Women’s roles and images in advertising
A pragmatic perspective

Trabajo de Fin de Grado

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ABSTRACT

Since publicity plays an important role in shaping societies’ beliefs, customs, behaviour and education, researchers are focusing increasingly on the study of advertisements’ adequacy. To this effect, the present study aims to analyse the roles and images of women in the advertising world of the Western culture. Through the comparison of five pairs of advertisements from the present and the past century, along with the application of Relevance Theory, this paper studies what and how advertisements involving women communicate. Besides, this study examines the changes in the depiction of women between the past and the present centuries’ advertisements. In this way, this work supports the evidence that the relevance-theoretic approach can be applied to the interpretation of advertisements merging visual and textual content. Moreover, it also provides an account of the main portrayals of women used in advertising. Thus, the conclusions confirm, on the one hand, that contemporary advertisements communicate more information implicitly than their 20th-century counterparts, and on the other hand, that 21st-century advertisements continue and perpetuate the roles and images based on women’s sexual objectification, sexism, stereotypes and classical archetypes used in elder advertisements. Due to the many impacts of advertising, such conclusions highlight the urgency to change advertisements portraying women to fit in the contemporary world that fights for gender equality and women’s rights.

Keywords: Relevance Theory, Women Studies, Gender Studies, women, advertising, advertisement, communication, gender roles, sexism, stereotypes.

RESUMEN

La publicidad juega un papel fundamental dando forma a las creencias, costumbres, comportamientos y educación de las diferentes sociedades. Consecuentemente, los investigadores se centran, cada vez más, en el análisis de la adecuación de los anuncios. Por ello, este estudio tiene el objetivo de analizar el papel y la imagen de la mujer en el mundo publicitario de la cultura occidental. A través de la comparación de cinco parejas de anuncios del presente y del pasado siglo, así como de la aplicación de la Teoría de la Relevancia, este trabajo examina qué y cómo comunican los anuncios protagonizados por mujeres. Asimismo, este estudio analiza los cambios en la representación de la mujer en los anuncios del pasado y del presente siglos. De este modo, este trabajo respalda la evidencia de que la propuesta relevantista puede aplicarse a la interpretación de anuncios con contenido visual y textual y también da cuenta de las principales representaciones de la mujer en la publicidad. Así, las conclusiones confirman, por una parte, que los anuncios contemporáneos comunican más información de forma implícita que sus parejas correspondientes al siglo XX, y por otra, que en la publicidad del siglo XXI se continúan y perpetúan los roles y las imágenes de la mujer basadas en la objetificación sexual, el sexismo, los estereotipos y los arquetipos clásicos que ya se usaban en anuncios anteriores. Debido a las numerosas influencias de la publicidad, tales resultados evidencian la necesidad de introducir cambios en los anuncios que representan mujeres para que sean acordes al mundo contemporáneo en el que se lucha por la igualdad de géneros y los derechos de la mujer.

Palabras clave: Teoría de la Relevancia, Estudios de la mujer, Estudios de género, mujeres, publicidad, anuncio, comunicación, roles de género, sexismo, estereotipos.
1. INTRODUCTION

From the emergence of publicity on, human beings have become a target that is being more and more constantly bombarded with explicit and subliminal forms of advertising:

In contemporary society, advertising is everywhere. We cannot walk down the street, shop, watch television, go through our mail, log on to the Internet, read a newspaper or take a train without encountering it. Whether we are alone, with our friends or family, or in a crowd, advertising is always with us, if only on the label of something we are using (Cook 2001: 1).

The revolution of the consumer society has prompted the development of numerous studies that ponder about every possible aspect within the fields of publicity but one of the topics which has raised much interest is the image and the roles that women portray in this environment (Barreto 2005; Chacón 2008; Espín et al. 2006; Garrido 2007; Igoe 2006; Loscertales 2003; Moral 2000).

Whether as a target or as an object, women have played since the beginning of modern advertising –at the end of the 19th century– and still play a deeply important role within this field (Moral 2000: 214; Zimmerman & Dahlberg 2008: 71). It is easy to understand why they are the dominating target if we take into account that they “make 85% of all purchasing decisions” (Hanan 2016). Consequently, many studies that revolve around the different roles in which women are portrayed in publicity have emerged within the fields of Gender and Women Studies. (Espín et al. 2006; Garrido 2007; Henthorne & LaTour 1995; Loscertales 2006; Mayne 2000; Moral 2000; Zimmerman & Dahlberg 2008). In relation to this, the importance of the sexualisation and objectification of women in publicity has captured the attention of researchers who claim that such portrayals are stimuli for consumers to buy (Tanaka 1994). However, the implications of showing such images and roles go beyond the fields of advertising provoking subsequent effects and consequences. Critics claim that publicity and the media cause a deep impact on their contemporary society as they are persuasive; convey social, moral, and educative values; portray lifestyles and attitudes; create social
identities; and impose and consolidate fashion, customs, beliefs, behaviour... (Moral 2000: 208). In other words, advertisements influence on the way women view themselves as well as on men's perception (Chacón 2008: 406; Igoe 2006: 3; Moral 2000: 211).

Primitive advertisements, especially the ones released in the first half of the 20th century, portrayed different depictions of women that may seem absurd or obsolete from nowadays' point of view. From the 1960s onwards, women became more independent and gradually took control over their sexuality, work life, and family, among other things. This revolution raised by the second wave of feminism resulted in a partial exoneration for them, not only in their daily lives but also in the advertising environment. Nevertheless, their portrayal was still far from respecting them entirely. From the 1990s up to nowadays, the third wave of feminism has led women to continue fighting for equality (Zimmerman & Dahlberg 2008: 71), as Igoe also claims (2006):

Throughout history, advertisements aimed at women have often questioned women’s intellect and integrity, making them appear more as objects than actual human beings. As advertisers strive to convince women of the true necessity of a product, women seem to be presented with images of their inadequacy (Igoe 2006: 1).

Questioning if the conceptualisation of women in the current century's publicity has changed for the better is precisely the departure point of the present paper. According to a research conducted by the UK Advertising Association in 2015 “seven out of ten women say brand advertising alienates them, and nine out of ten say advertisers don’t understand them” (cited in Fraser 2015). Hence, it is necessary to search for the weaknesses in women’s advertisements that cause such negative viewpoints.

The aim of this study is to analyse a set of advertisements by observing what and how they communicate the portrayal of women. Accordingly, the present paper will be based on a pragmatic approach and so the analysis of the chosen advertisements will follow Relevance Theory by Sperber and Wilson, since it is “arguably the most appropriate framework to decipher the underlying language and mechanism of advertising” (Alrasheedi 2014: 70). Hence, this study will accomplish two things: on the one hand, it will reaffirm that the pragmatic theory mentioned above can be applied to the advertising discourse, as some other researchers have already stated (Alrasheedi 2014; Díaz 2000; Durán 2005; Forceville 2012; Pop 2007, Tanaka 1994). On the other
hand and more importantly, it will present an investigation about the evolution of women's roles, stereotypes, and misconceptions in the publicity of the past and present century. Consequently, this study will analyse five pairs of the 20th-century and 21st-century advertisements which have been divided according to the different images and depictions of women they show.

