist perspective. These practitioners consider discourse to be the important level of focus when examining the exercise of power through language. Mills states that discourse theorists in general are well aware of power struggles within society and language; however, they find it difficult to describe it. She argues that they are “more concerned with mapping out the multiple sites where power is enacted and negotiated”¹⁰ rather than working to overthrow an unequal system. Fairclough and Wodak, however,

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⁹ ibid, p. vii
argue that discourse not only “helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, […] it also] contributes to transforming it.”11 They argue that, since discourse is so important from a social perspective, “discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the way in which they represent things and position people.”12 However, since discourse theorists are so divided on the issue of power, different types of analyses have arisen which, in turn, advocate different means by which power relations can be portrayed in language, but also how they should be changed. This includes Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDIA).

2.1.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Norman Fairclough is considered to be one of the founders of the approach known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and he was also a leading figure when it developed into a combined “network of scholars”13 in the early 1990s. This network includes theorists such as Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen, Teun van Dijk and Ruth Wodak and, while they together have formed a school of thought concerning CDA14, their approaches on how to analyse still contain several differences. Fairclough has since developed his approach into what he refers to as his “three-tiered model” for analysing discourse, which consists of perceiving discourse as “text, written or

12 ibid.
14 ibid, p. 5
spoken, as *discourse practice* and as *social practice.*”\textsuperscript{15} This means that he analyses the text, and then he identifies how it was produced and how it can be interpreted in terms of social context, making it three-dimensional.

Discourse analysts can also disagree on what is most important to analyse within a text. They maintain that all texts can be analysed in different ways and consequently, different conclusions can be reached by different analysts regarding the meaning behind a text. Although there is arguably a limit as to the range of possible meanings that can be recovered from a text, “different understandings of the text result from different combinations of the interpreter”\textsuperscript{16} when it comes to analysing “social positionings, knowledge [and] values.”\textsuperscript{17} While different researchers apply different theories and analytical approaches, and each has an interest in finding meanings in texts which corresponds with their own interests, they still aim to retain “their respective scientific methodologies […] while remaining self-reflective of their own research process.”\textsuperscript{18} However, by reflecting on a text in terms of its social and perhaps even political value, a discourse analyst, at least to some degree, is forced to take into account “both the immediate conditions of the situational context [of a text] and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures.”\textsuperscript{19} This is not to say that all discourse analysts choose to put the most emphasis on social structures as, for example, Mills argues that discourse analysts are more concerned with “the internal structures of interaction in their immediate context [rather than being…]

\textsuperscript{17} ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Wodak, Ruth, & Meyer, Michael. eds. 2009. *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed, p. 3
\textsuperscript{19} Fairclough, Norman. 2001. *Language and Power*. 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, p. 21
concerned to relate these individual dialogues to larger social structures,” resulting in a move away from societal analysis.

For those discourse analysts who are concerned with societal analysis, power in society is a concept which tends to be analysed. The aim within CDA regarding power relations is not to expose why inequalities exist, but rather how language is used by those in power to exert their power. Analysts are, therefore, “interested in the way discourse (re)produces social domination, that is, the power abuse of one group over the others, and how dominated groups may discursively resist such abuse.” The reason this is considered to be an important issue within CDA is that analysts find those texts which “encourage the acceptance of unequal arrangements of power as natural and inevitable, perhaps even as right and good” are those which tend to have both a symbolic and material effect on human beings. Language is not, however, power on its own, but rather it allows those in control of discourse a means to empower themselves and, in turn, language becomes powerful by the way in which it is used. The analysis of power within language from a CDA perspective therefore often aims to analyse from “the perspective of those who suffer”, since it is those in power who are not only “responsible for the existence of inequalities [but...] also have the means and the opportunity to improve conditions.”

As with any theory, CDA has not been without criticism. The very methodology which CDA rests upon has, for example, been criticised as being inconsistent. Widdowson argues that there is “a lack of impartiality in the way that

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23 ibid.
method is applied” and that this leads to an analysis which only shows that which the researcher intuitively feels “will provide results that have ideological meaning” whilst at the same time ignoring contradictory data. However, it is important to remember that any criticism of CDA must be aimed at specific research or its researcher, since CDA as a whole contains so many differing viewpoints, some which are ever changing. Because of this, CDA cannot be viewed as “a holistic or closed paradigm.” Instead, CDA researchers have to be aware that the term “critical” in itself can be seen as negative, and hence they have to “make their position, research interests and values explicit and their criteria as transparent as possible.” Nevertheless, it is the job of CDA analysts to stay in touch with the current social, economic and political climate in order to properly analyse and critique language and examine how it can be used to highlight issues that are of concern to its advocates, such as “linguistic forms of racism and sexism.”

2.1.2 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

There has not always been a natural connection between language and gender but, as from the 1970s, feminism in particular began exerting an influence as linguists started viewing gender in a more systematic way. The combination of gender studies and linguistics resulted in more empirical investigations arising, which ultimately

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26 ibid.
“resulted in the well-established field of language and gender studies that exists today.”

Early feminism viewed women as a sisterhood, whose solidarity lay only with each other, but this is not how it is perceived today. Instead, feminism today claims that many societal problems are due to gender representation, and the way that it is possible for women and men to have “multiple positionings and multiple identities” which are not always easily defined. According to Mills, feminism ultimately aims to change “the social structure to make it less oppressive to women, and for that matter, to men.”

Feminist critical discourse analysts are, just like some critical discourse analysts, concerned with power relations and how these manifest themselves in society. They tend to investigate how “women as individuals and as members of groups negotiate relations of power. [...] Recent feminist work has moved away from viewing women as simply an oppressed group, as victims of male domination” and instead try to understand how resistance against power is possible in everyday life. Many theorists, for example Mills, argue that the notion which has women being compared and contrasted against each other, resulting in particular views of women being favoured over others, still exists. This is in spite of many efforts by researchers, such as Mills, who are aiming to move away from general statements regarding men and women as a whole. Instead, researchers within FCDA now try to examine “more detailed and mitigated statements about certain groups of women or

33 ibid, p. 195
34 Mills, Sara. 1995. Feminist Stylistics, p. 4
35 Mills, Sara. 1997. Discourse, p. 78
36 Mills, Sara. 1995. Feminist Stylistics, p. 4
men in particular circumstances”\(^{37}\) in order to show what is considered appropriate and even permitted behaviour in today’s society. However, Mills and Mullany still maintain that research about gender and gender issues should still allow some generalisations about both men and women, as long as one recognises that “all men and women do not behave in homogenous ways.”\(^{38}\) Overall, the aim of FCDA is to examine multiple discourses and how these can be related to gender and gender issues.

One of the main reasons why FCDA is so concerned with power relations is the belief that there is still a powerful hierarchical system operating, in which women are forced into “an acceptance of the status quo and prevalent views of women as inferior and sexually available to men, with men as superior.”\(^{39}\) Scholars working within the field of gender studies, such as Sandra Bartky, suggest that authorities such as the law, the police or the media are not the only ones who hold power, but rather that “disciplinary power that inscribes femininity in the female body is everywhere.”\(^{40}\) Gender, according to theorists within FCDA, refers to traits held and assigned to men and women rather than the biological sex, which is something that they consider changeable, as they are “assigned by a culture, socially determined and learned.”\(^{41}\) This is also the supposed cause of discomfort experienced by individuals when they exhibit characteristics which deviate from those which are considered appropriate for their gender by the wider society. This leads to feelings of “inadequacy or [being

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38 ibid, p. 45
40 ibid, p. 95
seen] as the oppressiveness of society’s views of women.” The representation of gender within discourse therefore needs to be analysed as both images and texts may give us an impression as to how roles are constructed, and in turn changed. The alleged sexist views in, for example, the media, “where women are encouraged to see themselves as of less value in relation to men” is claimed to be discrimination against women based solely on gender. Gender is therefore an element which appears in the foreground in a text, when showing men as predominant, as opposed to discussing qualities in terms of what individuals can or cannot do.

As has been previously stated, FCDA generally maintains that there is a possibility of multiple discourses in one text, which women can either comply with or resist, simply because there is such a wide range of institutions and societal structures which, they believe, oppress women. Because of this, many theorists, such as Coates and Cameron, as well as Tannen, are adamant in discussing access to discourses by women, simply because it is evident that “women frequently do not have the same access as men to speaking rights.” The examination and analysis of multiple discourses is necessary in FCDA simply because a text usually is influenced by several people, and hence can advance several viewpoints. Because of this, the importance of gender has to be carefully analysed and validated in every context available.

Discourse as a notion has been positive for FCDA, however, because it

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has enabled the discussion regarding women in a social, political and cultural position to be examined more thoroughly and this has, in turn, resulted in the construction of “scenarios for social change and subject positions for active women as agents.”

