

## Multifaceted Representation of Women in Advertisements: A Multimodal Analysis

Umm E Ruman <sup>1</sup> Syeda Nabiha Innayat <sup>2</sup>



**Abstract:** The world of technology is constantly evolving, and with that comes a growing need for improved mobility and communication. As a result, there has been a surge in demand for new and innovative ways to present information to readers more effectively and engagingly. One solution to this challenge has been the emergence of multimodal transactions to convey complex ideas and concepts. This research article delves into the multimodal analysis of selected advertisements to unveil the representation of women. This study examines the advertisements by the application of the multimodal method (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001; Brandt, 2004), following the overview of how meaning can be composed over diverse semiotic resources for each mode, i.e., written, visual, and spatial primed by Cope and Kalantzis (2009, 2013) and Kalanrzi, Cope, Chan, and Dalley-Trim (2016). Advertisements are critically analyzed underpinning the CDA approach by Norman Fairclough (1989). Findings unravel the manifold layers of multimodal transactions, revealing that women are represented beautifully in ads. Still, when the advertisements are critically analyzed there are profound meanings and dual senses that do not click the eyes at first but it is deeper than that. In addition, these advertisements influence the viewers' perceptions of women.

**Key Words:** Multimodality, Gender Stereotypes, Advertisements, Visual Grammar, Semiotic Resources

### Introduction

Communication is a ubiquitous phenomenon of human interaction, and it occurs in various forms such as verbal, written, physical, and emotional (Luhmann, 1992). Every word conveyed has a particular intention, and its happening relies on how it is built and delivered. In the domain of commerce, advertisements play an important function in boosting productions or thoughts to the audience. However, creating effectual promotions is not an easy task, and it requires careful consideration of various factors. The temporal arrangement is a crucial factor that promotional agencies must consider, as it can affect the potency of an advertisement. The right regulation can guarantee that the content reaches the intended audience at the right time and increases the fortune of success. In addition, the quality of words is essential, as it can impact the way the public comprehends the message. Advertisement agencies must cautiously select their language to guarantee that they are ingratiating, clear, and easily understandable. Font choice may seem like an insignificant item, but it can have a significant effect on the potency of an advertisement. The accurate font can make the message more readable, captivating, and unforgettable to the audience. Color strategy is also important, as it can evoke specific feelings and moods in the audience, which can cause their perceptual experience of the merchandise or idea being marketed. Finally, organizations play an essential role in the success of an advertisement. Advertisers must ensure that the organization involved in creating and delivering the message has the essential abilities, knowledge, and experience to do so publicly. They must be able to pass on the subject matter intelligibly and with confidence to the gathering and react to any questions or concerns that may arise. Overall, creating effective advertisements requires a profound and interconnected approach that considers various factors. By carefully considering these

<sup>1</sup> M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English (Linguistics), Rawalpindi Women University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan. ✉ [rumanyounus6@gmail.com](mailto:rumanyounus6@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> MS Scholar, Department of Development Studies, National University of Sciences & Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan. ✉ [syedanabiha12@gmail.com](mailto:syedanabiha12@gmail.com)

- **Corresponding Author:** Umm-E-Ruman (✉ [rumanyounus6@gmail.com](mailto:rumanyounus6@gmail.com))
- **To Cite:** Ruman, U. E., & Innayat, S. N. (2025). Multifaceted Representation of Women in Advertisements: A Multimodal Analysis. *QJantic Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 6(1), 20–29. <https://doi.org/10.55737/qjssh.vi-i.25282>

factors, advertisements can increase the chances of success and efficaciously promote their products or ideas to the public.

In today's world, advertisements have gotten along as a critical part of our daily lives. Not only they are effective in the transference of data, but they are also approachable to a broader audience. The rational motive behind this is that advertisements are planned in a way that is more attractive and less daunting than conventional SMS formats. Advertisements use transmission elements to acquire attention and leave a thought on people of all ages and backgrounds knowledge. They can be custom-made and reported to the target audience's predisposition, making them more relatable and attention-getting. For example, if the target audience is children, advertisements can be created using animated characters and bright colors to capture their attention. In contrast, if the target audience is adults, advertisements can be designed using well-informed visuals and tones to convey an awareness of expertise (Usman, [2013](#)). Briefly, advertisements have come a long way from being just a means of backing up products and employment. They are now an indispensable tool for enterprises to reach out to a big audience and build brand awareness. With the right approach and execution, advertisements can be a powerful means of communication that can inform, educate, and entertain the audience at the same time.

