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## The Meaning of Advertisement Directed to the Youth for Parents and Educators - An Analysis of the Weekly „Bravo”

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## The Meaning of Advertisement Directed to the Youth for Parents and Educators - An Analysis of the Weekly „Bravo”

**Abstract:** Advertisements are a permanent element of modern life. They shape our consciousness, mentality and mode of communication and should be the subject of analysis that are interesting for parents and teachers. Two important characteristics of advertisements are appealing slogans and stereotypes. The conducted analysis confirmed that although Bravo magazine does not contain any advertisements which would depreciate other cultures or nations, it should also be added that there are no elements which refer to Polish traditions, either. The phenomenon of mixing Polish and English words always exist, and Bravo magazine copies this trend in advertisements. It is impossible to prevent English vocabulary from influencing the Polish language, however, educators should make young people more sensitive to correct language and encourage them to use the vocabulary in compliance with grammar rules and spelling.

**Keywords:** advertisement, covert advertisement, parents, educators

Nowadays advertising permeates all walks of human life, including the social, cultural and even the educational areas. Advertisements can be found not only in the press, on the radio and television, on hoardings and the Internet but also on buildings which serve religious or educational purposes. We can encounter them where school accessories, devices and gadgets commonly used by young people. e.g. mobile telephones or computers are promoted. The fact that advertisements are all around us is sufficient reason for parents, teachers and other educational professionals to take a greater interest in the problem of advertisements. All of them

can not remain indifferent to this issue for other, more important and decisive factors. One of these is the influence of advertising on behaviour of teenagers and their mode of communication, and the image of children used in advertisements. With the importance of the educational process in mind, we should also consider the image of the elderly presented in advertisements, which may become fixed in the minds of students, making them adopt certain ideas and imaginations about their parents, other adults and even their teachers. Authors of advertisements use elements of our everyday life and in that way, they create certain imaginations about a family. Thus, the way that a teacher, father, mother, grandparent or sibling is presented remains important and should be thoroughly analyzed. With regards to the image of a family, an analysis of the advertisements in the popular weekly magazine "Tele Tydzień" indicates that advertising copywriters use a traditional family pattern to advertise many products. A man, who is the father of the family, plays the leading role [Ignatowski 2012, p. 114].

As the production of advertisements, two other issues should be addressed which are essential for parents and educators: advertising slogans and stereotypes. It should be added that it is just an advertisement that is involved in the process of forming, slogans and stereotypes. When said repeatedly, a catchphrase becomes fixed in the recipient's memory, its role being to make a customer feel a desire to purchase the offered product or service – a clear association is made with the advertised product and its manufacturer. This is an essential reason why an advertising catchphrase does not contain any important information [Šmid 2011, pp. 48–67]. Teachers, parents and linguists should note that a slogan might become a permanent element of everyday life and start playing a communicative function; sometimes the function becomes entirely different from the original one, i.e. the slogan no longer serves any marketing purposes. Young people are especially susceptible to such phrases. Obviously, the process of adopting the slogan might be relatively long and to a great extent, its adoption depends on the expressiveness and strength which characterize it. Thus, this begs the question: Could an advertising slogan serve as a tool of communication? In fact, we could go further and ask whether slogans created by advertising copywriters might facilitate communication between generations allowing the hermetically closed world of young people to become more open to contact with the elderly. This would depend, however, on whether older people, parents and teachers, would be ready to accept the specific language of the young generation and use it while communicating with them.

We have also mentioned that authors of advertisements willingly use stereotypes. They contain opinions on a particular social or professional group which although simplified, are commonly shared. Stereotypes are characterized by emotions, which makes them permanent, easily adopted and difficult to change [Nelson 2003, pp. 25–26; Kurcz 2003, pp. 113–117]. From the point of view of education, images and repeated slogans should not disseminate negative opinions

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about people who come from a different cultural environment or civilization, or have different political or religious views.

