

# Characteristics of the Language of Advertising: Profanity in Contemporary Advertising

Simona Vernerová

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**Mgr. Hana Čechová**

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doc. Ing. Anežka Lengalová, Ph.D.  
děkanka



  
PhDr. Katarína Nemčoková, Ph.D.  
ředitelka ústavu

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na hledání všech aspektů, kvůli kterým může být reklama vnímána společností jako nevhodná, urážející a vulgární. V teoretické části jsou definovány pojmy reklama a profanace. V následujících kapitolách je výčet důležitých lingvistických a vizuálních projevů, které jsou pro tuto analýzu stěžejní. Praktická část se zabývá rozborem všech aspektů, které souvisí s profanací v reklamě. Analýza zahrnuje dvacet dva reklam, z nichž každá vykazuje určité prvky profanace.

Klíčová slova: reklama, profanace, tabu, lingvistické prvky, vizuální prvky

## **ABSTRACT**

The thesis concentrates on aspects causing an advertisement to be seen as inappropriate and insulting to the public. In the theoretical part, terms such as advertisement and profanity are described. In the subsequent chapters there is a list of significant linguistic and visual signs, which are considered crucial for the purposes of the analysis. The practical part focuses on the analysing all aspects related to profanity in the language of advertising. The research sample consisted of twenty-two advertisements, each featuring certain elements of profanity.

Keywords: advertising, profanity, taboo, linguistic aspects, visual aspects

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## INTRODUCTION

The times when people needed only basic things which they managed to grow, make or do on their own to live happily and contentedly are gone. The needs of an average person increased with time and people started to sell and buy things for money. Nowadays, the market, as an economic system, is full of products and services, which means that the product must be promoted well in order to get into the subconscious of the society and to overshadow the competition. This phenomenon is called advertising and even though it may sound as a cliché, advertisement nowadays is everywhere around us.

However not all advertising is a fair play. In some of the advertisements certain elements appear which may seem inappropriate or insulting, destroying the social principles and not abiding by the limits or rules. Advertising often displays sexual behaviour or nakedness and other areas which will be included in this work. These limits of appropriateness are created by the society. The reason why features of profanity are sometimes hard to identify is the fact that society is diverse and as such has different values and limits. Each person can thus perceive profanity differently and in fact they do.

In this work there are advertisements in which indication of profanity or direct features of it appear, primarily in contemporary advertising. These advertisements appeared in printed advertising (e.g. magazines and newspaper), or in the out-of-home advertising (e.g. billboards, posters) in the last years. The source was the Internet as it was not hard to find the basic information about these advertisements, i.e. when, where, and by whom they were published.

The theoretical part provides definitions of significant terms – advertisement and profanity. The first chapter focuses on the structure of printed out – of – home advertisement and delimits the difference between commercial and non – commercial advertising. Profanity is here described from many points of view because it is related to many factors and can be expressed in many ways. Possible verbal and visual phenomena potentially related to profanity is described.

In the practical part there are twenty two advertisements, mostly published in countries where English language is the first or second official language. They are divided into several groups according to the field in which profanity is visible. In the analysis all of the elements are taken into consideration; however, the key features which indicate that the advertisement is inappropriate or vulgar are paid most attention to. The aim of this part is

to analyse the way how profanity is/may be interpreted in the advertisement. The other aim is to clarify the purpose the author created the ads for.

## **I. THEORY**

## 1 CHARACTERISTICS OF ADVERTISING

The bachelor thesis deals with the language of contemporary advertising and its modern aspects. It is essential to illustrate the concept of advertising at the beginning of this bachelor thesis in order to be able to operate with the term further.

### 1.1 Definition of Advertisement

Goddard says “we all recognize the type of advertising text that occurs in newspapers and magazines, where a product is being presented as desirable for us to buy.” (Goddard, 2002, 5) Another slightly complicated definition describes advertising as “nonpersonal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products (goods and services) or ideas by identified sponsors through various media.” (Arens, Bovée, 1994, 6)

### 1.2 Purpose of Advertising

According to professionals, the nonpersonal communication is based on “cognitive psychology with a bias toward the use of verbal material and linguistic performance, disregarding pictorial and other non-language stimuli” (Marieke de Mooij, 2005, 144). The purpose is to arouse interest in the society or individuals, to influence their behavior so as to create a relationship between the potential “seller” and “buyer”.

### 1.3 How to Advertising Works: Models

The following models provide knowledge about how advertisement works (de Mooij, 2005, 152):

- Sales – response model – direct advertising process, the main idea is expressed directly and simulates the answer => distribution, so-called “buy – now” strategy
- Persuasion model – the intention is buying, by providing arguments it emphasizes the brand of the product and creates a kind of preference for the brand, it uses presenters, demonstrations, testimonials

- Involvement model – is based on the relationship between the consumer and the brand, advertisement must be original, an indirect model of advertising is more likely to be used
- Awareness model – the main reason is to evoke differences of the product from other similar brands, metaphors are often used, humor and etc, it is an indirect advertising process
- Emotions model – building trust and emotional relationship, often focused on the feminine part of the society
- Likeability model – the advertisement is supposed to point out what is likeable about the brand by using direct addressing methods, however, this manner is not correct
- Symbolism model – symbol functions as a code which is connected with a brand and is simultaneously different from other competitors

#### **1.4 Commercial and non-commercial advertisements**

In the introduction of their publication, Vestergaard and Schroeder consider both these terms an essential know-how in the world of advertisement. In fact it is primarily the commercial advertising, which exists all around us, which influences our lives mainly in the investment of our financial resources. Vestergaard and Schroeder list various types of commercial advertisements. The most common of them are considered to be *commercial consumer advertising* which promotes a product or a service using very convincing methods so as to sell it. Another type of the commercial advertisement is the *prestige or goodwill advertising* which means that companies do not promote a certain product but they mainly focus on the brand and their good reputation in a long-term scale. People realize the existence of a company; they remember the brand for a long period and create a certain opinion. This type of advertisement is used in political propaganda too. Another type, *the industrial or trade advertising* is found in specialised printed materials, for example in trade journals or business parts of newspaper. In these advertisements the

reader is to become more aware of special technical parameters of the product than in consumer advertising. The company concentrates on advertising of the product in various industrial advertisements, however, in some other cases institutions can appeal on individuals (customers) as in *consumer advertising* (Vestergaard and Schroeder, 1985, 2). *Commercial advertising* is published in order to encourage the distribution, whereas *non-commercial advertising* is used to influence the behaviour, opinions, values (e.g. in politics), also to point out individual problems or global ones (e.g. poverty, substance abuse, child labour, etc.). These advertisements are published by different organizations, for example by schools, churches, charitable organizations, political institutions, etc. Generally, they are used by non-business and non-profitable institutions. There are some cases when one or more agencies and trade companies become involved in non-commercial advertising campaigns. The classic example of it is a campaign for Drug-free America, coalition of more than two hundred advertising companies, media and other institutions were involved in the fight against the illegal usage of drugs. This extensive campaign was successful and was able to change attitudes and behaviour of consumers (Arens and Boveé, 1994, 566). The authors Arens and Boveé (Arens and Boveé, 1994, 567) add that “non-commercial advertising helps build a better society relating to issues as health, safety, education, and the environment.”