In this particular exploration, we are venturing on a comprehensive journey that aims to delve deep into the intricate details of representations of women in advertisements. Our primary objective is to unravel the manifold layers of multimodal transactions that occur in the form of written, visual, and spatial modes critically. Through meticulous analysis and critical evaluation, we aspire to gain a better apprehension of how these advertisements determine the perceptions, affectation, and behaviors of the viewers toward women.

### **Delimitation**

For this study, two advertisements that we trust will provide priceless insights have been chosen. These advertisements have been selected based on their matchless characteristics, such as their message, modality appeal, and overall effectiveness. The principal attribute of this research focuses on the written, visual, and spatial modes of multimodal analysis, and are critically analyzed.

### **Literature Review**

In [2018](#), Del Saz-Rubio analyzed, in what way, TV advertisements for instrumentation render women's identities. Thematic analysis disclosed two main recurring themes: the publicity of women's sexual and appearance empowerment, and their superiority to make out with inner affectionate conflicts related to aging or loss of confidence. The ads urge women to use their products to stay beautiful and specify beauty standards to authorize themselves. Communicatory words are important, while visual and auditory words strengthen and support the transmission of implied assumptions.

Moreover, The promotion of digital technologies has led to the emergence of new digital genres, such as TED talk videos, which cater to both specialist and non-specialist audiences. This research digs into how the knowledge domain is sent to a non-specialist multitude through the use of generic and multimodal origin in TED talks. The research findings point out that visuals play an important role in informing scientific thoughts in TED talk videos, and the writing style has developed with digital traits (Xia, [2023](#)).

In addition, Baykal ([2016](#)) examined the multimodal artifact of female looks and adjusted in what way, mascara advertisements in Turkish women's publications use communicatory and visual skilfulness to apply the idea of perfect feminine beauty. The analysis unveils that these commercials intend to set up a set of standards for the ideal "look" by focusing on tortuous, long, thick, and curved eyelashes.

Additionally, Atma & Awad in [2023](#), examines the portrayal of gender stereotypes in Algerian television commercials through the use of visual grammar. The analysis focuses on five advertisements, which were evaluated based on their representational, interactive, and compositional elements. The findings indicate that both genders are depicted offensively in the ads and that a range of multimodal resources are used to create these portrayals.

Also, Rubio in [2018](#), analyzes gender stereotypes in contemporary British TV commercials. Women are portrayed in non-remunerated scenarios at home with their children, while men are depicted in

remunerated scenarios as experts in their professional capacity. Stereotypes are less obvious when both genders are shown in remunerated settings, though some ads emphasize women's interpersonal skills and men's expertise in financial and medical issues.

### Research Methodology

Despite previous research in multimodal, advertisements other than TV commercials and video advertisements remained less explored. This research is motivated by the desire to examine the advertisements other than TV ads, and commercials. This research specifically focuses on the selected advertisements to address the gap in multimodal analysis.

### Research Objectives

To understand in what ways advertisements represent women through various modes such as visuals, language, and spatial.

### Research Questions

How do advertisements represent women through various modes such as visuals, language, and spatial?

### Framework

This study will underprop the multimodal method. Effective multimodal fit-in modes in numerous arrangements to comprehensibly convey the connotation that is required. This multimodal method of genre analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen, [2001](#); Brandt, [2004](#)) follows the overview of by what means meaning can be composed over diverse semiotic resources for each mode, i.e., written, visual, and spatial informed by Cope and Kalantzis ([2009](#), [2013](#)) and Kalanzis, Cope, Chan, and Dalley-Trim ([2016](#)). In addition, Advertisements are critically analyzed underpinning the CDA approach developed by Norman Fairclough ([1989](#)).

### Sample

#### Figure 1

Advertisement 1: Weyenberg Shoes in Playboy Magazine ([1974](#)), *Keep Her Where She Belongs*



#### Figure 2

Advertisement 2: Alcoa Aluminium ([1953](#)), *you mean a Woman can Open it?*





## You mean a woman can open it ?

Easily—without a knife blade, a bottle opener, or even a husband! All it takes is a dainty grasp, an easy, two-finger twist—and the catsup is ready to pour.