It is not just power relations alone which can oppress, but rather language plays a large part within oppression. Language can, according to CDA thinking, be used to control and manipulate a reader into submission, whether physically or mentally with regard to views and opinions. Language within society also exerts control in the sense that the author/speaker assumes that there is a choice in meaning due to the fact that she herself has chosen what to say; however, “the language system pre-exists her and determines what can be stated, mostly without the person’s (sic) being aware of any restriction.” Language can, in this way, affirm the already established status quo, but can also challenge it if one is aware of the difficulties surrounding language. Attempting to change language by, for example, creating gender-neutral or non-sexist terms has in the past proven to be futile, simply because they have been turned sexist just by the context in which they were used. One example of this is the word “chairperson”, as opposed to “chairman”, to refer to both genders, but instead leading to referring to a woman as a “chairperson” whilst a man is still a “chairman”, ultimately distinguishing between the two genders all the same. Because meaning is most often created by society, non-sexist or neutral terms can very simply “lose their neutrality in the ‘mouths’ of a sexist speech community and/or culture.” What FCDA therefore has to do is first to acknowledge the intention of an author while, at the same time, only assume what can be determined from it by

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49 Mills, Sara. 1997. Discourse, p. 103
using the knowledge resources already installed in the minds of the readership, in order to finally determine what can be inferred from the text in order to make it gender-neutral.\textsuperscript{52} FCDA therefore ultimately functions to bring attention to "the way that language works to 'normalise unequal gender roles"\textsuperscript{53} which its proponents claim is necessary to raise awareness about how gender-inequalities operate within society.

As with CDA, FCDA has not been without criticism. Early feminist critics were very adamant in showing how women were being represented in texts, whilst in the process failing to provide the public with a way of analysing other texts in a similar manner. When critics tend to use this kind of criticism of texts, they “position themselves very much within the domain of the phallocentric literary criticism (that is, criticism which generally tends to privilege male opinions and writers),”\textsuperscript{54} which is ultimately what they are aiming to criticise. Wodak asserts that, in the past, FCDA also has had a tendency to put too much emphasis on gender which has, in turn, led to a disregard of other identities such as race and class.\textsuperscript{55} This can result in analyses where “the complex relationship(s) between the many important social factors and phenomena constituting our identities are rarely mentioned, even neglected.”\textsuperscript{56} However, Mills proposes that it is becoming less common for feminist theorists to assume that all men or all women are the same and, instead, they try to show greater awareness of other differences in order to not make their analyses too simplistic. This has resulted in analyses which try to incorporate other manifestations of oppression, such as those which may be found in racism and homophobia within feminist critique.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Mills, Sara. 1995. \textit{Feminist Stylistics}, p. 131
\item \textsuperscript{53} Mills, Sara and Mullany, Louise. 2011. \textit{Language, Gender and Feminism – Theory, Methodology and Practice}, p. 26
\item \textsuperscript{54} Mills, Sara. 1995. \textit{Feminist Stylistics}, p. 14
\item \textsuperscript{55} Wodak, Ruth. 2008. ‘Controversial Issues in Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis.’ In \textit{Gender and Language Research Methodologies}, p. 195
\item \textsuperscript{56} ibid.
\end{itemize}
in order to see if they “may overlap and interact with forms of sexism.”

The reason why different identities, besides just gender, should be taken into consideration within FCDA is clear because of the way in which two readings of the same text may still have different interpretations due to a person’s background, which can be non-relatable to the gender they may have. The fact that one woman differs from another in terms of, for example, intellectual and psychological characteristics can be regarded as a cultural phenomenon, where there are clear differences between for example western women and Muslim women. The alleged sexualisation of western women compared to the cultural choice of some Muslim women to wear a veil, may hold different meanings, depending on the person to whom it is exposed. For some westerners, veiling is seen as oppressive while in many, if not most, instances that may not be the case. Mills argues that western feminists therefore have to be careful in their analyses to ensure “their views of women in other cultures are not based on stereotypes, but are based instead on empirical research and consultation with those women themselves.”

Although power is an important aspect in FCDA, with feminists believing that society’s hierarchical system benefits mainly men, it does not mean that “all men benefit equally from the way that society is structured, since society also oppresses men in different degrees.” However, FCDA aims to make clear how society differentiates between gender, and how that also reflects upon how people view themselves.

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57 Mills, Sara. 1995. Feminist Stylistics, p. 3
58 Mills, Sara and Mullany, Louise. 2011. Language, Gender and Feminism – Theory, Methodology and Practice, p. 20
59 Mills, Sara. 1995. Feminist Stylistics, p. 3
2.2 Language and Power

As has been partially discussed in the sections on CDA and FCDA, language and power can closely correlate. Weiss and Wodak argue that, although they do correlate, one cannot always be derived from the other. They have stated that “power does not derive from language, but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and the long term.” They believe language is a tool to be used when establishing “differences in power in hierarchical social structures.” Similarly, Fairclough argues that it is the reader who brings meaning into a text, and hence language within a text can be used to assert power and in turn “impose assumptions upon readers and interpreters generally.” By doing so, someone in power can relay information that will be interpreted in the way which they would like it to be. He also argues that the relationship between society and a text is indirect, since it is mediated, and since “the values of textual features only become real, socially operative, if they are embedded in social interaction” and that, therefore, makes it possible to influence the perceived meaning of a text as assumed by the readers. This way of thinking is common when analysing power, giving the impression that the meaning of a text must remain undetermined until someone interprets it and, in doing so, reproduces power structures. This produces a text which encourages readers to see the world in a certain way, because the meaning used is “mediated through forms of language which presents as ‘natural’ or ‘common sense’.” The same can, in today’s society, be said about visual communications as

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61 ibid.
62 Fairclough, Norman. 2001. Language and Power. 2nd ed, p. 69
63 ibid, p. 117
64 Simpson, Paul and Mayr, Andrea. 2010. Language and Power – a resource book for students, p. 2
they also shape the way in which we view the world, often in correlation with text, which makes it multimodal. Multimodality describes the juxtaposing of linguistic signifiers with non-linguistic ones, including images and graphological elements, to generate a new and combined meaning which has a different or greater signification than the sum of the components. Visual communication does share qualities with language in general, as it is culturally specific in the sense that different images produce “different visual meanings” in different cultures. Since both language and images can be interpreted differently due to social or cultural differences, some theorists, such as Susan A. Speer, have argued that words in themselves cannot hold a specific meaning, but that we as readers infer the meaning. She argues that this means that there can never be specific words that are, for example, “sexist or egalitarian in their function,” and that we therefore might as well stop trying to enforce what can be seen as ‘non-sexist’ language.

As discussed in the section on FCDA, power plays a large part when discussing and analysing gender differences in language. Fairclough argues that one important aspect of power, as a concept, is how it allows those with power to divide different areas into specific parts in order to keep them “demarcated from each other [resulting in…] a particular ordering of those parts in terms of hierarchical relations of domination and subordination.” This often results in structures being seen as common sense, or natural, since it is projected by those with higher levels of power, onto those who have less. It also results in “integrating people into apparatuses of

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control which they come to feel themselves to be a part of.”  

This includes being seen as, for example, consumers of a certain product. Advertisements and marketing use power in this way in order to influence people by implying that their lives will somehow change by just owning a product, for example “suggesting how ‘happy’ people will become if they buy specific consumer products.”  

Gender differences are also highlighted by the use of power in a similar way, as language can be used as a “tool to constrain, coerce and represent women and men in oppressive ways.”  

Language used in the media plays an important role in how men and women view themselves and, while gender in the past has been viewed as something which a person has acquired, it is now also seen as “something that individuals do/actively perform.”  

This means that gender nowadays also is a construct which a person has control over; however, the general views of society regarding gender are still controlled by those in power. Language is still claimed to be used to produce “an ideological system that regulates the norms and conceptions for ‘appropriate’ gendered behaviour” and, because of this, it is the job of those with power to either change ideological views, or continue to use language to further an ideologically preferred agenda.

### 2.3 Analysing Advertisements

The late nineteenth century marks a turning point not only for general commodities, but also in terms of the availability of advertisements. This was due to the fact that

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70 Mills, Sara and Mullaney, Louise. 2011. *Language, Gender and Feminism – Theory, Methodology and Practice*, p. 25  
71 ibid, p. 41  
72 ibid.
this period was the time in history when companies could physically make more of products than was necessary. This resulted in increased competition for market share, and the products which had previously been unbranded were now able to compete with other products based on having specific qualities.\footnote{Myers, Greg. 1994. \textit{Words in Ads}. London: Edward Arnold, p. 20} The size of ads began to grow in newspapers and posters, eventually culminating in the first ever full page ad appearing in a publication. This, as well as the fact that the quality of newspapers and magazine improved, allowed the advertising business to expand by experimenting not only with language, but also with images.\footnote{ibid, p. 21} However, from World War I and beyond, markets for household-goods stopped expanding which resulted in advertisers having to reconsider their marketing strategies. The response was not to produce less, but instead what was “proposed was that consumers should consume more.”\footnote{ibid, p. 23} Ads became focused upon targeting consumers, with the aim of convincing them that advertisers’ products were now indispensable to everyday life.