Before plunging into the study, the next section will be devoted to introduce the most important considerations about the relevance-theoretic approach. Section 3 will present the research focused on the pragmatic analysis of the chosen advertisements as well as the identification of women’s roles and images depicted in advertising in both of the aforementioned centuries. Finally, Section 4 will draw a series of conclusions.
2. RELEVANCE THEORY

2.1. Overview

Relevance theory was developed by Sperber and Wilson (from now on S&W) on the basis of Grice’s Inferential Model (1975) and so, while they accepted certain aspects of his approach, they also refuted some of his ideas (S&W 2005: 358). According to them, it was Grice who laid the foundations for modern pragmatics by introducing “an alternative to the classical code model” (Wilson & Sperber1 2004: 607) – the inferential model – and “new conceptual tools” which tried to “reconcile the concerns of the two then dominant approaches to the philosophy of language, Ideal Language Philosophy and Ordinary Language Philosophy” (S&W 2005: 353-354):

For ordinary language philosophers, there was an unbridgeable gap between the semantics of formal and natural languages. Grice showed that the gap could at least be reduced by sharply distinguishing sentence meaning from speaker’s meaning, and explaining how relatively simple and schematic linguistic meanings could be used in context to convey richer and fuzzier speaker’s meanings, made up not only of what was said [sic], but also of what was implicated (Ibid: 354).

S&W take into consideration two basic ideas from the Gricean approach. Firstly, they accept that sentence meaning conveys a speaker’s meaning and that a speaker’s meaning is “an overtly expressed intention which is fulfilled by being recognized” (Ibid: 355). From Grice’s inferential view, utterances show what the speaker says – the semantic meaning of words – while the speaker’s intended meaning should be recovered inferentially by the hearer from the utterance together with the context (Grice 1975: 43-44). So, this theory proposes that the speaker intends the hearer to recognise her intention to inform of something while the hearer tries to recognise what the speaker intends to inform him of (S&W 1995: 23). Hence, “communication is successful not when hearers recognise the linguistic meaning of the utterance, but when they infer the speaker’s meaning of it” (Ídem).

1 W&S from now onwards.
2 Following Grice’s and S&W’s approaches, this paper will use the terms ‘speaker’ and ‘addresser’ to refer to the producer of a message in a communicative situation and the terms ‘hearer’ and ‘addressee’ for the interpreter of this message.
3 To avoid misunderstandings throughout this paper, the speaker will be identified with male referents and the hearer with female referents.
As regards the second foundational idea, Grice proposes that “in inferring the speaker’s meaning, the hearer is guided by the expectation that utterances should meet some specific standards” (S&W 2005: 355). In other words, for Grice communication is a matter of cooperation and so, according to the Cooperative Principle, the participants in a communicative situation should pay attention to the following maxims in order to communicate effectively and efficiently (Grice 1975: 45-46):

- **The Maxim of Quantity**: make your contribution as informative as required; do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
- **The Maxim of Quality**: do not say what you believe to be false and do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- **The Maxim of Relation**: be relevant.
- **The Maxim of Manner**: avoid obscurity or ambiguity and be brief as well as orderly.

However, sometimes speakers violate or flout these maxims and therefore they implicate information, giving raise to *implicatures*, which are additional assumptions and conclusions applied to preserve the Cooperative Principle and its maxims. Grice divides implicatures into *conventional*, which are not based on the CP or maxims but attached to specific word meanings, and *nonconventional*, which comprises *generalised* and *particularised conversational implicatures* – they are always derived from the proposition, the context and the CP observance – (Ibid: 56-58).

Considering the aforementioned notions, it should be taken into account that S&W continue and depart from the Gricean approach in certain aspects. On the one hand, they argue that Grice focused too much on implicit communication and they defend that “the explicit side of communication is just as inferential and worthy of pragmatic attention as the implicit side” (S&W 2005: 358). On the other hand, they depart from the idea that the comprehension process is guided by the Cooperative Principle and its maxims and they rather affirm that “the very act of communicating raises precise and predictable expectations of relevance, which are enough on their own to guide the hearer towards the speaker’s meaning” (Ibid: 359). Instead of the Cooperative Principle and its maxims, S&W propose that communication is based on the concept of relevance:
Relevance is a potential property not only of utterances and other observable phenomena, but of thoughts, memories, and conclusions of inferences. According to relevance theory, any external stimulus or internal representation which provides an input to cognitive processes may be relevant to an individual at some time (W&S 2004: 608).

Relevance Theory is grounded on the idea that “relevance play[s] a fundamental role not only in communication but in cognition” (Wilson 2014: 132) and this is reflected in the Cognitive Principle of Relevance and the Communicative Principle of Relevance (S&W 2005: 360). The former is based on the idea that utterances raise expectations of relevance because relevance is a “basic feature of human cognition” and not because communicators follow Grice’s Cooperative Principle (W&S 2004: 608). S&W affirm that humans “tend to maximize relevance, not because we have a choice in the matter [...] but because of the way our cognitive systems have evolved” (Ibid: 610). In other words, human cognition organizes information so as to maximize relevance and so individuals process inputs productively and spontaneously (S&W 2005: 360).

An input is relevant when an individual is able to connect it with his background knowledge to yield conclusions which are important to him (W&S: 608). These conclusions are what S&W call cognitive or contextual effects, the modifications or improvements introduced in a communicative context, that is to say, the effects that “result of interaction between new and old information” (S&W 1995: 109). But, as the authors indicate, not any sort of modification raises contextual effects: for example, when new information reproduces old information or when it is unconnected to previous knowledge, no contextual effects stir up (Ídem). On the contrary, the following definitions correspond to the different kinds of contextual effects that they distinguish:

- Strengthening of an assumption: new information provides evidence or strengthens old assumptions (S&W 1995: 75-76).
- Contextual implications: conclusion derived from the “synthesis of old and new information, a result of interaction between the two” (Ibid: 109).
- Contradicting and eliminating an existing assumption (Ídem).

S&W are especially interested in contextual implications and in yielding positive cognitive effects (S&W 2005: 359) –for example, true conclusions are positive cognitive
effects as opposed to false conclusions, which are still cognitive but not positive effects (W&S 2004: 608). Besides, they point out that this property is about a matter of degree:

Everything else being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effects achieved, and the smaller the mental effort required (to represent the input, access a context and derive these cognitive effects) the greater the relevance of the input to the individual at that time (S&W 2005: 359).

When it comes to the role of relevance in communication, S&W propose that the communicative processes are not inferential but ostensive-inferential (1995: 50-54). To understand this, it is essential to review several concepts. Firstly, it should be understood that an individual has his own cognitive environment, which is the set of facts that are manifest to him (Ibid: 39), that is to say “all the facts that he is aware of [and] the facts that he is capable of becoming aware of, in his physical environment” (ibid.). This can be connected to the concept of ostension or ostensive behaviour, which consists in “[making] manifest an intention to make something manifest” (Ibid: 49). So, according to them:

Inferential communication and ostension are one and the same process, but seen from two different points of view: that of the communicator who is involved in ostension and that of the audience who is involved in inference (S&W 1995: 54).

Ostensive-inferential communication is grounded on the informative and the communicative intentions. When a communicator produces a stimulus, he intends to make manifest to the audience certain assumptions (informative intention), and when the speaker makes it mutually manifest to the audience and to himself that he has this informative intention, he is exhibiting his communicative intention (S&W 1995: 58, 61). To summarise, in ostensive-inferential communication “the communicator produces a stimulus which makes it mutually manifest to communicator and audience that the communicator intends, by means of this stimulus, to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions” (Ibid: 63).