## **1.5 Type of Advertising**

People frequently encounter advertising in magazines and newspapers or when watching television, listening to the radio, travelling to work on billboards and street hoardings. However, this work focuses on printed advertisement, found in the newspapers, magazines or out-of-home advertising. David Ogilvy claims in his book that it is quite difficult to create a successful printed advertisement because nowadays the main absorbing mass media and communicative channel is the television. Still, it is possible with enough knowledge in the branch of printed advertising to make the one, which catches attention, invokes interest of the reader and fulfils its purpose. (Ogilvy, 2007, 70)

### **1.5.1 Printed Advertisements**

According to Ogilvy, the main parts of printed advertisements are the headlines, illustrations, text and the graphic modification.

In this part, a more detailed structuring is used according to Arens and Boveé who define the key format elements as headline, the visual, subheads, body copy, boxes and panels, slogans, seals, logotypes and signature. (Ogilvy, 2007, 71)

### ***1.5.1.1 Headlines***

Headline is a very important feature of printed advertising. It has the leading position in advertisement as a whole. The words of headline are always in a larger print than the other elements of an advertisement in order to attract attention. According to a survey, most readers concentrate firstly on the headline than on the other parts. And that is one of the reasons why a successful headline is considered to be a complete selling idea. Attracting the attention of the reader (audience) and makes it easier for them to understand the main selling idea and afterwards read the body copy (e.g. headline: “What kind of man reads Playboy?” body copy: “He’s man who demands the best life has to offer.”). (Arens and Boveé, 1994, 248-253)

The authors introduce various types of headlines according to the type of information.

- Benefit headlines – assure the reader of the usefulness of goods and promise some benefits
- News headlines – provide a new piece of information to the reader
- Provocative headlines - arouse curiousness in the reader and provokes desire to find out more
- Question headlines – usage of a question tends to provoke desire to look for the answer in the other parts of the advertisement
- Command headlines – words in this headline incite the reader to do certain activity

### ***1.5.1.2 Subheads***

The term subhead is defined as a kind of an addition of the headline. Smaller letters are used; the font is often highlighted and differs in colour. Although a subhead contains less key points which support the marketing, it is able to complete the main idea appropriately. (Arens and Boveé, 1994, 253-254)

### ***1.5.1.3 Body Copy***

This element offers information such as functions, advantages and usefulness of the product to the reader. In the body copy, the copywriter says just what is to be said, no more, no less. They must make the readers aware of the benefit the product would have for them.



Generally speaking, while writing the body copy, the copywriter should use short sentences and common words as in casual speech. On the other hand, apart from the simple and clear style, the body copy should be accurate, a bit dramatic and memorable. (Aren and Boveé, 1994, 254-259)

Body copy styles (Arens and Boveé, 1994, 255-256):

- Straight sell copy – explains directly the headline and the visual, emphasizes the key characteristics of the product according to the order of importance
- Institutional copy – it points out rather the philosophy of the organization or the uniqueness of the brand rather than qualities of the product on their own
- Narrative copy – Arens and Boveé claim that “it sets up a situation and then resolves it at the last minute by having the product or service come to the rescue.”
- Dialogue/monologue copy – the writer creates the body copy on the basis of thoughts of the main figures in the advertisement
- Picture-caption copy – tells a story with illustrations and captions, it has many different uses and varieties of style
- Device copy – uses humour, rhyme, poetry and other humorous devices

#### ***1.5.1.4 Boxes and Panels***

Copywriters sometimes need to fit in a lot of information. That is why some extra information is spread into the so-called boxes and panels next to the main text – i.e. body copy. Afterwards, the longer text is more complex and more accurate. They define a box as “copy with a line around all sides” and they say “a panel is a full - length box usually running the whole place of an ad.” (Kolář, 2006, 63)

#### ***1.5.1.5 Slogans***

The word *slogan* originates from the Scottish term *battle cry*. “From the linguistic point of view slogans are compared to proverbs, i.e. short and rhymed”, Kolář states and defines some examples (e.g. “*When you need aspirin drink Disprin*”, “*It’s fingerlickin’ good*”. *Kentucky Fried Chicken*). (Kolář, 2006, 63) Arens and Boveé claim with enthusiasm that “slogans should be like old friends – recognized instantly years after years”. In fact, it

should be brief, accurate, understandable and also different from other slogans of the competitive companies (e.g. *Diamonds are forever* in DeBeer's ads). In advertising, slogans are used to present the main idea which is related to a single product or with the whole company in order to engage the interest of the reader and afterwards for the purpose of selling the product - one of the tricks of trade. (Arens, Boveé, 1994, 263)

#### ***1.5.1.6 Seals, Logotypes and Signatures***

A seal is a special credible mark put on products by some official institutions, for instance Parents Institute or Underwriters Laboratories, because they hold the status of respectful authorities. Logotype and signature are symbols representing a special design of a company name which promotes its product. The use of logotype is clearly to identify a product and it gives the product individuality on the market. (Arens nad Boveé, 1994, 263)

### **1.5.2 Out-of-home Advertisement**

Medias which promote their own business outside on the streets are called out-of-home media and that is how they differ from printed advertising which appears in newspapers and magazines. Out-of-home advertising is divided into outdoor and transit advertising. In both categories there are several terms to be defined. (Arens and Boveé, 1994, 469)

#### ***1.5.2.1 Outdoor Advertisement***

The basic forms of outdoor advertising are the poster panel, the bulletin and the spectacular. These appear in many sizes and are many times bigger than advertisements in magazines (Arens and Boveé, 1994, 470). Generally they are hung out on places which are visible from all angles and where there is a huge frequency of potential observers. The size and locality hold a very important role because the right combination of these aspects can interest a potential observer. For instance they appear close to frequent vehicular traffic or in centres and city streets. (Elsa Simões Lucas Freitas, 2008, 8-9)

#### ***1.5.2.2 Transit Advertisement***

The difference between outdoor and transit advertising is the choice of locality. Around the year 1910 the company Cambell Soup placed an advertisement on the buses in New York City which brought a big acceptances and this type of propagation became a trend. It follows that transit advertisements are placed on various means of transport (e.g. buses, subways, elevated trains, trolleys, airlines and etc.). As a matter of interest, this step of

placing advertisement on buses was very successful. Transit advertising includes the following formats: inside cards – hung out above the windows; outside posters – placed wherever on a mean of transport from outside; terminal posters – stations and other stops are special places for placing advertisements such as floor displays, island showcases, illuminated cards; taxi exteriors - cab roofs. (Arens and Boveé, 1994, 475-478)

## **2 THE CONCEPT OF PROFANITY**

Another very important point is the definition of the term profanity as one of specific features of modern advertisement. Its desirability is disputable but that is not the point. In this chapter, profanity and related terms are defined.

### **2.1 Definition of Profanity**

Defining the term the Macmillan Dictionary describes profanity as “a word, language or behaviour that is offensive because it is rude, or shows a lack of respect for God or people’s religious beliefs.” The word profanity has various synonyms (e.g. obscenity, bad language, abuse, swearing, vulgarity and etc.). ([www.macmillandictionary.com](http://www.macmillandictionary.com))

### **2.2 Definition of Taboo**

From the point of view of social connections, it is dispensable to mention the term taboo because while interpreting it a taboo can disgrace traditions, principles and stances. The European explorer of the South Seas generally defines taboo as “something that should not be touched”. However, the semantic area is very wide and represents truly plenty of different views in many situations. (Freitas, 2008, 1).