Advertisers employ several techniques in order to enhance the appeal of the product they are trying to sell. Two techniques which are common are that of hard selling ads versus soft selling ads. Hard selling ads are designed to persuade the consumer of the imperative of buying the product immediately, by either “playing up their product’s merits and qualities”\footnote{Simpson, Paul and Mayr, Andrea. 2010. \textit{Language and Power – a resource book for students}, p. 34}, or by using statements such as ‘buy now’ or ‘limited availability’. In contrast, soft sell is not as urgent in making a sale, but rather plays on the product’s general appeal\footnote{ibid.} and also includes general brand promotion which does not necessarily aim to sell a specific product. Two concepts that overlap with the hard versus soft sell is referred to as ‘reason’ and ‘tickle’ which describe why
one should buy an ad. ‘Reason’ ads often “suggest a motive or reason for purchase while tickle ads tend to appeal to humour, emotion and mood.” 78 The same factors may also be relevant when considering why an ad may have long or short copy accompanying the images, as these different techniques are all employed in order to invoke a specific response from consumers. If a brand is successful enough in its advertisement then, over time, consumers will come to know their ads simply by association with, for example, a specific typeface. Once a brand association is that strong, a company may not even have to put its name on the ads, as the other signifiers present will be sufficient to enable brand recognition. 79

Ads themselves are often multimodal in the sense that they make use of both text and images when trying to sell a product. It has long been believed in advertising that images are superior to text simply because “‘pictures do not lie’, [and…] the audience will believe what it sees illustrated, especially if it is a photograph.” 80 Kress and van Leeuwen argued that multimodal texts with images and writing “may carry differing and even conflicting meanings – the writing may convey one set of meanings and the images another.” 81 This poses a problem when analysing advertisements, as one has to decide which element is most valid for interpretation. The same goes for ads with just images 82, as they too can invite multiple interpretations, depending on social and cultural differences. The difference in to whom the ad is directed also comes into play when analysing, as the pronoun “you”,

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80 Myers, Greg. 1994. Words in Ads, p. 135
82 Myers, Greg. 1994. Words in Ads, p. 150
often is used because the advertisers have no certain way of knowing who is reading whilst, at the same time, it is “powerful because it is slippery.”\(^{83}\) It is important for advertisements to seem personal, in order to attract a wider audience, whilst staying completely removed from, for example, class or gender. By using the pronoun “you”, the ads allow the readers to see themselves in the situation which the ad depicts, however far the addressee may be from that situation. In contrast, the use of “we” in an ad is difficult as it can either be seen as “not including or including the person who is spoken to”\(^{84}\) making it difficult for the advertisers to predict the effect of the ad, since it is up to the reader to recover the intended usage through context. Similarly, the use of “I” requires a person the reader can relate to, with the “I” speaking either “as the potential consumer, the endorser or the sceptic”\(^{85}\) of the product which is for sale. This is also difficult due to the fact that not all ads will resonate with everyone, as based on differences in gender, class or culture, as the “I” is often juxtaposed with a person depicted in a photograph, resulting in the readers imagining the model is speaking to them directly. Relating to this, the pronouns “he” and “she” also tend to be used to imply familiarity to the reader, as these pronouns “refer to someone known to the reader”\(^{86}\) either through the ad or because it is relatable to someone in the reader’s life. Although most ads have the aim of selling a product, they can also be used to “amuse, inform, misinform, worry or warn.”\(^{87}\) Ultimately, an advertisement shows the availability of a product to the public\(^{88}\), whether this product is a physical product which can be bought, or if it is the company promoting its own brand, or corporate image.

\(^{83}\) Myers, Greg. 1994. *Words in Ads*, p. 79
\(^{84}\) ibid, p. 81
\(^{85}\) ibid, p. 83
\(^{86}\) ibid, p. 85
\(^{88}\) ibid, p. 74
As consumerism has grown and advertisements changed, so has the image portrayed within ads. There is a considerable divide between those who produce advertisements and those who end up purchasing the products,\(^89\) which enables the producers to have “a massive and unremitting influence”\(^90\) on the everyday lives of consumers by affecting what they buy. That is not to say that the public is unaware of its assigned role, but rather it is very much aware, and Fairclough for example argues that the role of consumers is even a “desirable role”\(^91\) for some simply because of the status associated with it. It is because of this that advertisers categorize their products by the intended consumers so as to target them efficiently, ultimately adding further to the status of being a consumer due to the products one may purchase.

The way in which advertisements and their producers most influence consumers is by showing them lifestyles to which they might aspire. By doing so, they “invite them to ‘join’, and to come to see their chosen consumption community (for it is claimed to be merely a matter of choice) with its rapid transformations.”\(^92\) This transforms ads into ideological processes as it encourages spending, and in “leading people to acknowledge and pursue this lifestyle […], advertising is helping to legitimize contemporary capitalism.”\(^93\) Selling a better lifestyle rather than just selling a product ensures that there will be a never-ending product availability, simply because “people can always be dissatisfied.”\(^94\) It is, however, impossible for the producers to know for certain who is going to buy their product, and yet they have to produce their ads with a specific target in mind. This causes them to address what is

\(^90\) *ibid*, p. 161
\(^91\) *ibid*, p. 30
\(^92\) *ibid*, p. 171
\(^93\) *ibid*.
deemed an ideal subject\textsuperscript{95} which the consumer then is forced to have an opinion about. It is not necessary for the consumer to relate to the ideal subject, but rather the aim is for the consumers to want what is presented in the ad, whether or not it is something which fits into their lifestyles already. By presenting, for example, a beautiful celebrity in an ad selling perfume, the implied message is that owning and using the perfume somehow grants access to a perceived lifestyle associated with those who have certain advantages. The ad is “positioning the reader into a discourse of upward aspiration through consumerism”\textsuperscript{96} indirectly, by making assumptions not only about who the target market is, but also what they want.

Although the aim of ads often is upward aspiration amongst its target audience, the meaning behind a text is not displayed in plain sight for the consumer to react to. Instead, it is the reader who has to interpret the text and we, as readers, also assume what a text is implicating by analysing what it actually says and how. It is the role of the consumer to find the implied meaning, whilst the connections are not “made by the text itself.”\textsuperscript{97} Because of this, it is important to take different social perspectives into account when analysing a text, as well as an advertisement, since more than just one interpretation can be deemed the correct one. In turn, different texts also express different social conditions, based on who wrote them and under what circumstances. Kress and van Leeuwen maintain that “because societies are not homogeneous, different media through which texts are constructed will show social differences.”\textsuperscript{98} Social and cultural differences also pose an issue for producers of ads,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{95} Fairclough, Norman. 2001. \textit{Language and Power}. 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed, p. 41
\item \textsuperscript{96} Mills, Sara. 1995. \textit{Feminist Stylistics}, p. 74
\item \textsuperscript{97} Fairclough, Norman. 2001. \textit{Language and Power}. 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed, p. 65
\end{itemize}
as they have to take these into consideration when transferring ads between cultures. They must be aware “that it is often more than words of an ad that need translation” simply because of what may be deemed appropriate behaviour in one culture, may not be appropriate within another. The same can be said for interpretations of ads, as one interpretation often changes to the next. Asking one person’s opinion about an ad may result in a deep “ideologically charged discussion, revealing their political and social position, and their acceptance of, or alienation from, the status quo.” Similarly, interpretations can differ, and this is based solely upon whether readers are “children or adults, women or men, rich or poor, and so on.” The result is that no interpretation can be seen as wrong, and every opinion or critique of an ad is valid. However, just because the message of an ad is criticised does not mean it is not accurate or in touch with reality: instead, the critique is of “the economic, political or social system of the present,” which in turn is seen as unwanted. Similarly, a positive viewpoint regarding ads reaffirms the reader’s belief that the current status quo is appropriate. However, to the “feminist opposed to patriarchy, the gay opposed to heterosexual hegemony, the environmentalist opposed to over consumption, the socialist opposed to capitalism” some ads may promote values which can be seen as anachronistic. It is also within this critique of ads that theories such as CDA and FCDA can find their basis in arguing against unequal power relations.