When someone has the intention to communicate, he is trying to fulfil his informative intention but if the addressee does not recognise this informative intention, then communication fails (Taillard 2002: 190). S&W claim that communication only succeeds when a stimulus is relevant enough for the hearer to process it (S&W 2005: 360). Hence, the Communicative Principle of Relevance states that “every ostensive
stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance” (W&S 2004: 612). The *Presumption of optimal relevance* is the postulate according to which a stimulus is considered “relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee’s effort to process it [and] it is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator’s abilities and preferences” (Ídem). So, this presumption grounds the way in which hearers do their interpretive processes and this is what they call the *Relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure*, which is defined in the next lines (S&W 2005: 360):

a) Follow a path of least effort in constructing an interpretation of the utterance (and in particular in resolving ambiguities and referential indeterminacies, in going beyond linguistic meaning, in supplying contextual assumptions, computing implicatures, etc).

b) Stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied.

In other words, this comprehension process has the objective of finding a suitable interpretation that satisfies the individual’s expectations of relevance. To do so, addressees enrich the explicit level so as to decode the sentence meaning and supply contextual assumptions at the implicit level in order to yield enough cognitive effects (Ibid: 361).

In connection to what is explicitly or implicitly communicated, once again Sperber and Wilson depart from Grice’s approach. According to Grice, the speaker’s meaning may be decomposed into *what is said* –that comprises the conventional meaning of an utterance, reference assignment, deixis and disambiguation–, and *what is implicated* –that is conversational implications and conventional implicatures– (Grice 1975: 42-43). Meanwhile, relevance authors propose that the assumptions communicated by the speaker may be *explicatures* –which is a richer elaboration of Grice’s notion of ‘what is said’– and implicatures (W&S 2012: 11). According to these theorists, an explicature is “a proposition communicated by an utterance [which] is a development of a logical form encoded by the utterance” (Ibid: 12). The explicature is derived through a combination of decoding and inference and its recovery involves a series of processes such as disambiguation, reference assignment, saturation, pragmatic enrichment or *ad hoc* concept construction (Ibid: 9-12). As far as the implicature is concerned, for these theorists it is “a proposition communicated by an utterance, but not explicitly” (Ibid: 12). They distinguish two kinds of implicatures, *implicated premises* and *implicated conclusions*, which are defined in the following lines:
Implicated premises must be supplied by the hearer, who must either retrieve them from memory or construct them by developing assumption schemas retrieved from memory. What makes it possible to identify such premises as implicatures is that they lead to an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance, and that they are manifestly the most easily accessible premises to do so. Implicated conclusions are deduced from the explicatures of the utterance and the context. What makes it possible to identify such conclusions as implicatures is that the speaker must have expected the hearer to derive them, or some of them, given that she intended her utterance to be manifestly relevant to the hearer (S&W 1995: 195).

Implicated conclusions derive from the implicated premises that an individual may come up with. Hence, implicatures arise in variable degrees of strength and so, they can be from weakly to strongly communicated depending on the range of alternatives provided by the addressee (Ibid: 15-16).

To summarise, the basic postulates of Relevance Theory and its differences with Grice’s approach are the following (S&W 1995: 161-162):

- Relevance is more explicit than Grice’s Cooperative Principle and its maxims.
- Grice proposes that communication must have “a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction” (Grice 1975: 45) while Sperber and Wilson defend that communication’s purpose is to have the speaker’s informative intention recognised by the hearer.
- Achieving optimal relevance is less demanding than obeying Grice’s maxims.
- Grice’s principles and maxims are rules that speakers and hearers should know in order to communicate adequately although they can violate these norms to achieve certain effects. Meanwhile, relevance is a cognitive feature: speakers and hearers need not know this principle to communicate and it cannot be violated but applied without exception.
- Relevance Theory explains ostensive communication and it gives account both of its explicit and implicit sides. Grice’s approach
distinguishes between what is said and implicated, but he was mainly concerned with implicit communication. Moreover, implicatures are thought to preserve the assumption that the speaker has obeyed the Cooperative Principle and its maxims.

2.2. Relevance Theory and advertising

As already mentioned in the introduction, one of the aims of this paper is to prove that Sperber and Wilson’s proposal can be applied to advertising. There is a basic idea stressed by Díaz when it comes to analysing publicity from a relevance-theoretic perspective: attracting the audience’s attention is an essential target in advertising although it is a much more complicated task than in ordinary conversation (Díaz 2000: 43). This explains why advertisers put all their efforts to develop tactics to ensure consumer’s attention. In this sense, Byrne points out that:

The advertiser has no certainty of a captive audience even if the physical presence of the audience can be guaranteed, and so has to weigh the implications of using a more interesting style to convey the message, even if this involves more processing (Byrne 1992: 6).

The analysis in Section 3 will be based on visual advertisements with text and with respect to the previous quotation, it can be claimed that images, texts, colours, figures and almost every single part that shapes an advertisement involves a thoughtful decision on the part of the advertiser to draw consumers’ attention (Silveira & Ibaños 2014: 534). So the features in an advertisement which have the purpose of establishing communication with the addressees are ostensive stimuli:

In advertising terms, given the readers' tendency to pick out the most relevant stimuli in the environment and process them so as to maximize relevance, advertisers may produce stimuli likely to attract attention, to prompt the retrieval of specific contextual assumptions, and to point towards an intended conclusion (Pop 2007: 405).

When an addresser conveys certain information or an attitude –informative intention– by means of stimuli, he is trying to cause an effect on his audience “at no unnecessary effort” –communicative intention– (Forceville 2012: 8). Whether the communicative intention may be evident to the addressee or not, Díaz argues that the advertiser’s aim is to persuade the audience about the benefits of buying the advertised product (Díaz
Actually, advertisers tend to communicate covertly because admitting their selling intentions may undermine their persuasive power (Alrasheedi 2014: 71). To this effect, the distinction between overt and covert communication is crucial when it comes to the analysis of advertisements. Since S&W's ostensive-inferential proposal gives an account of overt communication, it was Tanaka who developed a theory on covert communication from the relevance-theoretic view:

In covert communication, the speaker intends to achieve the fulfilment of his informative intention without the aid of communicative intention. In contrast to what happens in ostensive communication, he does not intend to make his informative intention mutually manifest to the addressee and himself. He does intend to affect the cognitive environment of his addressee by making her recover certain assumptions, but he avoids the modification of the mutual cognitive environment of the addressee and himself by not making this intention mutually manifest. In other words, he does not publicize his informative intention (Tanaka 1994: 41).

Some reasons why advertisers choose to construct their campaigns based on thorough inferential processes are that addressees “may find [it] more persuasive than asserted claims” (Geis 1982: 50), or that “by involving the audience in the advertisement, their attention is retained for longer” (Díaz 2000: 45). Besides, when addressees take part in the inferential interpretation of elusive advertisements, they are left to draw their own conclusions and thus the addressers are discharged from all responsibilities (Tanaka 1994: 42; Durán 2005: 86; Pop 2007: 405).