#### **2.2.1 Origin of Taboo**

In 1771 Captain James Cook became conscious of a taboo for the first time during his visit to Tonga and it was him who brought this term into English from the Polynesian language. In local culture taboo was based on their religion and secular connotations. Many taboo items were taken down also in a social hierarchy. Even the visitors of Polynesian Islands obtained a long list of taboo which they had to follow. In connection with taboo items they imposed bans. If the ban was broken, the sanction followed. The word had a wider meaning for the indigenous inhabitants. It was a combination of words holy, sacred, forbidden and defiled; the relationship between these words creates some kinds of an impurity. (Freitas, 2008, 24-33)

### 3 LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISING

#### 3.1 Discourse of Advertising

Cook (Cook, 2001, 4) simply says that “discourse is text and context together, interacting in a way which is perceived as meaningful and unified by participants.”

Text is used as a linguistic device which is artificially separated from the context just for the purpose of analysis. As far as context is considered, it is important to mention these terms (Cook, 2001, 4-8):

**Substance** – importance of spoken or written text

**Music and pictures**

**Paralanguage** – elements providing language, for example choice of typeface and letter size in written text

**Situation** – relationship between participants, objects and people in connection with the context

**Co-text** – “text which precedes or follows that under analysis”, and which participants consider as the same discussion

**Intertext** – text which is considered as to other discourse, but it affects participant’s interpretation

**Participants** – observers who perceive the context, they have their attitudes, interpretations, related feelings, they are senders and receivers, addressers and addressees (e.g. *sender* can be an advertising agency and *addresser* can be a model in advertisement, *addressee* can possibly be certain target group but *receiver* is that one who observe the advertisement). Senders or addressers do not always have the same meaning as well as the couple addressee or receiver.

**Function** – text is made with a certain intention by the senders and addressers so as to be spotted by the receivers and addressees

#### 3.2 Types of Sign

According to the semiotic theory, sign is defined as “something which stands to somebody for something else, in some respect and capacity”. One of the founders of semiotics Charles Saunders Peirce divided the three types of relations between a sign and its object: *icon*, *index* and *symbol*. These indexical, iconic and symbolical relations are significant for an advertising analysis. An *icon* is a sign related with the object on the basis of physical

similarity. An *index* is a sign which is realistically related with the object (e.g. smoke is an index of fire). A *symbol* is a sign connected with the object on the basis of social rule (de Mooij, 2005, 45).

### **3.3 A Framework for Analysis of Taboo and Profanity in Advertisements**

Advertising analysis have a similar structure in general and predominantly deal with the wide range of elements which were for instance listed in chapter 3.1 and 3.2. However, this work deals with another feature appearing in advertisements and that is profanity. Each advertisement is original in a way but most of them are described on the basis of general structure. Elsa Simões Lucas Freitas lists other elements and effects on which it is necessary to concentrate while analysing these advertisements in order to make it clear where and how profanity manifests itself. Connotation in advertising which causes different feelings, visions and emotions in a recipient is very substantial, primarily for this group of advertisements with the aim to produce contradictoriness. It is important to distinguish advertisements with taboo-related products from non-taboo products. Advertisements with taboo-related products try hard to break away the attention from the taboo issue and produce positive feelings with a good intention. On the contrary advertisements that are non-related use taboo in order to attract the attention and produce a feeling full of contradiction. However, it is not a stated rule. To express the connection between the product and vision and feelings the linguistic devices such as metaphor, metonymy, personification, pun and other are used. These linguistics devices are both verbal and visual/pictorial. In nowadays advertisements these elements are very common and important for taboo advertisements – their usage has a foregrounding effect. Contemporary advertisement combines images and words, so it is substantial for the recipient to learn how to “read images”. Both sides, linguistic and visual, participated on the creation of a taboo in advertisement. (Freitas, 2008, 46-50)

#### **3.3.1 Lexical Aspects**

##### **3.3.1.1 Metaphor**

It is defined by Kolář (Kolář, 2006, 82) as a “transfer of meaning on the basis of external similarity of denotates” (e.g. *blood red* – colour, *ear drum* – transfer of things to the body). On the basis of the description in Encyclopaedia Britannica (<http://www.britannica.com>),

metaphor is greatly widened in literature (e.g. *Iron Horse - originates from one poem written by Emily Dickinson*). Metaphors are also often used in casual speech which is enriched with a certain dose of criticism and enlivened by it.

### 3.3.1.2 *Metonymy*

Metonymy is another figure expression - transfer of the meaning on the basis of the unit emerging from the typical example which is a word “crown” for “king”. Metonymy has indexical features. (Vestergaard and Schroeder, 1985, 38)

### 3.3.1.3 *Personification*

In The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language (Crystal, 1987,70), personification is a type of metaphor, when the human features are transferred to inanimate subjects (e.g. *All little roofs of the village bow low* – literary example from a poem End of Another Home Holiday by D. H. Lawrence).

### 3.3.1.4 *Simile*

The term “simile” means two objects which are compared on the basis of similarity by using a word *as like* or *as* (e.g. *I wandered lonely as a cloud* by William Shakespeare). (Crystal, 1987, 70)

### 3.3.1.5 *Hyperbole*

Vorel (Vorel, 2005, 94) claims that a hyperbole can be considered as an exaggeration (e.g. *I have not seen you for ages, we have millions of reasons*). Also defines the hyperbole to be the opposite of euphemism and while using the rude expressions we can move to dysphemism. Other examples point to the fact, that strengthened hyperbole can truly have features of the roughness (e.g. *Kick that sodding cat out, will you*). A hyperbole is mostly used by the younger generation and on the basis of publication occurs much more in American English than in the British one.

### 3.3.1.6 *Euphemism*

The word euphemism originates from the Greek language. Euphemisms are used in case when people want to soften the meaning of the word and do not want to be rude or too honest. That is why it is better to replace the word *die* by the word *pass away* or *leave for better world* in certain situations. The usage of euphemism is, according to authors,

dependent on the social and cultural surroundings. The antonym of euphemism is a dysphemism. (Vorel, 2005, 95)

### 3.3.1.7 *Pun*

Pun is a form of a word play, when a word has two different meanings or the usage of words sounds the same but have a different meaning. (www.macmillandictionary.cz) Pun is often used for instance in black humour, lapel badges, car stickers, trade name, book titles and etc. Also right in the world of advertisement we can very frequently encounter pun as a feature of freshness of a pun (e.g. the slogan for a new kind of adhesive: “*Our word is your bond*”). Crystal adds that puns are much more popular in Britain than in the USA. (Crystal, 1987, 63)

### 3.3.1.8 *Taboo Words and Swear Words*

In this chapter vowels in some words will be replaced by a typographical sign called asterisk which is inserted in swear words in order to moderate the roughness and inconvenience of the usage.

According to Swan (Swan 1991, 589), there are some words in a language whose usage is said to be inappropriate, useless or shocking in certain situations. The three most common areas of occurrence of the taboo words are indicated by Swan. The first area is a religion, especially Christianity where people tend to use words such as God or Christ with respect for the language. It still seems rather problematic to accept impolite or even disrespectful expression for this society. Many of the taboo words, which are used carelessly, are often related with the sexual symbols/ words (fu\*k). The words are replaced by the asterisk in order to hide its full forms but still preserve the meaning. In formal language they are often replaced by euphemisms, which have the same meaning but are not so shocking (have a sexual intercourse). There is a huge number of taboo words connected with parts of the body which are also considered to be very inappropriate (e.g. pi\*s). They can be also substituted by euphemisms with a more polite meaning (go to the lavatory). The human beings use these expressions so as to express themselves more emotionally instead of euphemisms or generally more formal language. In most cases of taboo words their literal historically non-offensive meanings vanish, for instance the meaning of the word *pi\*s* is *urinate* but when somebody uses the expression *pi\*s off*, it means *to go away, to get out*. The author also adds that the social awareness makes the usage of this language



dependent. The level of vulgarity is perceived by people differently depending on the society they are used in.