In terms of gender equality, there is a distinct difference in how ads address women and men. Many ads aimed at women sell their product as a solution to a problem, which the female reader is supposed to recognize as a common problem and

100 ibid, p. 2
101 ibid, p. 69
102 ibid, p. 213
103 ibid, p. 204
in turn “realize that the solution to the problem is contained within the purchase” of the product which is advertised. This affects the views of women, and how they perceive themselves, negatively as even though the problem may not be one that the reader has to endure, she will still perceive the problem as negative. Because of this, “texts construct a notion of what cultures consider is commonsense or natural” leading to prevailing stereotypes. Stereotypes are still very widespread in ads with, for example, ads for household products traditionally being aimed at women whilst car ads are aimed at men. Although there have been detectable changes in recent years, some of the tendencies described are still evident. Car ads aimed at female readers are usually for smaller cars, or present women as part of a couple purchasing a car, whilst men have been known to be portrayed as being “not only lovers but also husbands, fathers, loners, technical experts, general status-seekers and responsible guardians of the planet’s ecology (!).” This not only presents a view of reality which feminist discourse analysts seek to challenge, but also they would argue that it maintains the status quo of men being hierarchically above women. There is a general implication in ads that there is “one kind of intelligence for women and another kind for men” which they believe also ultimately puts men above women through its implication. Taking into account not only what types of ads are aimed at women and men respectively, but also how different they are in the way they are put forth, Mills claims that ads “add up to furthering the stereotyping of women and men as always being different.” At a time when feminism is arguably becoming more influential, there is also a growing clash between the femininity, which certain types of ads appear to suggest is the norm and they therefore seek to promote an ideal, and the idea

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104 Mills, Sara. 1995. *Feminist Stylistics*, p. 73
that women can be equally as strong and independent as men. Advertisements have not been slow to engender this message, especially when selling specifically feminine products. A trend has arisen which, according to Cook, takes the message of feminism, and reproduces it within ads for products with the sole purpose of furthering the status quo. In this sense, there is a “clash of discourse […] which [not] all individuals will notice since it becomes naturalised.”108 Consequently ads and their producers are furthering the notion that feminism and femininity cannot correlate, but that one has to sacrifice one for the other, with a false promise of reconciliation between the two.109

Femininity is also used in other ways to sell products in ads, specifically in a sexual way in order to attract attention. One way in which the female body is used in ads is through fragmentation, letting one part of a female body represent the whole of a woman. It is, according to Mills, far more common for a woman’s body to be fragmented in ads than it is for a man’s body.110 Mills argues that even legislation ensures that it is easier for a woman’s body to be sexualised as “females may be photographed in great detail and in sexually provocative poses, the camera focusing on their sexual characteristics, whereas male sex organs may be represented only if they are not erect, that is if they are specifically not sexual.”111 The level of nakedness which is acceptable in the genre of advertising would not normally extend to the primary sex organs. Nonetheless, the sexualisation of women’s bodies occurs not only in ads which aim to sell female products, but rather the female body is used to sell products which have no connection to it. This is to suggest to the reader that the use of such products may make it possible for them to “attain the qualities of the female if

111 ibid.
they buy the product.”112 Semi-clad women have been known to appear in ads which some may regard as somewhat crude, and which aim to sell anything from cars to even drain-cleaner.113 This sort of sexualisation is common in advertisements and in public culture, resulting in a negative effect regarding “gendered expectations of women, men and heterosexuality”114 since it disregards any viewpoint which disagrees with these views. Mills and Mullany claim it is also common for ads to imply sexism, rather than being obvious with it. It is then “down to the reader to infer sexism”115 even though the implied message of an ad can be quite hard to miss.

3. Method

The investigation in this essay aims to critique CDA and FCDA as analytical tools by using a qualitative approach based on the source material found in printed advertisements. This will be done in order to show how CDA and FCDA may have flaws when arguing on behalf of existing gender roles in ads. The advertisements used, which will be described in detail (and can all be seen in Appendix A), will first be examined through critical discourse analysis from a feminist perspective in order to highlight similarities and differences in their approach, so as to later show possible failings in the argument from that point of view. As previously mentioned, the aim is to use adverts which show similar products intended for both men and women when possible, however in order to effectively show any sort of pattern in regards to feminist critical discourse this may have to be disregarded at times. This may come to show some irregularities regarding how men and women are perceived in print

113 ibid, p. 176
115 ibid, p. 152
advertisements, as it is not possible to compare and contrast an unlimited number of ads. Because the ads were carefully selected with the purpose of pinpointing possible gender inequality to argue for or against, the investigation will only be able to highlight gender roles as they occur in the sample data, leaving out any wider implications on print advertisements as a whole. The method will be based on previous research within critical discourse analysis and feminist critical discourse analysis, but it will therefore also be subjective at this stage to some extent, which is necessary to perform the analysis, and to be able to identify, and distinguish between, the subjectivity and objectivity of CDA/FCDA methodologies. All print ads were found online, by searching for the different sub-categories ‘car advertisements’, ‘food-related advertisements’ and ‘general product advertisements’, and selecting the ads which at first glance had some sexual implications. However, there were some deviations from this method. Regarding the miscellaneous advertisements, such as the organ-donation advertisements, they were found by expressly searching for such ads. The ad from Reborn to be alive was seen online in a different capacity, and I thereafter searched for similar advertisements which were using male models. In terms of the ads from the same companies, such as BMW, Hardee’s and Hunky Dorys, they were found when researching whether companies had put forth similar ads in the past, in order to see if there was any possible pattern regarding how they conducted their marketing. The websites where the ads were found ranged from private blogs to magazine websites and news sites, some showcasing multiple ads with the intention of comparing car ads, for example, but which are not included in this investigation. Meanwhile, other sites had the specific intention of discussing the sexualized nature of the ads. In terms of why certain ads were chosen and others not, the choice was mainly based on the quantity of features discernible, especially to
ensure that they contained some sort of copy to analyse that might point to what may be regarded as gender inequalities. Ads were also chosen depending on the gender of the models, and to whom they were aimed, in order to attempt to keep a balanced sample between the two. Therefore, the features in the ads that will primarily be investigated are the text-copy, images, intended meaning and aim, as well as the presence of any cultural, political or social implications within either the ad’s depiction or its meaning. The investigation will aim to describe each ad separately, directly followed by an in-depth analysis of the features, both from a CDA and FCDA point of view and a critique of these theories, in order, finally, to initiate a general discussion which evaluates them, and establishes any overall implications revealed by the analyses of the ads from an objective standpoint.

4. Results and Analysis

In the following section, print advertisements will be presented in terms of format, grammar, features and discourse in order to, at a later stage, analyse how they convey gender roles from a feminist perspective, whilst also discussing the limitations that this sort of analysis may have. In order to aid the presentation of the advertisements, they have been divided into four different sections. These are car-advertisements, food-related advertisements, general product-advertisements and miscellaneous advertisements. The results of this qualitative investigation, which aimed to compare gender inequalities as they are perceived and put forth in print advertisements, showed several differences and one could find evidence for a difference in power relations as described by FCDA. The investigation aimed to compare both genders in similar ads but, where this was not possible due to a difference in findings, advertisements showing different products were used. The discussion goes into detail
regarding the ads which can be seen in full in Appendix A, and how they individually perpetrate gender inequalities. The analysis will be conducted using terms such as “sexism”, “sexual innuendo”, and “fragmentation”. Sexism in this case is intended to mean “prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex”\textsuperscript{116} whilst innuendo is defined as “an oblique hint, indirect suggestion; an allusive remark concerning a person or thing, esp. one of a depreciatory kind,”\textsuperscript{117} in this discussion viewed from a sexual aspect. When referring to fragmentation, it is the definition made by Mills which is applied, stating that fragmentation is “the process whereby characters in texts are described in terms of their body-parts instead of as people.”\textsuperscript{118}

4.1 Car Advertisements

This first section will feature car advertisements from the companies BMW and Mercedes-Benz, as well as Dale Wurfel Used Vehicles Strathroy for comparison. The first two ads from BMW differ to some degree, but CDA and FCDA can claim that they both have sexist and stereotypical qualities. The first ad features a blonde Caucasian woman, lying on her back. The photo is zoomed in to focus only from the top of her head down to the top of her chest, and she is resting her right hand up towards her neck. She is wearing makeup and her hair appears to have been curled. To the left of her neck is the only text available in the ad which is not added-in. The

\textsuperscript{118} Mills, Sara. 1995. Feminist Stylistics, p. 207
text is printed in white and reads “You know you’re not the first.” The only other text available is an add-in of the BMW logo which reads ‘BMW Premium Selection – Used Cars – www.bmw.gr’, as well as ‘Sheer Driving Pleasure’. The ad makes no use of an actual car in the advertisement, but rather uses a woman to entice readers and consumers. The fact that the reader can only see the woman’s head and shoulder shows fragmentation of her and her body according to CDA/FCDA. FCDA would argue that the use of fragmentation here insinuates to the reader that this is something which is attainable, especially when considering what the actual tagline of the advert is. As the advert is for second-hand cars, the tagline in itself is not suggestive or sexist; however, since BMW chooses to not have an actual image of a car in the ad the meaning is transferred to relate to the woman. This changes the meaning behind the words “you know you’re not the first”, so as to mean that the reader/consumer is not the first one to have had this woman, making implications on her sexual identity, and hence removing any other characteristics from her identity. From a feminist perspective, the fact that the reader can see no hint of clothing on the model also furthers the sexualisation of her, resulting in a perception that BMW is using her sexuality to sell second-hand cars. However, all the different elements of the ad can be described as non-sexualised when interpreted individually. For example, the tagline of “you know you’re not the first” could be argued as being very applicable since the advert is for used cars, and holds no sexual innuendo when used on its own. Separating the different elements of the ads show limitations to FCDA as the feminist argument can only be fully applied when the ad is discussed as a whole.