As regards the inferential process, advertisers will usually provide no more than the exact information that is required in the derivation of the implied premises and conclusions that they want to convey. As pointed out in Section 2.1 (see p. 10) addressees may recover from weakly to strongly communicated information and between which there is a continuum. So “the closer the message is to the ‘strong’ end of the continuum, the more the responsibility for the derivation of implicatures resides with the sender of the message” (Forceville 2012: 5).

Before continuing, there are some observations connected with the interpretation of visual components in advertisements that should be explained. Tanaka claims that images are stimuli that help addressees to recover the assumptions that advertisers communicate in a covert way and so, they “act as an aid to the fulfilment of the communicator's informative intention” (Tanaka 1994: 58). In this way, illustrations
and headlines are two different pieces which usually complete each other's meanings (Crompton, cited in Tanaka 1994: 58).

On another note, Forceville comments the controversy over the interpretation of images in terms of what they communicate explicit or implicitly (2012: 9). According to S&W, explicatures are propositions and so, they are either true or false (S&W 1995: §4-4). Critics argue that only propositional sentences can be analysed in such terms, and because of this, images would lack explicatures. However, Forceville vindicates the possibility of identifying them by arguing that pictures yield sets of assumptions that involve the same derivative processes as explicatures: reference assignment, disambiguation and enrichment (Forceville & Clark 2014: 469).

To support the evidence that Relevance Theory is applicable to advertising, the following section is devoted to an analysis grounded on a series of advertisements that merge images with texts.
3. A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF SOME 20TH-CENTURY AND 21ST-CENTURY ADVERTISEMENTS

In the next pages, ten advertisements composed of images and texts will be analysed with a two-fold objective: firstly, to evaluate them from a relevance-theoretic perspective and to find out what and how they communicate the intended meaning, and secondly, to give an account of women's depiction in the 20th and 21st-century's advertisements.

The first pair is thematically related by the body image. Fig. 1 is a 2015 advertising billboard that is noteworthy thanks to its striking yellow background and, according to Silveira and Ibaños, “billboards have the advantage of being huge and eye-catching, targeting different classes, thus having a guaranteed audience” (2014: 537). What first comes to the addressee's eyes is the attractive and athletic girl in a bikini who is placed in the middle of the image. The model has been faded into blacks, whites and greys except for her yellow swimsuit that matches with the background colour. Besides, it contains a question in capital bold grey letters: “ARE YOU BEACH BODY READY?”.

Fig. 1. “Advertisement of the Weight Loss Collection by Protein World from 2015” (Hackman 2015).

S&W claim that when an addressee provides an ostensive stimulus to catch people's attention, he “must intend to make it manifest to the audience that the stimulus is relevant” (1995: 156). As stated in Section 2.2, texts, images and other elements in
visual advertisements are the stimuli that the addresser provides to attract the addressee's attention. The potential addressee of an ostensive stimulus will be the individual whose cognitive environment is successfully modified by the addresser (S&W 1995: 158). Therefore, someone who engages in the reading and derivation of an advertisement accepts that the stimuli shown raise expectations of relevance. Consequently, this individual should activate the presumption of optimal relevance as it is assumed that the addresser usually provides the most relevant stimulus according to his possibilities (Ibid:165). Considering the aforementioned, the next step for the addressee is to infer the set of assumptions that the advertisement communicates both implicit and explicitly. This procedure is exactly the same for the rest of advertisements and so, from now on, the analysis will concentrate on explaining the implicit and explicit communication retrieval.

According to Victoroff, colourful images attract more the attention as opposed to colourless and vibrant aggressive colours such as yellow or red cause a deeper impact on the audience (1980: 37-38). Therefore, the model's body, the noteworthy colours, and the highlighted question are the central elements in this advertisement that demand the addressee's attention –ostensive stimuli–. To understand what the addresser is communicating, the addressee's cognitive system has to combine linguistic decoding and inferential processes to recover the explicit meaning by means of reference assignment, disambiguation, saturation, enrichment and ad hoc concept construction. In the case of the question, “you” corresponds to an element which is external to the advertisement, the addressee. It seems that there is no element in this question which comprises different lexical meanings and that no further constituents are missing. Hence, the addressee does not need to follow the paths of disambiguation or saturation.

As far as the construction “beach body ready” is concerned, the addresser plays with its ambiguity since there is not a fixed meaning for this concept. Consequently, the addressee has to construct it attending to other elements in the advertisement and so its meaning is context-dependent: if it were not for the three protein bottled image on the bottom right corner and the inscription “THE WEIGHT LOSS COLLECTION: MEAL REPLACEMENT AND SUPPLEMENTS”, the addressee could reach to different interpretations such as:
1. To be beach body ready is to be tanned.
2. To be beach body ready implies using sunscreen.
3. [...]

Therefore, the previous information enables the addressee to recover the implicated conclusion that to be “beach body ready” is related to using such products and this assumption is strengthen by the image of the fit model. The following step for the addressee is to infer the answer to the question. The implicated premise most likely to be recovered by the addressee is that the products of the Weight Loss Collection are aimed at people who need to lose weight to be “beach body ready”. In the next stage of the derivation, she should come up with the assumption that if someone needs supplements to lose weight s/he is not fit enough –background knowledge–. The implicated conclusion deducible from the previous premises would be that if someone is not well-toned, then s/he is not “beach body ready”. However, since the process of inferring implicit meaning depends completely on each individual, different addressees could arrive at other conclusions such as the following:

1. This product will help me to keep fit.
2. If I take this product I will resemble this woman.
3. The model uses the advertised supplements.
4. I need not this product if I am already fit.
5. [...] 

By means of a simple direct question, an image, and the name of the advertised product, the addresser communicates covertly that the addressee should buy the Weight Loss Collection meal replacements. Actually, the inferential derivation of this advertisement involves a level of processing effort that is greater than the one required in the interpretation of more explicit messages. A headline such as “Take the Weight Loss Collection meal replacements and supplements to lose weight” would be clearly more straightforward, but, on the one hand, it would not be as catchy as a direct question and, on the other hand, it would not be beneficial for the brand. In other words, inviting someone to lose weight may be understood as an offense if it is taken into account that talking about body image is nowadays surrounded by many taboos and negativity, especially when it comes to talking about overweight (Hargreaves & Tiggemann 2016: 568).
Fig. 2 represents a newspaper or catalogue advertisement from the mid-twenties. There are two female figures standing on the right which can be instantly noticed at first sight. The one who is placed closer to the margin is a plump and curvy good-looking girl in a high waist bikini who seems to be happy. Meanwhile, there is a skinnier girl to her left who is wearing the same bathing suit, but she has a marked bone structure and looks sadder. They are separated by a big bold black question mark that belongs to a question placed next to them, on the top left corner: “How do you look in your bathing suit?”. This question is complemented by two shorter ones, “Like this?” relating to the skinnier woman, “Or this?” referred to the other. There is a mature man’s face with expertise-looking glasses beneath the main question and there is a speech bubble accompanying him with the inscription “Skinny? Thousands gain 10 to 25 pounds this new easy way”. Finally, there is a message placed below that reads: “New ironized yeast adds pounds – gives thousands natural sex-appealing curves”.

![Advertisement of the Ironized Yeast from the 1920s](image)

Fig. 2. “Advertisement of the Ironized Yeast from the 1920s” (Lowe 2015).