#### 3.3.1.8.1 Taboo Words

The expression “taboo word” originates from Polynesian language and literary means the inviolability. The language was more conservative years ago, that is why the linguistics themselves avoided this theme. In modern languages, both the written and spoken form, taboo words appear more and more frequently (Vorel 2005, 95). According to Swan (Swan 1991, 589) there are several taboo words in English which are used the most. On the basis the author says that “one-star word will not upset many people, while a four-or-five-star word may be very shocking if it is used in the wrong situation”, the words will be marked by a different number of asterisks according to the “strength “of the swearword. He also adds that not everybody reacts to the same word in the same way.

#### **Taboo- meaning**

*Damn\*= condemn to hell (rare in literal sense; mainly used as a swearword)*

*Blast\*= strike down with divine punishment (rare in literal sense; mainly used as a swearword)*

*Hell\**

*God\*\**

*Jesus\*\*\**

*Christ\*\*\**

*Piss\*\*\**

*Bastard\*\*\**

*Sh\*t\*\*\*\**

*Fu\*k\*\*\*\**

#### 3.3.1.8.2 Swear Words

According to the simple definition of swear word is “a word that people use to swear and that a lot of people consider offensive.” (www.macmillandictionary.com) Kolář adds about swearword that “its meaning is always different from its literal (taboo) meaning. “He describes the difference between taboo words and swearwords in the following examples (example of taboo word: *What are you doing f\*\*king in my bed*, example of swear word: *What are you f\*\*king doing in my bed*). In the first example the literal meaning is *why you*

*are making love.* The meaning of the second example is the same as *why the hell you are in my bed.* (Kolář, 2006, 88)

### **Functions of swearword:**

Example of an exclamation of annoyance: *Damn (it), Jesus Christ!, F\*\*k (it)!*

Exclamation of surprise: *Well, I am damned! What are you doing here?, Why the hell are you here?*

Insult: *You bastard.*

Insulting request to go away: *F\*\*k off!*

(Kolář, 2006, 88)

### **3.3.2 Visual Aspects**

The usage of visual elements is highly important in modern advertisement and very strategic. Basically it means that the creators of advertisements often make efforts to attract reader's attention initially by visual devices which encourage the reader to get more information, simply become interested. Visual elements which are important for advertising will be described in this chapter.

#### **3.3.2.1 Pictures**

Guy Cook uses the term "modes" for three basic devices of communication in advertising such as language, music and pictures where each of these is expressed by different manners, so-called "sub-modes". Pictures can be an illustration or photography, cartoon film; music may be orchestral or solo, amplified or acoustic; language can be in a written form, spoken or even sung form. Although one of these devices predominates in an advertisement, we cannot ignore the rest of the mentioned modes. That is the reason why there is a connection between these modes, sometimes they are connected in a very straight way, another time the connection is very tight. To focus just on one of these attention-seeking devices is misleading in many advertisements. (Cook, 2001, 42) This work analyses printed advertisements, outdoor or transit without music, which means that mode music is ignored. As for the analysis of commercials, the omission of this mode should not be appropriate. According to Arens, Schaefer and Weigold, the reader mainly focuses on pictures while reading an advertisement and then after this they notice the text which can be for instance a headline or body copy. Members working on the visual part of

advertisement are those who draw pictures – the illustrators and those who use a camera for making pictures - photographers. (Arens, Schaefer and Weigold, 2012, 231)

### 3.3.2.2 *Body Language and Gestures*

In illustrations and photographs models as an addresser appear often using various gestures, recorded movements and positions, sometimes helping to identify the context. Desmond Morris was concerned with this theme dealing with body language described in certain situations that expressed certain actions. He divides them into: obscene signals, taboo zones, overexposed signals. Obscene signals are related to sexual behaviour. This type of behaviour also often appears in public and it is accompanied by many obscene gestures. These gestures are connected with two different situations. The first is described as a “vulgarly friendly” and the second one as a “deliberately malicious”. In the first friendly situation these gestures are used by a man towards a woman or the other way round and indicate sexual interest or relationship. However, not always are these gestures a question of privacy. On the contrary people that encounter them in public describe them to be offensive. A typical example can be the situation of a man as a customer in a bar who openly bothers a woman with his gestures and she feels uncomfortable and insulted. The second deliberately malicious situation is different, it is way dirtier. Addressing these gestures symbolises an attack.

Obscene gestures are of a highly variable quantity which is influenced by time and specific culture. Morris categorises these gestures into: Male Phallic Signs, Female-Genital-aperture Signs, Erectile Signs, Masturbatory Signs, and Groping Signs, whose meanings are obvious from the names. Very popular are phallic signs in which tongue, fingers and forearm are the most used parts of the body. The most frequent are the Middle finger Jerk, Forearm Jerk, Thumb Jerk, V-sign. (Morris, 2002, 296-298)

Forearm Jerk – an arm is bent into a straight angle on the forearm, the palm of the other hand is placed in the bending: (1) as a sexual insult, widespread, (2) as a sexual comment commonly used in Britain but we can come across this meaning everywhere. (Morris, 1995, 78-79) Middle finger Jerk as a sexual insult: (1) the middle finger is clearly directed upwards, this was already created in ancient Rome, nowadays it is a well known gesture and in America it is simply called “the finger”, (2) a hand with a raised finger is put down on the palm of the other hand, it is used in Lisbon and Syria, (3) combination of Middle finger Jerk and Forearm Jerk is used in Spain, Portugal and Italy. (Morris, 1995, 162)

Thumb Jerk as a sexual insult: “thumb is jerked upwards several times”, used in Sardinia, Greece, Turkey, Iran, the Middle East, Russia and parts of Africa and Australia. (Morris, 1995, 214) V-sign: (1) two fingers create a sign similar to the letter V and the palm is turned to the spectators. It is a sign of victory, widespread, taken over from Britain where it was extended by Winston Churchill in a campaign against Nazi, (2) the V-sign as an insult, two fingers in the shape of a letter V but the palms are turned reversely, used in Britain and its colonies or in Malta. (Morris, 1995, 130) Regarding sexual signals, Morris in his book also provides a scale of sexual behaviour, so-called “sexual sequences”. They are indicated from the ones least indicating sexual behaviour to body language which precedes sexual relationships: (Morris, 2002, 374)

1. Eye to body
2. Eye to eye
3. Voice to voice
4. Hand to hand
5. Arm to shoulder
6. Arm to waist
7. Mouth to mouth
8. Hand to head
9. Hand to body
10. Mouth to breast
11. Hand to genitals
12. Genitals to genitals

### 3.3.2.3 *Layout*

The term layout means distribution of all features of an advertisement which includes textual and visual parts. Mostly there are several professionals working on an advertisement and creating a team – creator, copywriter, photograph or illustrator, art director, designers and production artist who make a final design of the advertisement. This is the reason why a so-called layout is important. Apart from the idea of a complete design,

it helps the creative team to develop the non-verbal and symbolic components. (Goddard, 2002, 16-18)

## **4 PROFANITY IN THE LANGUAGE OF CONTEMPORARY ADVERTISING IN SOCIETY**

### **4.1 Advertising Ethics and Social Responsibility**

The world of advertising has its own rules and the expression of morality or social responsibility is connected with these rules. The creators of advertisements are not allowed to break the rules, but sometimes they can publish non-ethically and irresponsibly. For a better understanding of the issue of morality, the authors provide the following terms. Regarding the issue of morality, the advertisers consider two topics: *ethical dilemma* and *ethical lapses*. An ethical dilemma refers to a situation in which the advertisers deal with conflicting but justifiable decisions. An ethical lapse exists when the advertisers make unethical or illegal decisions. (Arens and Boveé, 1994, 43-44)