The second BMW ad features a Caucasian woman and man in a bed with white sheets, with the man on top of the woman, who is wearing black underwear. She is holding her hands up behind his head, whilst he is holding himself up above
her body. The ad is simulating intercourse, but instead of showing the woman’s face, the man is staring at a magazine fold showing a red BMW car. The only text in the ad is written in white across the man’s torso and reads “The ultimate attraction.” In the top right corner is a BMW logo. The ad makes similar implications as the first BMW ad; however, it also places implications on men as a homogenous group. The woman here is also fragmented, but this time it is only her upper body which is visible, and her head is obscured by a magazine featuring the BMW car advertised. Removing her head and face from shot also completely removes her identity as a person, as ultimately it could be anyone under that magazine. Coupling this with the tagline “The ultimate attraction” makes an implication on the man in the advert as well, as it implies that it is not the woman he is attracted to, but rather the car. He could ultimately be having intercourse with anyone, the woman is not what matters here, but rather it is the car. This puts an assumption on men as well, as all men are implied to favour cars over whomever they share their bed with, and what car they drive is what is most important to them in life. This ad is therefore not only open to the charge of being sexist in the way that it fragments and belittles the woman, but also because of the stereotypes it enforces on men as a group. An argument against the feminist argument of sexualisation in this advert is difficult as the ad itself makes use of a sexualised pose between the man and woman, and therefore infers it into the subtext of the ad.

The Mercedes-Benz ads are quite different from each other, but they use a similar strategy to the BMW ads, as they too place implications on gender. The first one features a red convertible with the top down parked in an empty parking lot, with a backdrop featuring the last rays from a sunset and multiple mountains. There are no people in the image, and no driver. The only text in the ad is written across the blue
The name “Mercedes-Benz” is printed in white in the bottom-right corner of the ad, as well as their logo being displayed in the top-right corner. The advert does make use of the actual car that they are trying to advertise, but it is rather the tagline which reproduces stereotypes on both men and women. The tagline “Men talk about women, sports and cars. Women talk about men inside sports cars” assumes that men can have no other interests than women, sports and cars, not only making the assumption that all males who buy Mercedes-Benz cars are heterosexual, but also that only men buy sports cars rather than also perhaps buying for example family cars. Women are presented in a way that is suggestive of stereotyping, as they are also all assumed to be heterosexual, as well as only being interested in rich men who can afford fancy cars. It is implied that women cannot buy sports cars, that they have no interest in doing so, but also that they have nothing better to talk about than men. The sexist stereotyping in the ad therefore removes agency both from men and women, assuming that life revolves around the other gender. A compelling, but in no way definitive, interpretation could also understand the intention as being that, hierarchically, women are beneath men as they cannot afford the luxuries which men can. A limitation to the feminist reading of the ad could argue that statistically men and women have different viewpoints when buying cars, whether it be a sports car or family car, and since the ad itself removes agency from both genders, it does not overtly describe gender inequalities.

The second ad from Mercedes-Benz features eight women’s breasts, all placed next to each other to make a square, covered in what appears to be a black silky sheet. In the centre of the sheet, the words “8 Airbags” appear in a white typeset in white. The only other text is in gold, in the bottom-middle of the ad, and it reads “The S-
Class – Smooth & Safe”. The Mercedes-Benz logo is featured in the bottom-right corner. The second ad repeats the same stereotypes as the first ad, aiming at men, using eight breasts in the image rather than the actual line of cars they are promoting. FCDA would argue that the fragmentation of women here is severe, as women are brought down to being nothing but their chests, but also because the breasts are equalled to airbags. The tagline “The S-Class. Smooth & Safe” does not necessarily have sexist connotations but, as it is used with an image of breasts, it becomes suggestive. Mercedes-Benz again limits their market to being aimed at heterosexual men, or perhaps homosexual women, however, that is a bit more farfetched. The women used in the ad have no identity whatsoever. In addition to the fragmentation element, there is again an implicit assumption that a woman can neither afford a Mercedes-Benz, nor has she any interest in such a vehicle or would appreciate it as a ‘smooth and safe’ car. An argument against this feminist reading, however, could claim that female breasts can be seen as something other than erotic. They are connected to the idea of motherhood, which gives the impression of being nurturing, soft and safe. The idea of the ‘smooth and safe’ car can therefore be linked to the image due to its link to the security of motherhood.

The final ad from Dale Wurfel Used Vehicle Strathroy appears to turn the tables and use the same concept as the first BMW advert, but rather than using a female model, they have chosen a man. It features a dark-haired Caucasian man in a lavender suit, with his bowtie untied and his white shirt partially unbuttoned, leaning back in a chair. The backdrop is black, and the tagline, which is placed next to the man’s face and in a white typeface, reads “You know you’re not the first. But do you really care?” with the emphasis being on ‘But do you really care?’ as it is in bold and larger font. In the bottom left corner the logo of the company is shown and which
reads “DALE WURFEL USED VEHICLES”, and “Strathroy” below it, and 4.99% Used Vehicle Financing beneath that. The 4.99% is written in slightly larger font, and in red. The concept is exactly the same as the BMW ad, using a fragmented man instead of a woman as only his upper body is shown, but in this case he keeps his clothes on, only revealing a little bit of chest hair by unbuttoning the top buttons on his shirt. The tagline “You know you’re not the first. But do you really care?” is again not sexual on its own, but as a male model is used rather than a used car, sexual implications are suggested. The ad also changes the hierarchical viewpoint, as it suggests that women are the ones with the power to choose, unlike the BMW ad. Aiming a car advert at women, or possibly homosexual males, is unconventional in itself, but then also giving women agency enough to be considered over men in a social perspective is rather unusual. It may be observed, however, that the man is still fully clothed unlike the woman in the BMW advert. His posture may be perceived as far more confident, leaning back in a tall chair, unlike the woman in the BMW advert who is suggestively naked with a sexual pose, making her appear far more vulnerable. A non-feminist reading could however interpret the Dale Wurfel ad differently, as none of the components in the ad are sexualised on their own. The tagline does not hold sexual connotations on its own, and would not even if it was paired with a car, as it is perfectly relatable to an advert for used cars. The man also is not explicity sexual, as he is fully clothed, and in what could be seen as a non-sexual pose. It can also be argued that just because something is sexually suggestive, it is not automatically ‘sexist’ as there is not necessarily any stereotyping or discrimination in regards to gender. As the BMW advert and the Dale Wurfel ad claims to be aimed at different genders, an argument against the state of undress can also be made. There is an evolutionary argument which suggests that whilst men find women more appealing
when wearing less clothing, women are known to be physically attracted to men who are in ‘action’, and hence wear, for example, uniforms or are dressed in a manner which suggests that they are successful. This is said to be due to the fact that women infer a man’s clothing to mean whether he can provide for a family and be a good partner. The argument against a feminist reading is therefore just as valid, and the advert is still very much up to individual interpretation.

4.2 Food-related Advertisements

The following ads will feature products relating to food, including brands such as Burger King, Dr Pepper, Hardee’s, Hunky Dorys, and Maggi Soup. Only one of the following ads makes use of a man, and even then it is only his jeans shown rather than any part of his body. All the other adverts make use of women’s bodies in some capacity. The Burger King ad features a blonde Caucasian woman on the left-hand side of the ad, with heavy makeup and her mouth open in an o-shape. On the corresponding right side is a hamburger. Above the hamburger is the Burger King logo and the slogan “It just tastes better.” Starting below the woman’s chin, and written in capital letters in white across the whole bottom of the ad, the tagline reads “It’ll blow your mind away.” The ad shows a fragmented woman’s head, in a similar pose as a blow-up doll, with her mouth and eyes wide open, as a rather large burger is positioned in front of her face. FCDA could argue that this alone has sexual implications, but coupled with the tagline it undeniably plays on the woman’s sexuality. It can be seen as sexual innuendo, as the advertiser appears to be attempting

to generate a particular range of meanings, but in doing so a more innocent interpretation is also made available which allows the advertiser the possibility to deny any such allegation in order to avoid “possible social consequences.” The tagline “It’ll blow your mind away” does not necessarily have sexual connotations on its own but, as the woman has her mouth open, in a suggestive pose that simulates someone giving fellatio, it also implies sexual acts. A feminist reading suggests that the fact that the woman is also not only styled to look like a blow-up doll but also positioned like one, dehumanizes her and turns her into a sexual object without any characteristics of her own. Using the burger alone in the image, coupled with the tagline, would have completely other implications than what the ad now implies.

The ad from Dr Pepper features a can of Dr Pepper Ten and a glass filled with the drink and ice next to it. The backdrop appears to be a jungle, with the items resting on a wooden chest. Next to the glass the tagline reads “It’s not for women” in white capital letters. Below the can and the glass in smaller white font a line of text reads ‘Dr Pepper Ten is a registered trademark of Dr Pepper Seven Up Inc. ©2011 Dr Pepper Seven Up Inc’. Above and to the right of this is a line of text which reads ‘Find us on Facebook’ as well as featuring the Facebook logo. The advert, in comparison to the other food-related ads, completely excludes women as a market, with the tagline “It’s not for women.” It can be argued that the advert itself enforces that which is seen as stereotypically male, using only dark colour schemes such as green, grey and brown, as well as having the backdrop being a jungle-type scenario. One possible reading of the ad produces an inference that it completely alienates a female audience. This could be said to enforce the belief that there is a fundamental difference between men and women, even concerning something so

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120 Tanaka, Keiko. 1999. Advertising Language, p. 45
simple as what drinks they prefer, with the implication that the difference between men and women is negative and implies inferiority. It also views men as a homogenous group, implying that all men are the same, since by the same indication all women are the same, and will therefore like the same sort of drinks. A feminist reading suggests that this removes the choice of both men and women to behave and like the things they do, simply because of their gender. According to the ad, there is no grey area where gender intersects, which is stereotypical in itself and reinforces a hierarchal patriarchal view of society, where men can have that which women are denied. However, an alternative reading of the ad offers the possibility that it should be read as nothing more than light humour and, as such, it is aimed to amuse both men and women equally. The intent in that case would be to sensationalise using humour, which by some may be viewed as misdirected humour, but nevertheless not having the intention of prohibiting the product from females.