As in Fig. 1, the question in big bold letters is a visual stimulus that the addressee uses to attract the addressee’s attention and to raise expectations of relevance in the individuals who interpret it as relevant. Consequently, the potential addressee activates the presumption of optimal relevance and so begins the inferential recovery of the implicit and explicit meaning in parallel to extract the assumptions conveyed by the addressee.
After assigning the referents of the pronouns “you” and “your” to a potential addressee and by involving her directly in the advertisement, the addresser is trying to ensure her attention. Furthermore, there are missing constituents that show up after applying saturation: “thousands” should be understood as “thousands of women”; the questions “Like this?” and “Or this?” would be “[Skinny] like this [woman]?” and “Or [good-looking] [like] this [woman]?” Moreover, the addressee needs to disambiguate the meaning of “pound” (money/weight) and discern which definition is the most suitable one for this context. The construction “this new easy way” refers back to the practice of consuming the advertised product, which is recovered after narrowing its meaning. As regards the question “Like this?”, the addressee assigns the demonstrative determiner to the skinny girl after taking into consideration the context in which it appears. In other words, it is the physical proximity between the woman and the question that guides the addressee in the interpretative process or association. The same happens with the question “Or this?” that the addressee assumes to be connected to the other woman.

With respect to the implicit level, the addresser has provided the audience with all the pieces to build the intended meaning. If he had omitted the question, the two girls, the expertise-looking man –which is a perception that the addressee recovers from the interaction of this context and her background knowledge of the world– and his speech bubble, the addressee would have had to make a greater effort to derive the implicated premises and conclusions. The most accessible implicated conclusion is that curvy girls look good in bathing suits as opposed to skinny girls. The fact that the advertisement overtly explains that the product helps to “add pounds” shortens the inferential process and so, the addressee can derive the implicated conclusion that women should take the ironized yeast to gain weight and thus look good in their swimsuit. Further implicatures could be the following ones:

1. Curvy girls are happy people as opposed to skinny girls.
2. Curvy girls are healthier than skinny girls.
3. The man is an expert, probably a doctor.
4. Thousands of women have tested the product.
5. This product is scientifically tested.
6. [...]
The fact that the man’s bubble speech contains a direct question which answers the question on how the addressee looks in a bathing suit diminishes the processing effort on the part of the addressee. In this sense, it can be noticed that this advertisement is more straightforward and explicit than the previous one although the addresser’s real intention – to sell the product – is not overtly expressed.

As regards the portrayal of women, their depiction in these two advertisements suggests that they are the potential targets of the advertised products. In fact, women tend to be more concerned with their body image than men and so, according to Hargreaves & Tiggemann, “on average, girls and women report greater investment in, and lower levels of satisfaction with their body than do boys and men” (2016: 568). However, the fact that in Fig. 1 the bikini is the only coloured element covering the model’s grey-toned body contributes to the enhancement and sexualisation of her figure becoming thus a lure for men’s attention (Chacón 2008: 407). These advertisements depict the body cult and body image topics according to which women impersonate beauty canon ideals. In connection to this, it is interesting to contemplate how the physical standards have changed with the passage of time just by observing the purposes of the products in both advertisements: women from the past century were expected to use products to gain weight while in the present century they are supposed to lose it. Therefore, women were supposed to look plump and healthy before, while nowadays they should be slim, fit, and athletic. However, contemporary western societies have an unrealistic body canon based on digital retouching that resembles the unattainable perfection (Martín & Marzal 2016: 6-7). This is why even when advertisements display athletic women, their bodies are enhanced with curves and larger breasts although exercising tends to diminish them (Igoe 2006: 4). The problem with these portrayals is that publicity and mass media contribute to the establishment of certain beauty standards which are unfeasible in many cases (Chacón 2008: 408). As a consequence, advertisements originate and promote adverse effects on society such as distorted and flawed views of body image and beauty, discrimination, eating disorders, self-esteem and psychological problems... (Chacón 2008: 408; Hargreaves & Tiggemann 2016: 570-572; Igoe 2006: 39).

4 This tendency is changing since there are more and more advertisements portraying men with idealized bodies. As a consequence, men are becoming more concerned about their body image at the same time that they are suffering the same problems as women. For more information on the subject, see Bree (2010) and Brenan et al. (2010).
Apparently, the exposure of women’s bodies is justified by the nature of the products in the former advertisements. However, this is not the case of the next two since they contain naked girls who have nothing to do with the advertised products and so, these advertisements are paired according to their portrayal of women’s sexual objectification for enticement purposes. Fig. 3 is a 2007 advertisement depicting a wet or sweaty naked body of a woman who is covering her breasts with her hands in a red bright manicure. The center of the image is occupied by a masculine fragrance bottle placed on the woman’s bosom without exposing any other body parts such as her face or belly. At the bottom of the image, in a superposed position, there is an inscription in white capital letters that reads: “TOM FORD FOR MEN”, and below, in a smaller size: “THE FIRST FRAGRANCE FOR MEN FROM TOM FORD”.

Fig. 3. “Advertisement of Tom Ford Fragrance from 2007” (Product For Sale 2016).

Tanaka affirms that there are non-linguistic stimuli which can also be interpreted in terms of inferential processes (1994: 42). In this sense, Pop claims that “different stimuli such as sex images are persistently used in place of ostension” (2007: 408). Hence, the illustration is the principal claim that captures the addressee’s attention. Once she accepts this stimulus as relevant she activates the presumption of optimal relevance and begins with the inferential derivation of implicit/explicit meaning in parallel so as to recover the addressee’s intended assumptions. In order to construct the explicit meaning, the addressee has to apply saturation so as to specify the constituents
which are missing: “Tom Ford [fragrance] for men's [use]”. As regards the other inscription, it is more explicit since it is a development of the former message.

Many implicatures can be derived from this advertisement despite the explicitness of the headlines. The addressee's background knowledge of the world should let her deduce that “Tom Ford”, in this particular context, is the name of the designer and the product itself –implicated conclusion– since fashion and beauty industry products such as fragrances, clothing lines, accessories, etc. are usually named after the brand or the designer's name and also thanks to the label of the bottle placed on the model's bosom –implicated premise–. Further implications could be the following ones:

1. Using this fragrance will attract women.
2. Her body's dampness hints at an intercourse scene.
3. Tom Ford produces luxurious articles.
4. Tom Ford may have female fragrances as well.
5. [...]

Once again, the addresser's intention –that addressees should buy his product– is covertly communicated. On the contrary, this is not the case in the following advertisement where it is overtly expressed. Fig. 4 shows a 1967 campaign by Drummond that exhibits a naked woman lain over a white surface. Her dense hair is consciously and orderly dispersed, her arms are spread to her head, leaning to her right, and her gaze is directed towards the addressee in a provocative and sensual way. She is surrounded

Fig. 4. "Advertisement of Drummond sweaters from 1967" (Gabillet 2013).
by four different sweaters and her breast and pubic area are covered by the sleeves of two of these garments. On the bottom left corner there is the following caption in black letters: “If you guys don’t buy these new Drummond sweaters, we’ll go right back to male models.”