### **4.2 Taboo as a Communication Strategy**

In comparison with contemporary advertisement, years ago there printed advertisement contained more product details, hence the real advantage of a product was emphasized. Nowadays authors of advertisements tend to attract reader's attention differently than by the quality of a product, for example by creative pictures or by using taboos connected with the social problems. (Freitas, 2008, 43)

### **4.3 Profanity in Advertising as a Part of Public Life**

In every branch there are critics and defence lawyers, positive and negative opinions on a certain topic and there is no difference between the world and an advertising sphere. This part deals with the issue whether or not we are influenced by advertisements and how. According to the effect of advertisement on our speech, defenders of a traditional English thinking claim that "advertising destroys the dignity of the language." Yet the researches dealing with this issue show that some people react better to informal, practical and down-to-earth language. Some of the advertisements may seem excessively offensive, obscene and vulgar. Nevertheless, opinions on this topic are very subjective. What is inappropriate for one can be completely acceptable for another one (Arens and Boveé, 1994, 40). In connection with the first idea, David Ogilvy mentions the term "level of relevance". For instance the advertisement where a naked woman appears was considered to be obscene. It was not because of the nakedness at all but due to the fact that the naked body did not have

any connection with the product (e.g. cooker). On the other hand in advertisements connected with cosmetic products, the nakedness has its function but of course it depends on the level of the suitability of profanity. The level of relevance is surely connected to the cultural and national attitude. Ogilvy mentions that an advertisement with a naked woman is better accepted by Parisians than by people living in South Dakota, referring to certain cultural differences in accepting the human body and nakedness. Representatives of Islam tend to have negative opinions on European or western manners and they are convinced that the female body is commercially abused. In Saudi Arabia women's photos are banned. They are also offended by the abuse of clerics, monks and angels in advertisements (Ogilvy, 2007, 28).

Arens and Boveé (Arens and Boveé, 1994, 40) say "what is considered offensive today may not be so tomorrow". The image of this idea adds to the fact that in 1927 a printed advertisement on an underarm deodorant appeared in Ladies Home Journal and people were hugely shocked but today it is a common type of an advertisement.

In plenty of publications about advertising the taboo themes, which are nowadays hugely discussed in many cultures, emerge. Related discussions, debates, researches and analysis are highly important and are surely not meaningless for better an understanding of this phenomenon. In technical terms, we are talking about this selection of advertisements:

1. Bodily functions and diseases which are then classified individually by people in their society
2. Dirtiness and bad language, in that they imply a defiling and polluting potential (Elsa Simões Lucas Freitas, 2008, 45)

An Indian National Creative Director, Leo Burnett deals with this theme in his article called *Creative or vulgar*, published on the website of The Sunday Indian. He describes taboo as a communication strategy in a positive connection or in a negative connection as well as the previous authors. He concludes his article with a crucial idea of how important it is to realize that "the line of control between informative, creative and vulgar is very thin." ([www.thesundayindian.com](http://www.thesundayindian.com))

## **II. ANALYSIS**



## 5 THE AIM OF ANALYSIS

It is not unusual to encounter advertisements in the public press or in the streets every day. These advertisements are to be found more often in contemporary advertising and they are definitely not likely to be unusual. The analysed ads are from a span of the last ten years. This analysis will include printed, outdoor and transport advertisements where profanity will be expressed explicitly or implicitly. Advertisements transmit their message by more than one code described in previous chapters. The analysis aims to cover all of these codes. Some of them are accepted by the society, some of them are shocking and do not follow certain social boundaries. The analysed advertisements will be divided into six groups according to the theme they display: sexual behaviour, parts of body and nakedness; relation with religion beliefs, violence or other social problems, usage of bad language. The aim of this part is to analyse the purpose these vulgar expressions are used in advertising: 1) if profanity/taboo is somehow connected with the product, 2) if profanity is a kind of a strategy of the advertisers so as to arouse interest without any direct link, 3) if there are more predominant verbal or visual signs in this kind of advertising.

## 6 PROFANITY: RELIGION BELIEFS

This part focuses on analysis of advertisements related to specific religious groups. Symbolism included in these advertisements regardless of being internally or externally related is rich in the interpretation.

In the first consumer advertisement [1A] for an Italian producer of ice cream “Antonio Federici” the authors applied features of Christianity. Various advertisements with similar interpretation were published. After deliberation two of them have been chosen to stand as an example. Sexual symbolism which denies Christian principles is used in both of them. In this case we know that desecration is related to a specific group of receivers – Christians. In the first advertisement postural habits or gestures are construed to be an indirect interpretation of homosexuality of monks which is unacceptable for Christianity. Profanity is in this case firstly visual but is also encouraged by the meaning of the slogan “We believe in Salvation”. The slogan can also be a pun of the word salivation where by omitting of one of the letters, the word salvation is used. In this context the comparison is inappropriate (the taste of ice cream is compared to the feeling of redemption). Authors play with paralanguage of the slogan where they applied a typical letter style for the Holy Writ. The headline which was written in the biggest lettering can be the mark on its own. In subheads the authors indicated the origin of the product which is partly written in English and Italian language “Gelato Italiano ice cream is our religion”. Authenticity was achieved by the signature of Antonio Federici which is, however, not very noticeable. A seal supplies the concept of quality.

In the second advertisement of the brand Antonio Federici the form of offense of church is very similar. The layout is not different either. Desecration is also primarily visual – using a picture of a pregnant nun. However the slogan is more provocative in this advertisement. It can also be considered to be a pun where the two meanings of words are mixed up. In context with the visual part, the slogan can belittle religion in the pure conception of Virgin Mary. Without visualization the slogan can have an absolutely different meaning.

The following advertisement [1B] is about sport footwear Pony. There are two feet pierced by a nail which symbolises the crucifixion (symbolical signs). According to the text, the advertisement includes only a logo and a product in the right lower corner and the name of websites in the left corner. They are both noticeably smaller than the feet

representing the crucifixion which means that the visual part is predominant. The advertisement does not include a headline, subheads or body copy that would normally provide information and an indication which could mark another context. In this case we can only guess what message the advertisement tries to tell us. The main idea can for instance be: “With our shoes you will not suffer”. The next symbol can be the colour of skin which can indicate that these shoes are intended for runners knowing that the best world’s runners are ordinarily Afro - Americans. In this case the main idea could be: “Fast and comfortable in our shoes”. This combination of symbols is definitely a successful attention-seeking device. However, for the Christian community it is inappropriate to depict sacrifice and suffering of Jesus for commercial purposes, for the distribution of shoes and the brand.

One of the most famous paintings depicting the good and evil is definitely The Last Supper, painted by Leonardo da Vinci. A graphic similarity of the painting helped authors of the advertisement on Mortein – rat poison [1C]. Da Vinci personified good and evil in the characters of Jesus Christ and Judas. The authors used animals instead of the faces of Jesus, Judas and other Apostles. However, we can hardly find Jesus and Judas among the rats so it means that the symbolism is based on graphic similarity. The arrangement of the space is kept: animals have the same clothing and are in the same place as on the original painting. The stylization has been changed: the room for feasting is in Renaissance style and a table with food, mainly with bread, is substituted for imitation of sewer and table filled with cheese. The product is depicted in the bottom right corner. In my opinion, there is no deeper context between the product and this illustration. However, this faithful illustration is able to attract the attention of a recipient as well as insult an orthodox Christian. On the other hand, this advertisement is not as offensive as previous advertisements.