The next four ads are from the American hamburger chain Hardee’s and are all slightly similar in style, none of which feature the actual Hardee’s logo. The first one features a Caucasian woman’s mouth, painted with red lipstick and open in an o-shape. In the centre of the ad, next to her mouth, the tagline reads “Open Wide, For the Angus Thickburgers,” with the logo for the Angus Thickburgers replacing the actual words. Beneath the tagline in black, smaller font, ‘Coming Soon First Time in Pakistan’ is printed. Similarly to the Burger King ad, this ad could be interpreted as to sexualise and fragment women with its innuendo. The use of only a woman’s open mouth, with the tagline positioned in front of it, resembles a sexual position which in itself demeans the woman into nothing but a sexual object. It associates the Hardee’s Angus Thickburgers with the idea that a parallel exists between devouring one of their burgers and having some kind of sexual access to the attractive woman with the open
mouth. In turn, it is not only trying to sell the consumer a burger, but it implies that the burger will give the consumer the same hedonistic pleasure from eating said burger as he/she would from oral sex. This is true for all of the Hardee’s adverts discussed in this investigation, as they all use fragmentation in some respect.

The second Hardee’s ad features what appears to be a pair of men’s jeans, opened at the front, and with a belt attached. In between the opening of the jeans the tagline reads “Un-buckle Your Belt For the Angus Thickburgers,” again with the Angus Thickburger logo replacing the actual words. Below this tagline it also reads ‘Coming Soon First Time in Pakistan.’ The ad with the use of its tagline also has a sexual connotation associated with it, but it does not make use of a person’s body to sell it to the consumer, but rather just the idea of physically taking your clothes off, in this case for a man to unbuckle and open his jeans. It is not as sexualised as the other Hardee’s adverts, as it does not make use of the fragmented woman’s body as an allure, but it can nonetheless be seen as a sexualised position and movement. However, a non-feminist reading of the ad could argue the opposite, namely that the unbuckling of the jeans is a result of eating something large which has resulted in a bulging stomach.

The final two ads are very similar, even using the same image of two Caucasian women. They are placed in the bottom corners of the ads, a woman with dark hair, white top and average makeup on the left, and a brown-haired woman with heavy makeup and a black feather boa wrapped around her on the right-hand side of the ad. The first tagline reads “It’s even better with two more” and the Angus Thickburgers logo beneath it, with the additional text of ‘About to come soon’, whilst the tagline of the second ad reads “Enjoy Hot or Classic Why not Both?,” also featuring the same logo and text beneath it. All the Hardee’s ads have a slight grey
background and the same font. An FCDA reading suggests that the adverts fragment the two women and their bodies in order to only include their heads and part of their shoulders. The taglines “It’s even better with two more” and “Enjoy hot or classic why not both” are not very suggestive as sayings but they are coupled with the image of two women who are presented as being very different. One of the women is wearing less makeup and more modest clothes, whilst the other is wearing heavy makeup with red lips and a feather boa. FCDA would say that this in itself enforces stereotypes onto women as even though they are allowed to be themselves, and in being so they are individualised, they are still made into antitheses with one wearing white and being modest whilst the other is wearing black and is assumed to portray less modesty. It gives the impression that the consumer of Angus Thickburgers can also choose which one of these two women that they prefer, taking the women’s choice out of the picture, but also implying through the taglines that the reader does not have to choose between them because he can have them both. One could argue that the sexual innuendos are rather weak, especially in the advert using the expression “open wide” accompanied with the word “thick” and “thick burger” as it simply could imply how large the burger is. Another argument against the sexual connotations is that the adverts are all from Pakistan which is a country with a strong religious and moral culture. However, because all the ads are one of a series of ads, all including sexual innuendos to some extent, it would be difficult for Hardee’s to deny that any such innuendo is present.

The two ads from Hunky Dorys are similar. The backdrop in both is an audience watching a rugby game. The first ad features a brown-haired woman holding a rugby ball, resting on one knee and with the other up. She is wearing minimal clothing and the photo is aimed down the front of her top. Below her chest is the
tagline, written in white, “Are you staring at my crisps?” At the bottom of the ad in white additional text reads ‘Proud sponsors of Irish Rugby’ and a green packet of Hunky Dorys Cheddar Cheese & Spring Onion is featured. The second ad features six women, all wearing minimal clothing and running. The woman at the front is holding a rugby ball. The tagline, which is next to this woman, reads “Tackle these” and at the bottom of the ad the text ‘Proud sponsors of Irish Rugby’ is featured alongside the green packet of Hunky Dorys Cheddar Cheese & Spring Onion crisps. The ads both show women with their full bodies, but due to their taglines the emphasis is put on parts of their bodies, helped by the miniscule, supposed rugby outfits that they are wearing. The first ad has a woman leaning forward, giving the reader an unbroken view down her top and at her breasts. The tagline, featured slightly below her breasts, reads “Are you staring at my crisps?” which is not sexual as a sentence, but coupled with the image of the woman’s breasts it suggests something different. The second ad features multiple women running, with the tagline “Tackle these” putting the emphasis on their semi-clad bodies rather than what the ad is actually selling, which is cheddar cheese and spring onion crisps. As none of them are wearing actual rugby clothes, as well as having both their hair and makeup done, the ad implies that they are dressed for glamour rather than rugby. Both ads also feature the words “Proud sponsors of Irish Rugby,” even though this is a false statement, as Hunky Dorys as a brand have never sponsored Irish Rugby on a large scale in Ireland. Instead they are aiming to use the association not only with rugby, but also the type of women who are featured in the ads to sell their product. The implication of this feminist interpretation is that buying and eating the crisps will enable the consumer to have a life where women being semi-nude will be prevalent, which is stereotypical and positions both

men and women in patriarchal positions. However, a non-feminist reading may suggest that the ad was made raunchy simply as a way by which the advertiser can quickly gain the attention of a male reader.

The final ad featured in this section is made by Maggi Soup, and it shows the Mount Rushmore National Memorial monument, but women’s faces have replaced all the male faces. Across the top of the monument, against a blue sky, small white print reads “if only women spent less time cooking.” Next to the text is a packet of Maggi Soup, with the text ‘ready made soups’ printed underneath it. It could be argued that this ad also plays on the stereotypical viewpoints of what women do and why they do it. The tagline which reads “If only women spent less time cooking” is implying that history would be very different if only women could tear themselves away from the kitchen. A feminist interpretation could see the ad as belittling women, as it is implying that women simply allowed men to take control of history, completely disregarding any gender oppression having existed which positioned men higher up on the social ladder in the first place. The implication that patriarchal societies exist due to women not applying themselves more is not only incorrect but it is also claimed to be sexist in the way that it chooses to ignore the things which women have done throughout history. By this interpretation, the ad therefore allows prevalent gender roles to continue, as it is stating that only women like to do the cooking. However, the ad could also be interpreted from the opposite viewpoint which would have the implication that they might in fact be making a feminist case. If this interpretation is correct, they are stating that women could and should be doing great things if only they were to liberate themselves not only from the kitchen but also patriarchy, and in turn become world leaders themselves.
4.3 General Product Advertisements

This section will discuss and describe ads featuring general products such as deodorant, cookery pots, and exercise clothes, none of which are all that different to the other types of print ads discussed. The deodorant ad is for Lynx Dry Full Control men’s deodorant. It features a Caucasian, brown-haired woman wearing nothing but purple underwear bending down in front of an open oven, as she is getting a cooked turkey out. The backdrop is of a circa 1950s kitchen, as seen by the dated appliances. On the right-hand side of the ad there is a picture of a deodorant bottle with its tagline “New Lynx Dry Full Control 48HR Antiperspirant”, as well as the text “Can she make you lose control?” printed in white. As it is a digital print ad, it also features ‘Watch the video’ as a link on the ad. Lynx here uses a woman’s body to sell a product which is only intended for men. The woman in question is only wearing underwear, as she is seen performing the stereotypical act of cooking a turkey and bending over to remove it from the oven. The hint that this viewpoint may be in the past, which is made less obvious by the fact that the focus is clearly on the half-naked woman, is the fact that she is cooking in a 1950s styled kitchen. The tagline also implies that a half-naked woman is what makes men sweat, as it asks, “Can she make you lose control?” rather than putting emphasis on the physicality of why anyone sweats. The question is whether the slight nod to the 1950s really is enough to make acceptable the fact that Lynx is still using a woman’s body to sell a male product. A feminist argument could be that the ad links to the 1950s simply because they are seen as “the good old days” when a woman knew her place and looked after a man’s appetites, both in terms of food and sex. CDA/FCDA could argue that the sexualisation of the model is furthered by having her wear minimal clothing, as in reality cooking a turkey in minimal clothing is not only unlikely, but also rather
unsanitary and could leave her prone to injuries. The kitchen is seen as a hot environment, making the woman sweat when cooking, whilst the turkey itself could be seen to correlate with the woman as it is a curved and soft, tanned bird with ‘legs’ and ‘breasts’. Marketing a men’s product with the use of a half-naked woman is stereotypical, and the ad itself could be said to further societal inequalities when having a woman do what is considered her typical chore, in spite of having hints to the past. It also partially stereotypes men to some degree at least by the implication that a half-naked woman is all that it takes to make them lose control. A non-feminist approach could aim to separate the elements in the ad, as the 1950s kitchen and the cooking of the turkey could lead to sweat-related issues and hence explain why they are used in this Lynx ad. However, the half-naked woman still would have little correlation to the deodorant advertised, making a non-feminist reading more difficult to sustain.