We call this safe-sealing bottle cap the Alcoa HyTop. It is made of pure, food-loving Alcoa Aluminum. It spins off—and back on again—without muscle power because an exclusive Alcoa process tailors it to each bottle's threads

after it is on the bottle. By vacuum sealing both top and sides, the HyTop gives purity a double guard.

You'll recognize the attractive, tractable HyTop when you see it on your grocer's shelf. It's long, it's white, it's grooved—and it's on the most famous and flavorful brands. Put the bottle that wears it in your basket . . . save fumbling, fuming and fingers at opening time with the most cooperative cap in the world—the Alcoa HyTop Closure.

### Data Analysis

In this segment, the analysis of advertisements is discussed.

### Advertisement 1

The advertisement photo selected is in Vintage Ads advertising male shoes in 1974. In this picture, Tuchman's 'pictures of perfection and goals of happiness' are evident. This piece of advertisement portrays the reality of today's society, the world of man. The picture represents the idea of objectification, a patriarchal society, and misogyny (hatred towards women).

### Linguistic Analysis

#### Figure 3

The Chunk of Advertisement 1 for Analysis



The picture has "Keep her where she belongs" and this slogan supports the thinking of a man-dominant society. Although these words do not signify the position of a woman directly where a woman is placed equally to a man's shoe shows that a woman's place is equal to a man's shoe in a society. She can be beautiful and can be presented as an object or a beautiful decoration piece in the house of a man. In contrast to a man a woman is always in lower rank and not slightly lower but equal to his shoe. This represents misogynistic thoughts of men dominated world.

An additional propaganda behind this discourse, which is quite evident in the written slogan "keep her where she belongs" along with the woman lying next to the shoe, indicates that women should be kept beneath men, and she is worth as much as the shoe, like a property that could be replaced. For centuries,

men have been suppressing and oppressing women, they have always kept them away from every arena of life including social, political, and economic, and considered them as mere extensions of themselves or the “non-significant other”, as it is men who define what it means to be women, if women are not men, they are not humans, they reason, they question, they have freedom of choice and they are the one who finds pleasure in their freedom of anything, where women are not used to any of these things.

“keep her where she belongs,” depicts the inappropriate status of women in misogynistic society and culture. Firstly, a woman is kept lower than a man and equal to an object (shoe) and there is another hierarchy, i.e., good woman and bad woman. A good woman is the one who obeys man and keeps herself under him. And if a woman lives with liberty and her life goes to be normal as the life of a man is, she is considered a bad woman. In the advertisement, the girl is placed where a man wants her to be. Man of society not only keeps her lower to him, but he desires her to be equivalent to a shoe (man shoe). This woman’s life is not the way, it ought to be, but the way things are going is completely what a man wants to impose in a man-controlled society or culture. From the advertisement, it is clear that the man hates the involvement of women, and he wants her to be displayed there as shoes, quiet and displayed neatly and beautifully, he will only use her when he needs. Women are at the bottom of the hierarchy where they can be linked to objects very normally.

## Visual Analysis

### Figure 4

*The Chunk of Advertisement 1 for Analysis*



The embellished woman is placed along with a man's shoe, signifying the position of a woman in society alongside with status of a man. A woman is given a lower rank in a male-controlled society. The woman is measured to be an object. We typically see that our society and our media are using a woman as an object, even in male product advertisements women are there to make it more attractive, eye-catching, and for the audience. Same as in this advertisement a woman is used as an object, the picture signifies the woman as an object. The shoe used is of man, and the man shoe signifies protection from the environment, subjugation, struggle, ambition, determination, and direction. The woman is placed along with the man's shoe, and she is looking towards signifies man is considered to be protection, determination, ambition, and direction for a woman, and without man, she cannot live. Men can use her as an object and men are free to decide the position of a woman which is shown as equal to men's shoe, and he can place a woman as a beautiful object.

In this ad, the bare body of the woman appeals to men and offers sexual attraction. It implies how women so often portrayed as sex slaves whose purpose is to calm down men’s sexual desire. Women are considered mere objects for men to satiate their kernel desires. For centuries, women have been considered



as mere tools for men to satisfy their lust or to show off. The bare body of the women portrays the mentality of patriarchal society, and how hypocritical and deceitful their approach is.