As in the previous advertisement (i.e. Fig. 3), the sexualised model is a stimulus that attracts the addressee’s attention. Besides, it raises expectations of relevance in the addressee who activates the presumption of optimal relevance if she considers the stimulus worth to be processed. Then, she proceeds to recover the information that is both explicit and implicitly communicated so as to build the assumptions that the advertisement conveys. In this case, the explicit information is derived by assigning the referent of “you” to the addressees reading the advertisement, presumably men, considering the menace of returning to “male models”; “these” to the sweaters that surround and cover the model; “we” to the people that run Drummond's company–, disambiguation –“guys” may have a collective use (either women or men) or just a male meaning, which is the one that suits best in this advertisement taking into account that it is a vocative that accompanies the personal pronoun “you”–, and free enrichment – “these new Drummond sweaters” has a broadened meaning since it should be understood that the addressee is not referring literally to the garments depicted but generically to all the new Drummond sweaters–.

With respect to the addressee's intention, he communicates overtly that people should buy his products. As opposed to the advertisement by Tom Ford that guides the addressee to the task of inferring most of the information, the explicitness of Drummond's advertisement leaves the addressee with little to implicate. However, every individual has her own background knowledge and assumptions that direct her in the derivation of certain implicatures whose accessibility depends on her experiences. For example, an implicature like “Drummond makes golfing garments” will only be derived by people who have such knowledge of the world.

As regards the role of women, this pair of advertisements depicts female models as objects, embellishing elements which have little to do with the nature of the advertised products (Moral 2000: 215). In fact, their portrayal has the sole purpose of attracting the male public by means of sexual arousal and so, they are luring elements that redirect men's awareness to the advertised products. By capturing their attention,
advertisers ensure the interest of the female public as well since, as stated in the Introduction, women have traditionally taken and still do most of the purchasing decisions not. A consequence of this sexual objectification of women is that they are depicted without personality or identity as they become bare objects whose bodies and beauty are simple rewards for the addressees’ attention. In this sense, researchers point out that publicity depicts women in these terms as a promise of sexual satisfaction: the addressee covertly communicates that if a male consumer accesses to the product, he will also be awarded with access to women (Chacón 2008: 406-407). In this way, the addressee recovers and assumption that is beneficial for the addressee while the last is discharged from all responsibilities connected to the individual's inferred conclusions.

According to Kilbourne “turning a human being into a thing is often the first step toward justifying violence” (cited in Igoe 2006: 3). Hence, the next pair of advertisements has in common the representation of sexist and domestic violence. To begin with the oldest one (Fig. 5), it is a 1953 black and white advertisement by Chase & Sanborn Coffee that shows a man sitting backwards on a chair, with his hand raised in a menacing gesture, ready to smack a woman – presumably his wife– that he is holding on his thighs. The woman is looking at the addressee while she seems to be trying to escape from her husband since she is about to be beaten. The advertisement has a headline in black bold letters that reads “If your husband ever finds out” and below, in smaller italics “you’re not ‘store-testing’ for fresher coffee...”. Between these lines and the illustration, there is more text which is the continuation to the previous ellipsis: “...if he discovers you’re still taking chances on...”.

Fig. 5. “Advertisement of Chase & Sanborn coffee from 1953” (Chase, n.d.).
getting flat, stale coffee | ...woe be unto you! | For today | there’s a sure | and certain way | to test for freshness | before you buy”.

On the bottom right corner, there is an illustration of a Chase & Sanborn Coffee can accompanied with the inscription in black letters: “‘PRESSURE PACKED’ Chase & Sanborn”. On the left and under the inscription “Here’s how easy is to be sure of fresher coffee” there is the explanation for the public to know how to test the coffee freshness which basically consists on pressing the top to check if the can is still pressurised.

The headline and the illustrations are sufficient stimuli to attract the addressee’s attention, whose expectations of relevance are raised when she considers these stimuli relevant enough to be worth processing. Consequently, the addressee activates the presumption of optimal relevance after considering that the addressee has provided the most relevant stimuli that he can afford. For the interpretation of what is explicitly communicated, the addressee should assign referents such as “your” in “your husband” or “you”, which both refer to the addressee. Besides, saturation provides the addressee with the missing constituents as in “fresher coffee”, which is to be understood in comparison with another element that has been omitted –for example, “fresher coffee [than the one the addressee usually buys]”--.

Such is the explicitness of this advertising that the addressee is left with little to implicate, although the consequences for the woman depicted are not expressed overtly. In other words, the addressee has to infer from the threat in the headline and the illustration that the woman is going to be beaten by her husband. Other implicated conclusions could be:

1. Women who do not buy this coffee should be punished by their husbands.
2. People prefer fresh coffee to flat, stale coffee.
3. Women are in charge of domestic tasks such as doing the shopping.
4. [...]
The rewards of buying this product are expressed overtly –this pressurised can guarantees that women will buy the freshest coffee hence their husbands will not punish them– and this conceals the addressee’s intention, who needs not to encourage the public to buy the product in a straightforward way.

Fig. 6 is a 2008 Duncan Quinn advertisement that gives free rein to the addressee’s inferential processes. The black and white image presents a man in a suit who is looking at the addressee with an arrogant smile and who is holding a tie around the neck of a semi-naked woman. Her face is not perceptible from the public’s perspective but her body lies on the bonnet of a car and she only wears white lingerie. There is no text except for the name of the brand –Duncan Quinn– on the bottom right corner.

Once the addressee accepts this image as a relevant input, she activates the presumption of optimal relevance that will guide her in the search of contextual effects. To recover the set of assumptions that the advertisement conveys, the addressee carries out the inferential derivation of the implicit and explicit information in the advertisement. In this case, there is nothing to infer at the explicit level and so, the addressee has free hand to derive as many implicatures as her background knowledge of the world allows her. The most accessible implicated premise –if the individual knows
the following information– is that Duncan Quinn designs luxurious male clothing, specially suits and neckties. Since the male model is wearing a suit and he is holding a cravat, the implicated conclusion is that the advertisement is publicising these garments and accessories. Someone who does not know about this brand could even infer that the model’s lingerie is also promoted by Duncan Quinn. Other possible implicatures could be:

1. The woman was chocked.
2. The couple was about to have intercourse.
3. The couple had intercourse.
4. Duncan Quinn neckties are potential assassinating weapons.
5. Duncan Quinn suits are perfect for assassins.
6. […]

The addressee is using a shocking image to attract the addressee’s attention and he plays with ambiguity so as to yield as many cognitive effects as possible. Although the violence in the image is too explicit, the advertisement conveys a vague meaning and consequently, the addressee needs to invest extra effort to recover it. The addressee’s ambiguity is translated into assumptions which are weakly communicated and so, the responsibility of the derivations falls entirely back into the addressees. Thus, what the addressee achieves is to attract more and for a longer period of time their attention and so, to make the advertisement and the brand memorable (Tanaka 1994: 82).

In connection to the target audience, there is a difference between the two advertisements. The Chase & Sanborn Coffee advertisement addresses directly to the female public –something deductible from the use of marital vocabulary, i.e. the word “husband” implies that the advertisement is targeted at wives– while the prominence of the male model in the advertisement by Duncan Quinn and the nature of this brand look for the attention of the male public. As regards the portrayal of women, both advertisements are related in the representation of sexist violence and women’s inferiority (Espín et al. 2006: 81). Garrido analyses the different types of men-women’s relationships depicted in advertisements and he identifies male dominance over women as one of the most extended types (2007: 65-66). In the case of the 1953 advertisement, the depiction of the indoctrinating husband with the authority to punish his wife is
justified in the culture and idiosyncrasy of that time's society. As a consequence, an advertisement like this one was not striking back on those days since it was only representing the reality of that time. On the contrary, this is not the case in Duncan Quinn's, as contemporary societies are fighting against sexist violence and an advertisement like this is ghastly and offensive. Hence, this type of advertisements may incite violence against women and promote a chauvinist culture based on women's submission and men's brute force (Chacón 2008: 405).