Before we turn to the main motif of our analysis, we should mention certain issues connected with advertising. It ought to be borne in mind, although we are not always aware, that some dynamic changes have been observed in the definition of the word “advertisement” [Kozłowska 2011, pp. 39–41]. The influence of an advertisement and the kind of information it conveys allows advertisements to be classified as either economic or social. The latter, as opposed to those associated with products, refers to certain ideas concerning our everyday life, such as periodic health check-ups, struggle with pathologies and discrimination, and sexual education. Moreover, more and more often copywriters design advertisements which avoid informing customers about the product itself. There is a tendency to create such an advertisement which would make a customer become emotionally close to a particular product or a particular brand. In the past, an advertisement was supposed to inform a customer about the advertised product and its competitive qualities. The change in the purpose of an advertisement can be clearly observed when it comes to advertising associated with banks and investment funds, in which commonly recognized celebrities such as famous actors, artists and sportsmen are asked to promote many financial services. It is thanks to their image, and not information about the product, that the customer is persuaded to remain loyal to a particular product or brand.

In the article we will try to analyse the relationship between the education of teenagers and advertisements. The title of this dissertation somehow defines the range for an analysis which could be the ground for drawing justified conclusions. The source of the analysis is the weekly magazine “Bravo”, which has a little more than 60 pages. For the purpose of this study we analysed all issues from the year 2010; during which period the magazine was the most popular title for younger people. Turning to the problem of advertising in this magazine, it can be easily seen that not many advertisements are presented. Usually there are up to seven in certain issues, which begs the question : Have copywriters decided that young people who read „Bravo” magazine are not suitable recipients for the advertised products? This is a question for marketing experts and sociologists: particularly sociologists, as in the editorial team’s opinion, the magazine’s readership comprises children from elementary schools, as well as teenagers from grammar schools, secondary technical schools and vocational schools. How is it possible to know the age of the readers? A reasonable guess can be made by analysing the list of set books and printed calendars. The latter contained all necessary information for all age groups regarding beginning and end dates of the academic year, as well as those of the semester breaks and exams. It should be added that the authors of the magazine freely decide which products are advertised and which are not. Apart from information on the product, there is a note that the product is being adver-

tised. However, sometimes the reader can see a picture of a product which is not accompanied by any such note. To be more specific, two examples follow: three photos of fashionable German shoes popular with teenagers are not indicated as advertisements, although they take up a whole page of the magazine, neither are large photos of books for students of elementary, middle and secondary schools, along with the address of the on-line bookshop which sells them. However, summer horoscopes and telephone numbers to fortune tellers who give advice to people in love and tell their fortune are labelled as advertisements.

Nowadays, a number of products are advertised indirectly, many examples of which are also found in Bravo magazine. Again, we will give some examples. In 2010, students were offered the opportunity to win mobile phones, jackets, bags, bracelets, perfumes, make-up sets and mascaras. However, to be entitled to take part in the contest, they had to send text messages. The range of products to be won in the contest was much wider. The list of prizes also included CD albums, computers, computer games, discmans, films, publications and invitations to popular restaurants visited by both teenagers and adults. There were also shoes, backpacks with photos of famous football players, sports T-shirts and even fur coats. The notice which encouraged the readers to join the contest was accompanied by the names of companies producing the prizes and the chain stores which sold them. Another type of hidden advertisement provides information on clothes worn by singers popular with young people. A Canadian singer, lyricist and actor Justin Drew Bieber “looks cute and fashionable in his cap with earflaps”. Selena Marie Gomez from Texas is presented to serve similar purposes. We can read in the magazine that “beautiful Selena (aged 18) will be really warm in these long pullover, scarf and cap”. Bravo magazine has a separate section devoted to fashion. The magazine not only showed pictures of beautiful clothes but also give the addresses of shops in which the clothes were available. An analysis of several issues of the magazine confirms that most products are advertised in such a way. Hence, it can be concluded that this method of advertising products is a most effective way of gaining a potential customer.

We should ask about common advertisements and the products they advertise. Bravo magazine has very few such advertisements. The most common adverts are for DVD films, horoscopes and advice given by fortune tellers. There is also an advertisement of a foreign bank depicting a woman lying in a comfortable position in a big armchair and smiling. Next to her is information on the bank. Between these two items are a scattered a number of female shoes. The second advertisement, for sanitary towels, is accompanied by a few simple sentences about fertility with barely any educational content to them. Next to the picture of towels there is also a picture of the packaging.