### Figure 5

*The Chunk of Advertisement 1 for Analysis*



Another practice that can be emphasized, in the ad is, the way a woman is smiling and looking at the shoe, as if she is cherishing it, this implies that she is happy to be treated that way. This notion depicts “women's psyche,” how they have adjusted themselves according to the oppressive and misogynistic mindset of the patriarchal society. The way the woman is looking at the shoe seems as if she's admiring the quality of the shoe, the shoe seems to be very luxurious, expensive, and of fine quality, this portrays that women look at the visual appearance and money of men, as they are mere gold-diggers who only admire money and luxury, a man can provide. The orange color in the background also signifies gold.

### Spatial Analysis

The commercial in interrogation presents convoluted and multi-layered content that is sent through respective spatial elements. These elements work collectively to make an adhesive and substantive whole that is deliberated to vibrate with the spectator and communicate a peculiar message. The spatial attribute of the ad is of special value, as it shows a key function in constructing the perceiver's inclination of the content and its conscious meaning.

One of the fundamental spatial elements of the advertising is in what way women are placed within the framework. Their arrangement and position propose a significance of empowerment and assurance, which is further strengthened by the shoes they are wearing. These shoes are placed conspicuously in the panorama of the frame, drawing the viewer's attention and declaring that they are a crucial region of the general content being conveyed.

Another essential spatial element of the ad is the motto that is featured conspicuously in the background. This shibboleth is cautiously positioned and planned to complement the other spatial elements of the advertisement, creating an awareness of harmoniousness and coherence that aids in reinforcing the overall content. Collectively, these spatial elements act to make a persuasive message that vibrates with the viewer and leaves a lasting effect.

### Advertisement 2

The commercial in question featured a ketchup bottle cap that is easy to ajar with a provocative slogan, "You mean a woman can open it?" The message, on the aboveground, may appear disputable and offensive.



However, upon closer examination, we can see that the ad cleverly targeted a specific audience and was an effective way to advertise the product. The views and norms of the 1950s were quite different from what we have today. Women were expected to stay at home and take care of the household, while the men went out to work. The woman of the house had to ensure that everything was done before her husband returned from work, including preparing dinner. At the dinner table, she was not allowed to complain unless her husband allowed her to do so. She had to follow her husband's orders at all times. However, things have changed a lot since then, and women are now seen as valuable and respected members of our society. In 1953, Alcoa created the HyTop bottle cap, which was made of aluminum and easy to open.

## Linguistic Analysis

### Figure 6

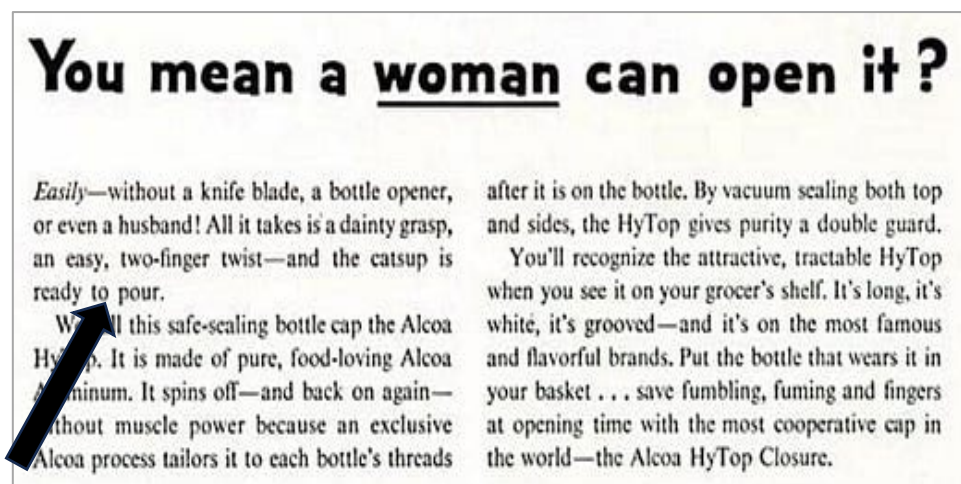
The Chunk of Advertisement 2 for Analysis



There is some text located below the picture in the advertisement, which further promotes the bottle cap. The ad claims that their bottle caps are so easy to open that even a woman can do it. Although it is an offensive ad towards women, it is still effective. During that era, women would be interested to see an ad like this because it highlights the convenience of opening a bottle easily. This also applies to older people who may have difficulty opening things as they age, so they would also be attracted to a product that is easier to open. In general, anyone would be drawn to a product that makes life easier. However, there is always more to an image than what is presented on the surface. This is not about the cap, there is deep meaning that tells that women are depicted as weak, that they need any help to even open the cap of the bottle.