The advertising agency behind the next ad approaches Christian symbolism in a relatively less aggressive way. It is an outdoor and consumer advertisement on pizza from Chapel Bar [1D]. They apply several slightly changed iconic signs (e.g. the face of Jesus Christ with pizza instead of halo). The replacement of halo by pizza does not change the semantic content at all, it rather omits it. In the slogan there is the name of the bar “Chapel bar”. The chapel is a place intended for religious ceremonies and prayers. The typical church type of letter is used to correspond with the name of the bar. This relation of the bar

on its own, its name and the picture of Jesus Christ is likely to be seen as blasphemy but does not disgrace standard Christian principles.

It is relevant to include the fact that this group of adverts as the campaign produced many different opinions and so it has become controversial [1E]. Also incorporation of the church authorities in an advertisement belongs to Christian themes. This happened in the campaign of the company of Benetton which made a collection of five advertising billboards that promoted the convergence of ethnic groups. On each of them there are two politicians or clerical dignitaries kissing each other that stands as a symbol of convergence and harmony. This idea is encouraged by the headline "UNHATE" that is also a name of a foundation founded by the Benetton Group, which seeks to contribute to the creation of a new culture against hate". ([www.unhate.benetton.com](http://www.unhate.benetton.com)) We found out from the logo and body copy that the United Colour of Benetton is involved in this organization.

In the first picture there is the Pope Benedikt XVI. with Mohammed Ahmed Al-Tayeb, in the other one there is a German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the French ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy, the American president Barack Obama and the president of Venezuela Hugo Chávez, Barack Obama and the president of People's Republic of China Chu Tintchao, an ex-leader of Democratic People's Republic of Korea Kim Jong-Il and an ex-president of Korean Republic Lee-Myung Bakem. This campaign was criticized mainly for the kissing Pope and for this reason the church took legal actions to stop the propagation of this billboard. In an article called Benetton tears down Pope-kissing ads after Vatican legal threat, the speech of a Press secretary Father Federico Lombardi was published: "We cannot but express a resolute protest at the entirely unacceptable use of a manipulated image of the Holy Father, used as part of a publicity campaign having commercial ends. It is a serious lack of respect for the Pope, an affront to the feelings of the faithful and an evident demonstration of how, in the field of advertising, the most elemental rules of respect for others can be broken in order to attract attention by provocation." ([www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)) On one hand the criticism is surely justifiable, mostly according to the misuse of well-known names and faces. On the other hand, there is quite a misapprehension of its true aim – to point to the coexistence of ethnical groups. In this case also the controversial kiss functions as a symbolical sign of a friendly coexistence. However, the authors could apply less controversial symbolical sign, for instance a hug or handshake.

In the previous paragraph, advertisement and its contradictory interpretation was

criticized, however, its main aim was much deeper, namely to point to the harmonic coexistence of ethnical groups and cultures. In the following two advertisements this problem is more than current. Contrarily, they point to the incompetence of coexistence of two different religious cultures. In this way we slightly touch on racism.

[1F] The advertisement which appeared in many American countries on public means of transport, as transit advertising, presents a civilisation clash. The text speaks clearly: “In any war between civilized man and the savage, support the civilized man. Support Israel, defeat Jihad.” Ideology of a clerical party made this advertisement play an important role in this case. Subsequently it moves to the kernel of this thesis – supporting Israel means supporting civilized people. On the other hand, Jihad is described to be a barbarian association, which can insult the whole Muslim community. The organization marked on the poster “Paid for by the American Freedom Defence Initiative” supports this ideology. Three URL addresses of articles dealing with the fight against the Muslim culture are listed on the poster in small letters. The verbal part predominates. The text is accurate and does not contain typical advertising features. Everything is stated clearly. There is almost no visual support. Perhaps only the Star of David stands as a symbol of Judaism and Israeli community.

[1G] The next advertisement against Muslims is supported by the same organization. The verbal part here also predominates and is not refilled by any other features. The text is again clear and contains the facts in number: “19.207 deadly Islamic attacks since 9/11/01 \*and counting\*, it’s not islamophobia, it’s islamorealism”. Except for the number of attacks, our interests can also be caught by two new terms “islamophobia” and “islamorealism”. In the context they express fear of what can happen and the reality which is supposedly going on. A political activist Pamela Geller said: “People need to know this. Obviously, everybody is surprised by this number and I think that’s part of the reason why we need to run these ads. People need to know this is going on across the world.” ([www.cbsnews.com](http://www.cbsnews.com)).

From these two advertisements it is obvious that Islam is a so-called personified evil that attacks the state of Israel and its alliance during the period of the last and this century. The problem of terrorist attacks based on the religious and political attitudes is significant. This advertisement is directly provocative and can raise riots by insulting the religious community of Muslims. However, Islam is the most radical and extreme ideology on the

face of the Earth and maybe for this reason these advertisements were not forbidden. Contrarily they were protected under the act of free speech in the USA

### **Conclusion of Profanity in the Advertisements Using Religious Signs:**

In the above-analysed advertisements profanity is typically expressed on the basis of visual expression [1A], [1B], [1C], [1D], [1E], as a strategy to attract the attention of the viewers. In this group it is very easy to indicate a recipient for whom these advertisements are unacceptable. Profanity against the religious values will be easily detected by Christians while looking at these advertisements [1A], [1B], [1C], [1D], [1E]. The authors use symbolic signs of Christianity in advertisements [1A], [1B], which are more insulting than iconic signs of Christianity in advertisements [1C], [1D]. The figure of a nun and a monk has a symbolic value in Christianity [1A]. However, in the advertisement they are in a compromising profane position not allowed in this religion. Advertisements [1F], [1G] can insult a religious group of Muslims. These two advertisements [1F], [1G] are the only ones whose profanity is completely based on verbal statement. In the first advertisement [1A], religious values are completely destroyed and can seem to be the most offensive ones. In the advertisement [1E] the world known cloth brand is promoted, however, its aim is implicit and goes beyond the marketing purpose.

## 7 PROFANITY: SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AND NAKEDNESS

The next group of advertisements display a highly widespread theme and that is sexual behaviour used in many different ways. The authors of advertisements use nakedness or sexual subtext very often. It is important to distinguish which of them cross the social limits and which are acceptable.

[2A] The first advertisement was done for magazine HUMO which included free Durex condoms in each of its copy. The product on its own is frequently considered to be a taboo because of its connection with sexual activity. Authors of this advertisement worked with pictorial metaphors – natural picture of a sexual organ and a depiction of an animal (e.g. snake, crocodile, bull, beaver). This illustration “censors” and softens the taboo of the photography itself. The slogan cooperates with the illustration – slogan encourages men in sexual activity. Body language has the same function here, for instance a sexual organ prepared for copulation is one of the sexual signals, primarily in its first interpretation. Although nakedness and sexual behaviour belong to a common lifestyle, the society considers them to be intimate and definitely private. That is why these natural photographs are so provocative. The next feature of profanity can be the fact that the advertisement prods the recipients rather into being sexually active than using condoms.

[2B] The second non-commercial advertisement promotes the usage of condoms as a prevention against the sexually transmitted illness – AIDS. Sexual signals are direct and explicit in this advertisement. Body language and nakedness clearly point to a sexual relationship of a woman and a man. However, in the first case the man here is a historically well known dictator Adolf Hitler and Saddam Husajn in the second case. AIDS as a danger is visually personified into the figures of dictators proved to be mass murderers in history. This idea is completed by a slogan which says that “AIDS is a mass murderer”. The personification of an illness which can kill is indicated here. Both items, visual and verbal, are shocking. They are intentionally scandalous in order to offensively point to the danger. The authors’ interpretation of the dictators surely caught the recipient’s attention while the slogan included primarily truthful information.