The next two ads are by Madison Avenue Cookware, and they both feature identical pots placed on gas stoves. The first ad features white text across the top which reads “The only thing that cooks better is a woman.” Along the bottom in black print is the Madison Avenue logo at the bottom-left, with the words ‘See the entire range at madisonproducts.com.au’ spreading across the bottom of the ad. The second ad is almost identical, although the words across the top differ and read “Enjoy your time out of the bedroom.” According to CDA/FCDA the ads are equally stereotypical as the ones previously discussed. Both ads are very similar aesthetically, with a stainless steel pot on a gas hob, but with slightly different taglines. The first one states that “the only thing that cooks better is a woman” whilst the second one says “enjoy your time out of the bedroom”. Both of these are using stereotypical lines to imply that women belong in the kitchen, where they are meant to do the cooking. The
second one furthers this sentiment by implying that, when women are out of the kitchen, they belong in the bedroom. A feminist reading suggests that this further hierarchal implications of patriarchal societies as women’s positions are seen as beneath those of men, having no say in what their chosen activities may be. The ads take away women’s choice, as the choice is made for them in the sense that cooking is what you should do even if you do not enjoy it, simply because you are a woman. A reading which could oppose that of FCDA could argue that the ad also implies that men cannot be good at cooking, as the first ad clearly states that the skill, which the pot mysteriously possesses, is only second to the skill of a woman. This in turn makes the ad discriminative towards men as well. A weakness of FCDA with regards to this ad could be the fact that it offers multiple interpretations. The ad could suggest, with the help of the tagline, that a woman who has a great sex life also may be reminded that she can enjoy other things than that of sex. “Enjoy your time out of the bedroom” can be argued to simply be a well-meant suggestion to someone who is already enjoying himself or herself.

Reebok Germany is responsible for the final ad, which features the view of a man from behind, with his right hand by his side. The words “Cheat on your girlfriend, not on your workout” is printed over and across his back in white, with the Reebok brand name and the tagline ‘The sport of fitness has arrived’ in white text in the bottom-right corner. An FCDA interpretation might be that this ad is contemptuous of women, and in turn their importance in the lives of men, as the tagline suggests that men should “cheat on your girlfriend, not on your workout.” The ad features the fragmentation of a man, only showing half of his body from behind, insinuating that it could be any man and that you can become fit if you only workout in Reebok clothes. A feminist reading would argue that the ad implies that cheating
on your workout is equal to that of cheating on your girlfriend is patriarchal in the sense that it places women further down on the social ladder than not only men, but also physical activity. Men are assumed to not care as much for their girlfriend as they care about looking their best. The question is whether any girlfriend would be accepting of their boyfriend cheating, if only it meant he did not skip out on a day at the gym. A non-feminist reading could suggest that, all in all, the ad stereotypically sets the moral compass of men askew, assuming that they do not think that one is worse than the other, which in the end is discriminatory towards men as a gender.

4.4 Miscellaneous Advertisements

Two organ donation advertisements will be discussed in this section to establish similarities and differences, as well as an advertisement from a betting website as this did not fit any of the previous categories. The first ad is from the Belgian organ donation organisation *Reborn to be alive* and it depicts a Caucasian woman wearing black underwear and silver heels, posing sitting down with her arms and hands above and behind her head, against a black background. The only text available on the page is the tagline “Becoming a donor is probably your only chance to get inside her,” as well as featuring the organisation logo and the words ‘sign up now at www.reborntobealive.be’ in the bottom right-hand corner. FCDA could argue that the pose the woman strikes is quite sexually provocative in the sense that she stretches her body as she is sitting down, whilst keeping her hand and arms alongside and behind her head. Connecting this with the tagline of the ad results in a very sexualised way of viewing the woman, which has it stating “becoming a donor is probably your only chance to get inside her.” It may have been difficult to feature an actual organ in the ad, but it is difficult to see the relevance of a half-naked woman considering what
the ad is trying to accomplish. It is placing the concept of organ donation to mean that women like her, who would usually be far out of your league, might at least be accessible to you in this one respect, i.e. if you donate an organ to her. The use of the word ‘probably’ in the tagline also furthers the sexual innuendo in the ad and the implication that the reader may actually be able to accomplish getting ‘inside her’ in some other way just by associating with the idea of organ donation. An argument against an FCDA reading could be that the image and the sexual innuendo is merely a means of attracting the attention of male readers, before pressing home the serious point about organ donation. This would leave the interpretation open depending on who the reader of the ad is.

The second organ donation ad features a male fisherman on a beach, caressing his “pregnant” stomach. Behind the fisherman is a fishing net, as well as a boat with the name ‘Moka’ written on it. The ad is from the organisation INDT – National Donation and Transplant Institute, which is shown in the bottom right-hand corner with the associated logo. The only text is “Anyone can give the miracle of life – Just be an organ donor,” as featured to the left of the fisherman, with the emphasis put on ‘The miracle of life’ as it is printed in a bold typeface. Conversely to the Reborn to be alive ad, the second organ donation ad from INDT uses a fully clothed man to spread their message. He is seen stroking his very pregnant stomach, which in itself may seem strange, but when coupled with the tagline of “Anyone can give the miracle of life – just be an organ donor” it parallels the tagline with being ‘reborn’ and the ‘miracle of life’ with that of the pregnant stomach. Juxtaposing the image and the words in the text creates a combined meaning which foregrounds the strangeness of a pregnant man, in order to generate the interest of the reader. There is no immediate sexism at play here, but a feminist reading rather suggests that INDT are playing with
the traditional gender roles which have women being pregnant and actually giving the ‘miracle of life’. Although from a biological viewpoint, a man would not be able to physically bear a child, the implication of the ad is that everyone is equal when it comes to organ donation. This in turn moves away from societal stereotypes and hierarchy in order to highlight a cause. INDT, as an organisation, have also used the idea of pregnancy in ads in the past\textsuperscript{122}, featuring anyone from an old woman, a businessman or a male skater with pregnancy bellies.

The final ad is from the online betting company Bet-at-home.com. Their ad features a Caucasian woman against a white background with her jeans pulled down to show her white underwear with the tagline ‘If you can read this it’s your lucky day!’ printed across the front of them. Other text on the ad includes ‘Sport – Casino – Games – Poker’ printed in white across the top-right corner, the website address ‘www.bet-at-home.com’ in white across the bottom-left corner, as well as a fold-in of the blue logo of the website in the bottom-right hand corner with the additional words ‘Lucky day?’ and ‘Pröva din lycka och bevisa din skicklighet hos: www.bet-at-home.com’ written in Swedish, which roughly translates to ‘Try your luck and prove your skill at: www.bet-at-home.com.” The ad shows a fragmented woman’s body with the emphasis on her female parts, only holding her jeans down in order to show a white pair of underwear with the printed tagline. FCDA would argue that not only is the image not relevant for what the ad is trying to sell, but it is also sexual in its implication that a woman taking her clothes of for anyone is equal to playing on an online betting site. The parallel is generated of the woman taking her clothes off, and gambling, intimating that the word ‘lucky’ applies both to success in both gambling and sexual conquest. In doing so, the ad is, arguably, reducing the woman to nothing

more significant than her sexuality. The fragmentation implies that it could be any Caucasian woman, and that playing on an online betting site is all that is necessary in order to entice a woman to take off her clothes. It gives the reader the idea that anything is possible, just by online betting, removing all choice from the woman regarding whether or not her sexuality is anything she wants emphasised above everything else that she may be. However, a non-feminist reading could make an argument that, just because the ad contains sexual allusion with regard to equating the luck of having sexual relations with a woman and gambling, it does not automatically remove the woman’s choice in the matter. It could merely be seen as a way of attracting the reader’s attention, specifically male readers, without suggesting any alternative interpretations.

5. Discussion

From a feminist perspective, the accumulated results tended to have a focus on sexist language, sexual innuendos, and fragmentation as these were the features which most stood out overall in the analyzed print advertisements. Therefore, it could be argued with regard to all of the ads that there is an element of gender inequality as based on these possible features, which is what this investigation aimed to explore.