### Figure 7

The chunk of Advertisement 2 for analysis



Furthermore, in this advertisement, there was text under the visuals. There is written, “without knife blade, a bottle opener or even a husband” This statement perpetuates the harmful stereotype that women are dependent on men for their basic needs, it implies she is been reliant on her husband in the past. Then there is a statement, *It spins off – and back on again – without muscle power* This is a very obvious clause, not needing to be pointed out but this is added to insult the intelligence of women. Finally, the icing on the cake is the last sentence. “Save fumbling, fuming, and fingers at opening time with the most cooperative cap in the world– the Alcoa HyTop Closure.” This statement not only summarizes the product and its purpose but also stresses the point home that their HyTop is the best bottle cap in the market.

## Visual Analysis

## Figure 8

The chunk of Advertisement 2 for analysis



The psychology of colors in advertising is a captivating subject to explore, as colors can elicit a range of emotions in individuals. Yellow is oftentimes connected with happiness, joy, and intelligence, while orange is meant to typify exuberance, discovery, and happening. Red is atypically connected to inescapable, powerfulness, and desire, while purple is often associated with creativity, imagination, and wisdom. Finally, green is often associated with a sense of peacefulness, growth, and health. Understanding the psychological impact of colors can be an important aspect of designing effective advertising campaigns.

The advertisement features the colors yellow, red, green, and white. The yellow wall is meant to arouse feelings of joyfulness and optimism in the viewing audience. The company intends to bring forth exhilaration about its new product, which is a subversive bottle cap. The red ketchup bottle is used to publicize the bottle cap, pointing out that it has a bright approaching ahead. The woman's dress is an endearing tint of green, which signals tranquility, growth, and well-being, as antecedently noted. Alcoa strives to instill a sense of tranquility in their audience when it comes to its merchandise. Customers can rest assured that the bottle cap will be unstrained to open and that they need not worry about anything. While colors can influence people's opinions, language choices and styles can also have a profound effect.

In addition, throughout history, there has been a harmful and unfounded belief that women are inherently weaker than men, both physically and emotionally, and that men and women have no similarities. This belief has been used to justify discrimination against women in different areas of life, including education, employment, and politics. Additionally, women are portrayed as weak in advertisements.

The cautious use of extended eyelashes and refined brushed eyebrows, concerted with a moue and imperfectly made-up lip, makes an astonishing facial expression that is both bewitching and maiden-like. The attraction to detail in the makeup application and the carelessly crafted hand pose further add a strike of usefulness and quality to the overall look, devising it more unforgettable and bewitching. All of these elements work collectively unseamed to draw the care of the people away from the typed message and rather focus on the delineation of women in a very affirmative and deferential behavior. The applicatory hairstyle also intensifies the overall effect by constructing the facial attribute and adding to the overall edification of the expression. The result is an ocular sensational portrayal of femininity and gracefulness that is sure to leave an everlasting feeling on anyone who views it.

## Spatial Analysis

The advertisement under discussion is a prime example of how visual language can be used to convey intricate meanings through the positioning of both the product and women. The ad's spatial elements are meticulously arranged to create a cohesive and impactful message for the viewers. The spatial quality of





the advertisement is particularly significant, as it plays a crucial role in crafting meaning in a tasteful and impactful way. The placement of the bottle, women, margins, and text, all work together seamlessly to deliver the intended message in a visually compelling manner. The creators of this ad have successfully crafted a narrative that is both aesthetically pleasing and rich in meaning by carefully arranging the various elements of the ad. Overall, this advertisement stands as a masterclass in visual communication, showcasing how spatial elements can be used to convey complex messages in advertising.