Nakedness and sexual subtext is also a code of fashion magazines and fashion brands. These elements are visible in prestige consumer and outdoor advertisements of the world wide brand DOLCE & GABBANA [2C]. These elements, we will call them nakedness up to a half of body, are quite acceptable for the society. Sexuality is brought about by the body language. In the chapter Sexual Signals, some typical sexual sequences which

indicate the rate of intimacy are mentioned: (1) - the less intimate, (12) - the most intimate. In this advertisement appear: (1) eye to eye – in the case of all men; (2) eye to eye – a lying man and woman; (9) hand to body – a lying man and woman whose bodies are touching each other. All of this can be a sign of the attractiveness of the woman. However, the way the man holds onto the woman's hands and the movements of other men gives evidence of their dominance and possible future attack. The woman can be a sexual victim in this case. On the other hand, the woman can become a participant in intended sexual plays. The advertisement offers us two different views. This is the reason why this advertisement may appear acceptable depending on its interpretation. At first sight the advertisement is artificial, prepared in a studio and that is why it does not completely evoke the real sexual situation. This fact softens the sexual subtext. As far as the verbal part is considered, once again we are encountered with an advertisement without any other verbal part. In many other advertisements of this brand we can find a similar concept: perfection, semi-nudity and DOLCE & GABBANA.

The consumer prestige and outdoor advertisement of the brand Calvin Klein [2D] offers a similar view. It has almost the same concept as the previous advertisement; offering the same fashion, using the same sexual charge, without verbal discourse. The body language is more provocative in this case. However, the sexual signs are more noticeable: (7) mouth to mouth, (8) hand to head, (9) hand to body, (10) hand to genitals – indirectly. The men's body language does not indicate a sexual harassment in this advertisement. The next difference is the surroundings of the photography looking more natural. Also the models stand for natural beauty.

The natural ideal of beauty is also used in a consumer prestige and outdoor advertisement of the brand DIESEL [2E]. Again, a half-naked woman appears here. What is different from the other advertisements is that the authors created a more noticeable slogan emphasizing the sexual body language: "Sex sells. Unfortunately we sell jeans." The irony is used effectively in order to approach the potential customer. The provocative sexual behaviour is related with nakedness also in the connection of words sex and sell.

Another advertisement was published by the world known organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals within the cycle "Go Vegetarian" [2F]. It is obvious from the name that advertisements are non – commercial and their aim is to persuade consumers to become vegetarians and stop killing animals in order to eat them. Nakedness is used but not in a sexual sense but in a sense of nature – that means that the human body is depicted



the way it is just as the animal body. A naked girl, an actress Alicia Mayer lies on the autopsy table with an identifying tag in the gloomy surrounding of the dissecting room. Visualization is accompanied by the title: “Meat belongs in the Morgue, not on your table.” It refers to what precedes eating the meat (for instance killing an animal, following parcelling of the meat). The animal body is replaced by a human one in this advertisement. The author wanted to point out the fact that we are able to eat animals and yet we consider it disgusting to eat humans, even though both are meat from the biological point of view. Profanity can be seen in the equality of a human body with an animal one and also in the nakedness. This organization uses nakedness very often which can be seen on its official web pages.

The last advertisement promoting sun glasses is different in its interpretation [2G]. Direct nakedness or sexual behaviour is not indicated here. An art designer replaced the man’s face with an intimate part of a body which is sometimes considered to be a taboo zone (bottom). Slogan “Kiss My Glass” is a word play in connection with the visual part. In reality the slogan means “Kiss My As\*”. Part of recipients can be insulted by this lascivious word and visual play. Another part of the society can find it humorous. By using this visualization and stylization, the author uses puns intentionally in order to make the ad easily memorable.

### **Conclusion of advertisements with signs of sexual behaviour:**

Shocking or provocative features, based only on visual tools such as sexual body language and nakedness without any verbal accompanying, appear in advertisements [2C], [2D], [2E]. Visual features predominate with verbal elements participating on the shocking impression in advertisements [2A], [2B], [2F], [2G]. Verbal offense does not appear here. Eroticism, sexuality and nakedness is used intentionally only as an attention – seeking device and does not relate to the product offered in advertisements [2C], [2D], [2E], [2G]. On the contrary in advertisements [2A], [2B], [2F], sexuality has a way meaning than just an intention to attract attention. Based on the subjective judgement – the most shocking advertisement is the one fighting against AIDS due to its graphic nature and the least offensive is the advertisement with sun glasses due to its humorous element. It is important to say that almost all of the advertisements are outdoor billboards indicated in the supplement of this Bachelor’s work. It means that these advertisements can be seen by young children and minors during the day, not only after 10 p.m. which is the generally

accepted watershed. This is the reason why these advertisements are seen as unsuitable. These advertisements oppose moral principles. However, it is important to mention that sex and nakedness do sell.

## 8 PROFANITY: VIOLENCE

The key words in this chapter will be the words murder, criminal act, blood and attack because these themes are also used by authors of advertisements.

The first demonstration [3A] includes two advertisements which have a similar structure. There is a person who died a violent death in the picture. However, the authors do not have the intention to caution society against the increasing violence but their aim is to sell knives and electric appliances. The function of a knife-rack was personified into the killed man and the role of toaster into the killed woman. Except for the stated price and logo, the verbal part is minimized, does not include any striking linguistic devices. A murder is a criminal act and here it was used for very commercial purposes. Depreciation of human life can be considered to be an offensive and a dangerous strategy.

By a way of contrast, there is a following non-commercial advertisement [3B] which was created by the organization Humans for Animals fighting against cruelty on animals and their killing. Unfortunately, this advertisement was such a poor quality that the body copy and other parts are not legible. However, the headline is sufficient for the analysis and with its meaning it belongs here. The imperative headline “don’t treat others the way, you don’t want to be treated” emphasizes the meaning of the illustration. Authors replaced the typical model of similar advertisements in which people harm animals by the model in which animals kill the human race. A seal is personified into the role of a murderer and the victim is a baby which is just as defenceless as a baby seal. The killing, especially of the baby can raise feelings full of contradiction which the authors wanted to achieve. On the other hand, profanity in belittling the human life is interpreted very aggressively.

Authors of the advertisement [3C] sell engine oil which is not very obvious at first sight. The headline is “He killed four people” and the subhead is “while preventing a rape”. The semantic meaning of the words kill and rape corresponds with a criminal act and approaches a very sensitive theme. The headline and subhead say that the man on the picture had to kill four violent criminals to save a girl. This good deed shows his good character. The body copy follows “it’s what inside is that counts, even for your engine. Use ELF Super HDB Turbo Engine Oil, and keep your engine 100% cleaned inside”. The main idea is the comparison of the rescuing of a victim to prevent suffering, with the function of the oil. The advertisers compare good deeds to the necessity of buying ELF Super HDB Turbo Engine oil. They used strong words in both the headline and subhead. The second

example is based on the same idea but in addition it is visually enhanced in strength. The man has permanent consequences due to his good deed – he has burned his face while saving people from the fire. The authors compare rather incomparable phenomena.