When it comes to car advertisements, Cook claimed that they tend to be aimed at men foremost, placing men in a more positive light than women.¹²³ For instance, car ads have been known to suggest that men are wealthier and hence can afford a better car, or simply that they are more appreciative with regards to the qualities that a well-engineered car may possess, unlike women who tend to focus on other qualities such as a car being family-friendly. In the ads included in this investigation, that

tended to be true, with women being fragmented in images used, as well as having sexual innuendos in the taglines which made stereotypical assumptions about women. Men, however, were also at times exposed to stereotypes, mainly when being grouped together as a homogenous group. The ad from Dave Wurfel Used Vehicles was the only one which reversed hierarchal views by placing a male model in their ad, with a sexual innuendo inferring meaning on him. However, the male model was still positioned in a confident pose, with his clothes still on, unlike the women featured in the car ads from both BMW and Mercedes-Benz. Several limitations of this CDA/FCDA reading could, however, be identified. One such limitation is the argument of fragmentation, as although this is seen as the description of men and women in terms of their body parts rather than as people, it is unclear where the line of what is and what is not fragmentation is drawn. If every head and face shot are to be considered examples of fragmentation, then a majority of human images could be seen as such. Similarly, if an advert is for a bra, it could seem logical to show that part of the body only. One could therefore argue that fragmentation only becomes contentious when it appears in (or out) of certain contexts. This is why it can be difficult to provide a clear FCDA definition as to what fragmentation is, and is not, leaving it up to the individual reader. The same is true for sexism, as the definition varies depending on who is reading the ads. Because of this, the arguments presented by CDA/FCDA may be limited as not all men and women find sexual imagery offensive to their gender, or read certain taglines in a way which implies sexual innuendo. The argument for or against gender inequality in car ads, or even Cook’s claim that they favor men over women, is therefore a matter of interpretation. The fact that something contains sexual innuendo does not necessarily mean that it is sexist.
In terms of the food advertisements, they all made some use of women’s bodies, except for one of the Hardee’s ads which used a pair of male jeans instead. A feminist perspective would argue that there were possible sexual implications and innuendos in all of them, as well as possible fragmentation, depending on how the messages were interpreted. The Hardee’s ads were the ones which are most likely to be deemed sexist from a FCDA standpoint, as there were multiple advertisements which were very similar and also included similar sexual innuendos, resulting in it being difficult to overlook and dispute any possible intended message. The Hunky Dorys ads, however, could be viewed as sexist in the way that not only were the women featured wearing minimal clothing which had nothing to do with rugby, as advertised, but the ads also put the emphasis on their bodies by the use of the taglines, resulting in fragmentation. In contrast, the ad from Maggi Soup was the ad which was most ambiguous, simply because the message could be interpreted as being one which argues for a feminist case. The implication that women could, and should, be world leaders and makers of history instead of cooking, could be interpreted either as sexist or feminist, which makes the message too ambiguous to ultimately judge.

The ads featuring general products could, from a feminist perspective, be interpreted to be more sexist, as there were multiple cases of fragmentation such as in the Lynx ad. There was a tendency to use female bodies to sell male products with which they had no relation. The Lynx ad in particular used fragmentation and stereotypes when portraying a woman cooking only in her underwear. The Madison Avenue ads also had clear sexual innuendos, and could be said to have maintained the social patriarchal hierarchy when implying in their taglines that women either belong in the kitchen or the bedroom. It could be argued that neither of these ads for general products is sexist, as it is likely that many women would simply recognize these ads
as reflecting the reality of their lives, and so they would have no reason to be offended by them. FCDA would claim that they portray a reality which promotes gender inequality; however, the subject matter can be interpreted in multiple ways.

As with the previous advertisements, the ads in the miscellaneous category also showed signs of fragmentation, sexist language and sexual innuendos. The *Reborn to be alive* ad for organ donation could be seen as sexist from a FCDA perspective in the way it not only had the woman posing in a sexually provocative manner, but also because of the accompanying tagline. This was in contrast to the INDT organ donation ad, which not only featured a fully clothed man, but which also chose to turn hierarchy fully on its head by having the man being pregnant. The difference in the ads is also highlighted by how different the focus is of the taglines, with the *Reborn to be alive* tagline having a possible innuendo in order to draw attention to organ donation, whilst the INDT ad instead reference to the miracle of life. As with the *Reborn to be alive*, the bet-at-home.com advert uses a tagline which has a sexual connotation because of the context in which it appears. As it is printed on the underwear of a fragmented image of a woman, the ad aims to sell a product using a semi-dressed woman in order to sell a product which is unrelated to her body, resulting in what could be claimed to be a sexist narrative.

From a feminist perspective, there is a definite trend visible in the ads used in this investigation when it comes to gender inequality. The problem is that many of the ads could be argued to have multiple narratives, either having an intended sexual message or a more innocent one. This is a limitation of CDA and FCDA as it argues for a generalization in terms of how sexism is portrayed. The idea of fragmentation, for example, leaves little room for multiple interpretations. Similarly, sexism can be interpreted in multiple ways simply due to the fact that what one person may find
offensive another may not. In order for the message of an advert to be sexist, it must be implied that one sex is inherently superior or inferior to the other, or has abilities or limitations that the other sex does not. However, if a reader is given the choice of multiple narratives and thus multiple interpretations, it is up to the reader to take responsibility for that interpretation, whether that means to imply a sexist interpretation when there may not be one, or to disregard it when it is present.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this investigation was to examine whether gender inequalities, as interpreted by CDA/FCDA, are prevalent in printed advertisements, and whether or not there is a distinct difference in how women and men are viewed and portrayed, whilst also examining the advantages and limitations of using a feminist analysis. Although a feminist interpretation showed that some of the ads examined contained discrimination against men as based on stereotypical viewpoints, most of the ads still showed that the sexualisation and fragmentation of women in the print ads used was much more frequent in nature. The results therefore partially confirmed the theory that gender stereotyping, and occasionally sexism, is still very much available in the print ads, at least within those used in this investigation, even though there was some overlap regarding how frequently both men and women were portrayed negatively. The results also highlighted some limitations when using CDA/FCDA, as ultimately the sexism and gender inequality found in the ads could be interpreted as being sexist, but equally could be argued as being non-sexist. In order to show how and if gender inequalities exist overall within print advertisements, one would need to use a larger sample of completely random ads in order to show more accurately how advertisers behave with regard to inequalities in a more general respect. From a feminist
perspective, this investigation showed that stereotypes regarding men were mostly
centered with presenting their behavior in a positive light, whilst women’s
behavior and the stereotypes regarding it often placed them lower on the hierarchal
scale. A more empirically reliable result could have been obtained if more ads had
been investigated, or they had been more randomly selected but, because of time
constraints and the qualitative nature of the essay, this was not possible.

Overall, the aim was still fulfilled as the results still managed to showcase
gender representation in print advertisements from a CDA/FCDA perspective, and
highlight where CDA/FCDA was limited in their analysis. The result did manage to
show both similarities and distinctions between ads, as well as between genders,
however one could argue that in order to fully grasp how widespread gender
inequality is in print advertisements further research would be required. Nevertheless,
the analysis of the results may be a limitation as the focus on gender inequalities
somewhat may inhibit objectivity when faced with advertisements which can be seen
as using multiple narratives. The struggle lies in the validity and reliability of
CDA/FCDA to provide an objective analysis of printed ads, as even though the
approaches are adequate in identifying features which can be interpreted as sexist or
confirms gender hierarchy from a feminist point of view, they are less satisfactory
when confronted with advertisements which enable multiple interpretations. As
ads aim to attract the attention of multiple readings, they must contain multi-
faceted messages which leave the readers with a choice of interpretation. It is this
choice which appears to be difficult for CDA/FCDA to accept, as it leaves the
interpretation of what is sexism in ads open to individual opinion.
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Appendix A – Print Advertisements

Below one can see all of the print advertisements used for analysis in this investigation, with corresponding tagline presented underneath. [Side note: Images have been removed from the electronic edition due to copyright reasons.]

BMW: "You know you’re not the first."

BMW: "The ultimate attraction."

Mercedes-Benz: "Men talk about women, sports and cars. Women talk about men inside sports cars."

Mercedes-Benz: "8 airbags."

Dale Wurfel Used Vehicles Strathroy: "You know you’re not the first. But do you really care?"

Burger King: "It’ll blow your mind away."

Dr Pepper: "It's not for women."

Hardee’s: “Open wide for the Angus Thickburgers.”

Hardee’s: "Un-buckle your belt for the Angus Thickburgers.”

Hardee’s: “It’s even better with two more.” ”Enjoy Hot or Classic Why not both?”

Hunky Dorys: "Are you staring at my crisps?"

Hunky Dorys: "Tackle these."

Maggi Soup: "If only women spent less time cooking."

Lynx: "Can she make you lose control?"

Madison Avenue: "The only thing that cooks better is a woman."

Madison Avenue: "Enjoy your time out of the bedroom."

Reebok Germany: "Cheat on your girlfriend, not on your workout."

Reborn to be alive: "Becoming a donor is probably your only chance to get inside her."

INDT: "Anyone can give the miracle of life."

Bet-at-home.com: "If you can read this it’s your lucky day!"