Such depictions encourage women's denigration at the same time that they reinforce the construction of an identity based on men's superiority. In connection to this, Chacón claims that men usually represent authority, wisdom, and experience in publicity (2008: 406) and thus, women are pushed to the background or rather represented in a lower position that stands as a flawed reflection of reality. In fact, this is precisely the connection between the next two advertisements. Fig. 7 is a 2016 Good Girl perfume advertisement by Carolina Herrera New York; so the target audience of this product is the female public. The focal point is occupied by a stunning blonde model that is looking fiercely and suggestively at the audience with her eyebrows raised. She is sitting on a grey carpet and between the legs of a man in a sensual position that accentuates her curves. She is wearing a black chic gown that

![Fig. 7. “Advertisement of Good Girl fragrance by Carolina Herrera New York from 2016” (Karlie Kloss 2016).](image)
covers her entire body, except for one of her legs that comes out through the high slit of the garment. Her right hand is holding her head, while her left hand is grabbing the ankle of the man sitting behind her on a red velvet couch. He is dressed in a suit that matches with her elegance but the public cannot see his face. In the center of the image, there is the following inscription in capital white letters: “GOOD GIRL | CAROLINA HERRERA | NEW YORK”. Furthermore, the illustration has a white frame that contains more text in black at the bottom: “THE NEW FEMININE FRAGRANCE” and below, in a smaller font, the social media hashtag “#GOODTOBEBAD”. On the bottom right corner, there is a superimposed image of the black heel-shaped bottle of the advertised product similar to the model’s footwear.

The text and the enigmatic model are sufficient stimuli to raise expectations of relevance and to activate the presumption of optimal relevance on the addressee, who has little to recover from the explicit level. The vagueness of this advertisement prompts the derivation of as much information as the addressee is able to derive once she merges it with her background knowledge. The most accessible implicated conclusion is that the advertisement is selling a perfume named “Good Girl” and the addressee will only infer this if she connects the headline “The new feminine fragrance” with the adequate background knowledge: “Carolina Herrera New York” should be discarded as the perfume’s name since it is the brand’s name. Moreover, the hashtag #Goodtobead at the bottom of the advertisement guides the addressee to the implicit conclusion that this perfume is made for “bad girls” – in sexual terms –. Further implicatures could be:

1. Good girls should be naughty.
2. This perfume makes girls to be bad.
3. Good girls should be submissive.
4. Carolina Herrera may have masculine fragrances as well.
5. There is more information on the Internet (#goodtobead).
6. […]

As it can be perceived, numerous interpretations may be derived depending on the individual’s assumptions, but somehow, the addresser’s ultimate intention is to publicise the perfume.
Fig. 8 is a 1974 advertisement by Weyenberg Massagic Shoes, it depicts an appealing blonde naked woman lying on the floor and looking captivated at a black and burgundy male shoe. The background is of a mustard tone that contributes to the enhancement of the white bold letters at the top of the image that read: “Keep her where she belongs...”.

As mentioned in Figs. 3 and 4, the naked woman is an ostensive stimulus used to attract men’s attention and also women’s, if we consider that they were the ones buying their husbands’ clothing and so men’s attention was redirected to them. Hence, expectations of relevance are raised in the individual that finds this stimulus relevant. So the potential addressee activates the presumption of optimal relevance considering that the addressee has provided the best stimulus to yield the intended cognitive effects that he could have designed according to his abilities and preferences. The derivation of the explicit level involves assigning a referent to the pronouns “her” and “she” –they may refer to the model– and saturation, as there are certain elements which are missing but presupposed –“keep” is an imperative that implies the existence of a second singular/plural person and so, this “you” should be referentially assigned to the addressee.

In connection to what the advertisement conveys, the addressee plays with an ambiguous message that may prompt the retrieval of different implicit meaning conclusions. On the one hand, the addressee could come up with the assumption that the luxurious shoe gives the model a high social status –retrieved from the background
assumption that this shoes brand was aimed at people from the upper classes and so it would help the potential consumer to keep his partner in the social class that the shoes belong to. On the other hand, the addressee could also recover the conclusion that with these shoes, the potential consumer will have the power to keep his partner at his feet – where she belongs–. By means of the ambiguity of this headline, the addresser prompts the derivation of multiple conclusions while he avoids the responsibility for the addressees' retrieval. More possible implicatures could be:

1. This advertisement publicises men's footwear.
2. Men who use this footwear will be rewarded with beautiful women.
3. Women should please men sexually.
4. [...] 

As regards the portrayal of women, it can be noticed that both advertisements devaluate them so as to represent them literally at men's feet. In this sense, it can be observed that both advertisements differ in the way they convey this degrading message as the eldest one is more overt than the newest. One argument that may shed some light on this matter is that researchers claim that modern sexism is less explicit and less likely to be identified as prejudicial than old sexism (Barreto & Ellemers 2005: 76-77). In this sense, the model in Fig. 7 may seem to be a fierce and powerful woman who runs the situation as opposed to the model in Fig. 8 whose nakedness reduces her to a sexual object to please men. However, the reality is that they are both represented in a downgraded position although the attitude of the model in the Good Girl advertisement tries to hide this inferiority since it goes against political correctness. In fact, what this advertisement encourages by means of the model's depiction and the hashtag “#goodtobebad” is that women should satisfy men by being playful in a seductive way. So, the role depicted in these two advertisements shows the stereotypical image of the woman whose worth relies on her beauty and whose life goal is to comply men (Moral 2000: 215). Either covertly or overtly communicated, it is almost clear that women are depicted as subordinated to men, a harmful image for society since it reinforces the prejudices that women still have to get over to overcome sexism and stereotypes based on gender roles (Barreto & Ellemers 2005: 85; Chacón 2008: 409).
According to Warrell, the problem with sexism is that people are surrounded by many subtle biases which have become so familiar to them that individuals fail to recognise them (2016). The next two advertisements represent one of the many clichés based on gender that women have to face in their daily lives. Fig. 9, a black and white advertisement of Kellog’s Pep Vitamins’ from the 1930’s, illustrates a woman wearing an apron and holding a duster while a man –presumably her husband– who stands behind holds her in his arms. He is looking straight to her radiant face while she is gazing forward. There is a speech bubble to their right and it seems to belong to the man since it reads in black capital letters: “So the harder a wife works, the cuter she looks”. On the bottom left corner there is a box of the advertised product accompanied by the inscription: “Vitamins for pep! Pep for vitamins!”. On the right, between this letters and the speech bubble, there is vignette that contains a cartooned version of the couple. His bubble reads: “Gosh, honey, you seem to thrive on cooking, cleaning and dusting and I’m all tuckered out by closing time. What’s the answer?” and hers provides the answer “Vitamins, darling! I always get my vitamins”.