The organization World Wild Fund published a press campaign called “Tsunami” [3D]. As far as the visual part of this advertisement is considered, a terrorist attack from the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2001 is demonstrated here. Unfortunately, instead of two aeroplanes there are several dozens of them approaching the World Trade Centre in New York; the image of this kind of an attack has a catastrophic impact. Just as ominous is its verbal part, with the headline “The tsunami killed 100 times more people than 9/11.” and in its body copy “The planet is brutally powerful. Respect it. Preserve it. [www.wwf.org](http://www.wwf.org)” In these parts of a printed advertisement the copywriter compares the number of victims who died during these two catastrophes; Tsunami is a metonymy of a series of huge ocean waves in Asia, and 9/11 is a metonymy of two suicidal terroristic attacks. Authors put a bigger emphasis on the impact of a natural disaster and with this statement urge society to reassess their relationship to the nature. The message and image portrayed in the advertisement insults not only the New Yorkers by reminding them of the event but all the people who were emotionally touched by it. World Wild Fund and advertising agency DDB Brazil conveyed that “ad was utterly inappropriate and should never have seen the light of day.”([www.ncbnewyork.com](http://www.ncbnewyork.com))

### **Conclusion of advertisements with element of violence:**

The analyzed advertisements deal with a certain taboo zone: violence. Image of a murder is presented very realistically in these advertisements [3A], [3B], [3C]. The image of a terrorist attack is depicted in the advertisement [3D]. These projections are encouraged by strong visual parts in advertisements [3B], [3C], [3D]. These images can raise different emotions in a very negative sense. In fact, they disgrace the seriousness of these crimes. What is more is the fact that these advertisements can be again seen by children.

## 9 PROFANITY: TABOO WORDS AND SWEARWORDS

Advertisements included in this group are completely different from the others, particularly in the fact that the main element of profanity is not special signs, signals or symbols but words, i.e. taboo words and swear words. Not a single one of the authors used an asterisk to soften the vulgarity. For our purposes the quotation norm is the same as in the analysis to maintain the code.

The first advertisement of this chapter [4A] may seem as a political campaign. However, the reality is different. The authors of this advertisement promote a pizzeria. A taboo word appears in the headline “Hell” and a swear word in the slogan “Too Good for Some Evil Bastards”. The word hell is ambiguous in this case – firstly it can be presented in its semantic field, but mostly as a name for the company. The swear word bastard is an offence which is raised to the power of the adjective evil, hereby it marks some people, possibly politicians. In this case, one of them is George Bush. Authors of this advertisement express their antipathy based on very subjective attitudes, also based on no respect, even vulgarity towards the person who is a former president and a statesman.

Explicitly, the taboo word is used in the following advertisement [4B] in its semantic content. This next commercial advertisement brings an organic fertilizer on the market in companion with a slogan “Holy Shit”. This slogan is a word pun. It plays with ambiguousness. Firstly, it is important to say that people know and use this phrase whenever they want to express their astonishment or shock – word shit in the slogan stands as a swear word with a function of exclamation of surprise. It is rather a common phrase and may be the reason why the authors used it. However, it is used as a taboo word in its true meaning or also as a dysphemism. If the authors used euphemism, for instance “Holy Excrement”, it would definitely not be as effective. Although the authors used humour as the main strategy, the word shit in the advertisement will remain a taboo word for some recipients.

Public authority of the city Prague 7 published several non – commercial posters that prompt people to clean up the excrements after their pets [4C]. This advertisement was created in two languages (in Czech and English). In the English version the copywriters used a taboo word shit in a slogan “Shit is not a cool brand. Clean up after your dog.” The taboo word is used very explicitly in this slogan. The Czech version of this advertisement is less explicit because the copywriters replaced some consonants by asterisks in the taboo word in order to soften the vulgarity. It is not clear why the authors did not use asterisks

also in the English version of the slogan to soften the vulgarity. The visual part corresponds with the main idea of the advertisement.

The Sun magazine ran an advertising campaign which informs the society about the results of British sportsmen from the Olympic Games in Beijing in comparison with Australian sportsmen [4D]. British sportsmen acquired 19 golden medals and Australian sportsmen 14 golden medals. The sum figures are depicted in the illustration of the British flag which is the same size as the billboard. The results and illustration mean that Britain slightly predominates. However, the slogan is more significant “Where the bloody hell were you?” in which the copywriter expressed a certain superiority and used a swear word bloody and hell as an offensive language devices. In the article published on the web sites The Guardian stated in connection with this advertisement that “one complaint was received by Advertising Standard Authority because the language was offensive in the ad and could be seen by children”. Advertising regulator forbid the magazine The Sun to use the word bloody in this campaign. ([www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk))

### **Conclusion about advertisements with taboo words and swearwords:**

In this group, profanity is related to vulgarity and it is expressed very explicitly by using taboo words and swearwords. That may be the reason why there are not as many advertisements as the ones where profanity is expressed visually and encouraged by the text. However, they exist in the advertising world even though they are vulgar. The biggest emphasis is surely placed on the verbal part and it is supported by the visual part. Here, the linguistic elements are used in the similar way and the main target is to attract attention, or arouse interest. Only in the advertisements [4B], [4C] taboo words also happen to convey more meaning related to product. That is why their vulgarity may not seem so expressive for a part of the society. On the contrary, the society may consider it to be humorous and swiftly interpreted. All of these advertisements belong to the group of outdoor or transit advertising, or to the group of advertisements which children can often encounter. That is the reason why these advertisements rank as dangerous and profane.

## CONCLUSION

The thesis analysed twenty-two advertisements which appear in places all over the world from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century till present and which somehow insult certain parts of the society based on their interpretations. Profanity is looked at from many different views.

The first aim was to delineate the linguistic and visual features which are a result of a certain kind of profanity. In sixteen advertisements profanity of the language of advertising was based on visual features. In eight of these the visual part relies on the verbal part (headline and slogan). The rest of the eight advertisements are based entirely on the verbal part. That means that there are less linguistic elements. Still, we can enumerate some of them. In the theoretical part possible linguistic devices were mentioned. Personification, metaphor and word pun are the most frequent ones. However, it is obvious from the analysis, that these phenomena are more often interpreted visually. Advertisements containing taboo words and swearwords create only a small separated group in which certain inappropriateness is expressed verbally.

The visual aspects of advertising are more frequent and very diverse. They usually create a certain taboo situation which enables a taboo image inappropriate for publishing; mainly in the chapters dealing with violence and sexual behaviour. In most cases it was photos rather than illustrations that evoke the real life images. In these photos body language and gestures are very important. In the theoretical part three types of signs which are a part of advertisements were mentioned. However, in these advertisements more symbolical signs appeared, mainly in the group dealing with religious belief.

Advertisements with condoms or the ones warning against sexual diseases, promoting taboo-related products and wanting to emphasize justifiably the danger, used all the mentioned taboo elements. Nevertheless, in this analysis there were more advertisements promoting non-taboo related products and still using taboo elements. Authors need to attract attention – unfortunately they also manage to attract the attention of children because most of the advertisements are out – of – home. It means that advertisers use taboo elements, which cause ethical dilemma or ethical lapses, as an offensive, scandalous advertising strategy.

In closing I would like to say that emotions and opinions in each of us after seeing these advertisements may differ greatly – the disapproval may be stronger, weaker or none

at all depending on many factors, such as cultural, social, educational, personal, etc. The thesis analysed all possible occurrences regarding profanity of the language of advertising. In my opinion, all of the advertisements analysed certainly initiate interesting debates, on both sides - the advertisers as well as the public. And this is the aim of ads, to make us think about them whether we approve or disapprove of them and the way they were created.



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## APPENDICES

P I    Analysed advertisements (enclosed CD)