## Findings

Overall, this work investigates the portrayal of women in commercials and the consequences it has on social groups. Through an investigation of different ads, the writer foregrounds the need for more various and veracious portrayals of women in advertisements. The article also digs deep into the inherent issues of gender inequality and discrimination that are preserved by pernicious representations and false beauty standards. In the end, the article debates that by boosting polarity but screening it optimistically and comprehensive symbolism of women, advertisers can play an epoch-making role in forming a more inequitable and courteous world for all. Promotions and advertisements are all over and are utilized every day to market products and ideals. Considering the widespread use of advertisements in marketing products and ideas, the article underscores the crucial role that advertisers can play in shaping a more equitable and just world for everyone.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the advertisements adhering to the representation of women. Through multimodality and CDA lens, we have addressed the research question, how do advertisements represent women through various modes such as visuals, language, and spatial? Using the multimodal method. Effective multimodal fit-in modes in numerous arrangements to comprehensibly convey the connotation that is required. This multimodal method of genre analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001; Brandt, 2004) follows the overview of by what means meaning can be composed over diverse semiotic resources for each mode, i.e., written, visual, and spatial informed by Cope and Kalantzis (2009, 2013) and Kalantzis, Cope, Chan, and Dalley-Trim (2016). In addition, Advertisements are critically analyzed underpinning the CDA approach developed by Norman Fairclough (1989).

Findings have revealed that women are represented beautifully in advertisements. Still, when the advertisements are critically analyzed there are profound meanings and dual senses that do not click to eyes at first but it is deeper than that. Recent research studies have delved into the portrayal of women in advertisements, revealing that they are often depicted in a visually pleasing manner. However, upon close analysis of the content, it becomes apparent that the seemingly harmless images have underlying meanings and implications that are not immediately evident. These deeper connotations are often dual, hinting at far more complex issues related to gender stereotypes, societal expectations, and cultural biases. In essence, the representation of women in advertising is a nuanced and multifaceted issue that requires a more in-depth examination to fully understand its impact on society. Additionally, multimodality, which refers to the use of multiple modes or channels to create meaning, plays a critical role in advertising as it allows for a more organized and effective communication of the intended message to consumers. This, in turn, fulfills the actual purpose of products, which is to persuade customers to buy them.

## References

- Alcoa Aluminum (1953), you mean a woman can open it? [clipart]. [https://miro.medium.com/v2/resize:fit:1400/format:webp/1\\*PWsvlrZvBosgnryklsEcbQ@2x.jpeg](https://miro.medium.com/v2/resize:fit:1400/format:webp/1*PWsvlrZvBosgnryklsEcbQ@2x.jpeg)
- Atma, S., & Awad, Z. (2023). Gender Stereotypes in TV Commercials: A Multimodal Analysis Approach. *Theory & Practice in Language Studies (TPLS)*, 13(9), 2365–2374. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1309.24>
- Baykal, N. (2016). Multimodal construction of female looks: An analysis of mascara advertisements. *Dilbilim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 27(2), 39–59. <http://dad.boun.edu.tr/en/download/article-file/263977>
- Brandt, S. (2004). GUNTHER KRESS & THEO VAN LEEUWEN, Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication. London: Arnold, 2001. Pp. vii, 142. Hb \$72.00, Pb \$24.95. *Language in Society*, 33(01), 115–118. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404504221054>
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2009). “Multiliteracies”: New Literacies, New Learning. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 4(3), 164–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15544800903076044>
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2013). “Multiliteracies”: New literacies, new learning. In *Framing languages and literacies* (pp. 105–135). Routledge.
- Del Saz-Rubio, M. M. (2018). Female identities in TV toiletries ads: A pragmatic and multimodal analysis of implied meanings. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 136, 54–78. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.07.009>
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. London: Longman Group.
- Kalantzis, M., Cope, B., Chan, E., & Dalley-Trim, L. (2016). *Literacies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). The modes and media of contemporary communication. London: Arnold.
- Luhmann, N. (1992). What is communication?. *Communication theory*, 2(3), 251–259.
- Rubio, M. D. S. (2018). A multimodal approach to the analysis of gender stereotypes in contemporary British TV commercials: “women and men at work.” *Poznan Studies in Contemporary Linguistics*, 54(2), 185–221. <https://doi.org/10.1515/psicl-2018-0008>
- Usman, M. (2013). Creation of Effective Advertising in the persuasion of Target Audience. *International Journal*, 2(1), 77–82. [https://www.ejournalofbusiness.org/archive/vol2no1/vol2no1\\_5.pdf](https://www.ejournalofbusiness.org/archive/vol2no1/vol2no1_5.pdf)
- Weyenberg Shoes in Playboy magazine (1974), Keep her where she belongs [Clipart]. Glamour.com. <https://media.glamour.com/photos/594d569e14a84666be6821b6/master/pass/women-in-advertising-river.jpg>
- Xia, S. (2023). Explaining science to the non-specialist online audience: A multimodal genre analysis of TED talk videos. *English for Specific Purposes*, 70, 70–85. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2022.11.007>