![Fig. 9. “Advertisement of Kellog’s Pep Vitamins from the 1930s” (Kellog’s, n.d.)](image-url)

The illustration of the couple and the big eye-catching speech bubble are the most prominent stimuli that attract the addressee’s attention. If she considers them relevant enough she will activate the presumption of optimal relevance assuming that the addressee has provided the stimuli that will yield the adequate contextual effects.
Considering this, she will try to recover both the explicit and implicit information in the advertisement with a view to retrieving the conclusions that the addressee contemplated. As regards the derivation of the explicit information in the speech bubble, the addressee is expected to assign a referent to the personal pronoun “she” and considering the context, it refers back to the word “wife”. Although this word is in singular, it has a universal value that comprises all wives and so addressees should enrich this concept by broadening its meaning. Besides, “harder” and “cuter” are loose uses that the addressee needs to adjust by means of an ad hoc concept construction that depends on the individual’s criteria. Therefore, the meaning of these notions will vary from one person to another. Moreover, the message at the bottom of the image needs to be saturated so as to supply the constituents that are missing: “[Get] Vitamins for pep! [Get] PEP for vitamins!”

The most accessible implicated conclusion is that the woman takes Kellog’s PEP Vitamins and this assumption is stressed by the cartoon in the vignette since she claims that she always get her vitamins. Another strong implicature supported by the man’s words in the cartoon and the main speech bubble is that the woman depicted is an attractive hard worker. Further implicated conclusions could be:

1. They are married.
2. The husband has arrived from work recently.
3. The woman is dusting the house.
4. The woman is happy.
5. Women are responsible of housework.
6. […]

It can be perceived that the addresser’s intention, that the addressees should get the advertised product, is expressed almost explicitly in the text at the bottom of the image – “Vitamins for pep! PEP for vitamins!” –, while the intended implicated information has the purpose of reinforcing the future rewards of using the product. In this sense, the addresser’s intentions are close to the explicit end of the overt-covert continuum.
Fig. 10 is a 2011 Mr. Clean advertisement published to promote their cleaning product on Mother’s Day. On the left bottom corner, there is the emblematic cartoon of the bald man that represents the brand and a cleaning sponge. Behind, there is a cheerful and radiant woman cleaning a glass with the same sponge and a little girl with an enthusiastic gesture who points at the spotless glass. On the top left corner, there is the following message: “This Mother’s Day get back to the job that really matters”.

Mr. Clean’s cartoon and the image behind are the stimuli provided by the addresser to attract the addressee’s attention. When she considers the advertisement relevant enough to be processed, she activates the presumption of optimal relevance considering that the addresser has provided the best stimuli. Consequently, the addressee begins the inferential process to recover the implicit and explicit information and the conclusions expected by the addresser.

The addresser plays with an ambiguous message that leaves the addressee with little to recover from the explicit level apart from the assignment of a referent for the determiner “this” that accompanies “Mother’s Day” and refers to 2011’s Mother’s Day. On the contrary, the ambivalence of the caption yields the retrieval of many implicatures. The most accessible implicated conclusion is that the advertisement is promoting Mr. Clean’s cleaning sponge and this is supported by the sponge depicted on the bottom right corner and the woman as she is using this article to clean the glasses. Other implicatures could be:
1. They are a mother and her daughter.
2. The sponge is to clean glasses.
3. Being a mother is the “job” that really matters.
4. Cleaning is the job that really matters.
5. Mothers should clean despite Mother’s Day.
6. [...]
represents the future continuation and preservation of this gender role. Even though nowadays’ publicity is introducing the depictions of the caring father and the househusband, the majority of the advertisements with domestic and familiar topics still portray women as the ones in charge of these matters (Espín et al. 2006: 86). In this sense, these depictions contribute to the perpetuation of a stereotype that needs to be overcome: the prototypes of the perfect mother and the housewife are not relatable anymore to the new family structures (single parent families, LGBT parenting families...), to nuclear families in which the woman is the economical supporter and the man is in charge of the house duties, or to independent and single individuals –either men or women– who conciliate their labor and domestic lives.
4. CONCLUSION

The previous analysis has presented ten advertisements concerning women’s body image, women’s objectification, sexist violence, women’s inferiority and domestic life (housework and motherhood). In connection to what and how these advertisements communicate, it can be perceived that 9 out of 10 convey the addresser’s intention –to sell a given product– covertly. As regards the target audience, 60% of the advertisements (Figs. 1, 2, 5, 7, 9 & 10) are aimed at a female public, 20% (Figs. 3 & 6) at a male public and 20% (Figs. 4 & 8) at a mixed audience since they advertise products for men to be bought by women. Furthermore, it may be noticed that the twentieth century advertisements convey information more explicitly than their twenty-first century counterparts, since the later are influenced by political correctness. In all cases, the advertisement’s explicitness is inversely proportional to the addressees’ responsibility on the recovery of the implicated conclusions: the more the explicitness, the less information that the addressee has to recover on her own and vice verse.

The benefits of introducing a pragmatic perspective in this work reside in that it enables the recovery of all the levels of information comprised in the advertisements and in turn the analysis on what they convey about women is more accurate. It should be considered that this study has been limited to the analysis of advertisements aimed at English-speaking countries, but further research should focus on this type of advertisements in other countries/cultures or in other forms of publicity (visual, acoustic...). Besides, it could be very interesting to apply this analysis to men’s roles in advertisements considering the hypothesis that men’s body image has changed in the 21st-century pursuing the unattainable perfection canon reserved until now to women. Moreover, a comparison between both gender roles in publicity could shed more light on the study of sexist manifestations in the media. Finally, future research could concentrate on women’s and men’s opinions towards stereotyped and sexist advertisements or on the effectiveness in selling of such advertisements.

With respect to women’s roles and images in publicity, it is evident that the portrayals in the past century advertisements are still used in the present century. In essence, their depictions are based on sexual objectification, sexism and classical archetypes. As stated in the Introduction, critics claim that this is so because the
advertising world tends to reflect its contemporary society, but the previous analysis has shown that this is not always true: some portrayals of women are grounded on fictitious canons and stereotypes not relatable to their contemporary world. As Moral claims, it would not be fair to say that publicity has been impassive with women’s achievements throughout the passage of time (2000: 214), but it is still too partial. Although advertisers are introducing new models based on nowadays’ women, they are bounded at the same time to old sexist biases and stereotypes that continue to be perpetuated.

Since advertising plays an important role in social education, it is necessary to end up with the depictions that denigrate women and consolidate harmful consequences for their development within their societies. Consequently, it is imperative to establish a series of parameters to ensure an egalitarian publicity free of classical archetypes, stereotypes and disparities. In connection to this, there are many regulation bodies and associations\(^5\) that contribute to this cause, but they still have a long way to walk. Furthermore, society’s actions are also fundamental in this matter since researchers claim that a cultural shift is essential to do away with this type of publicity (Igoe 2006: 5). Thus, it is important to raise awareness about women’s barriers and to promote an education based on gender equality. In this way, individuals will be provided with the knowledge and the tools to identify sexist manifestations, no matter how subtle, subliminal or implied they may be. Like Marie Curie once said: “you cannot hope to build a better world without improving the individuals” (Curie 1923: 168). So only once all men and women unite to speak out for women’s rights, the advertising world will have no chances to introduce denigrating images anymore.

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\(^5\) I.e. The Advertising Association, the Association for Women in Communication, and the ASA (Advertising Standards Authority) in the British context; the EASA (European Advertising Standards Alliance) and the EACA (European Association of Communications Agencies); and in the American context the FTC (Federal Trade Commission), the Bureau of Consumer Protection and the FCC (Federal Communications Commission).
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