In the magazine, we can also find two advertisements of herbal preparations which help to get rid of acne: a disorder which is troublesome and a cause of

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frustration and shame. The first advertisement is an extensive and informative description of the way in which the medicine brings the desired effects – the skin becomes healthy and skin problems (acne) disappears. The packaging of the preparation presents a face of a young girl partly covered by a bright pink fringe. Next to her is a boy in black sports clothes wearing a baseball cap and headphones on his head. The other advertisement shows the preparation in a clear black frame which graphically resembles an obituary. This method of advertising seems to be very appealing: its purpose being to confirm the great effectiveness of the product. The advertisement shows that after many years of being a parasite, acne “died suddenly, having been attacked” by the advertised medication.

In another advertisement, two smiling teenage girls advertise the creams and gels which are so popular in our country. This might seem surprising, because male cosmetics are recommended by a man wearing a white shirt, black jacket and tie. Since this outfit is not really common for young males, we can conclude that the author of the advertisement wanted to attract the consumer’s attention to the product. An operator of a mobile network is advertised with a picture of a big house in the background. Happy inhabitants of the house are looking through the windows: In one window we can see an elderly lady watering flowers, in another a young couple with a child. In the patio, there is a man who is hugging his girlfriend. Further away there is a postman and a little girl with a dog. The author of the advertisement encourages the audience to use the service by claiming that a mobile telephone can hold an exceptionally huge number of contact numbers and the number of the customer’s friends can also be that huge. A second advertisement for the same product shows a young girl in a white, big, loose dress sitting on a light blue scooter. Another mobile network is advertised using an image of three smiling girls wearing winter jackets. It is difficult to say how old they are as their faces are partially covered by winter caps.

What conclusions can we draw from advertisements in Bravo magazine for parents and teachers? Currently, banks and also mobile phone providers are focused on attracting a customer to their products and building loyalty to them rather than providing information. This intention is the main reason why famous actors and sportsmen more and more often are hired in advertisements, one example being an advertisement for a bank in “Bravo” magazine, which unfortunately includes hardly any information about the product itself. However, no celebrities can be found in advertisements for mobile phone operators, perhaps because advertisements have only recently started to be endorsed by famous people. We should not be surprised that not many celebrities endorse bank services and products: students hardly ever choose a bank in which their parents would like to deposit money or from which they would transfer money to their children’s accounts. However, it should be stressed that actors and singers popular with young people advertise clothes, which is understandable, since younger children and teenagers

greatly influence their parents in their choice of clothes. However, in mobile phone advertising, we see a certain danger which teachers and parents should be aware of: designers of the mobile operator advertisement assert that one should have a mobile phone to have many friends, which obviously is untrue, as people initiate friendship in a completely different way.

The great number of advertisements recommending DVD films and presenting horoscopes and fortune-telling implies that a young person is interested in possessing just these products. As the exact profile of the range of films offered should be the subject of a different analysis, we will turn our attention to the second mentioned service, i.e. fortune-telling. Fortune tellers are commonly known to tell people's fortune. They foresee future events, or give explanations for such events or the current course of life of the customer. Such practices were known as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C [Wróżbiarstwo, *mantyka* 2005, pp. 24; *Wróżbiarstwo* 2002, pp. 165–166]. A educator should be aware that conclusions drawn from such methods can not be rationally confirmed by any scientific methods. If it were confirmed that young people often turn to fortune tellers for help or advice, would it mean they do not fully rely on the fruits of scientific research? This, however, would not be the only important observation: A belief in fortune-telling might imply a lack of self-confidence, a lack of belief in one's own vitality or skills. In other words, the students' future would not depend on their personal strengths but on irrational forces, which are not clearly defined and rather unknown.

Here we should address advertising slogans. As mentioned earlier, they become fixed in students' minds and become tools of teenage communication. Two conclusions can be drawn based on an analysis of the advertisements in Bravo magazine. First of all, films described as "cooltowy" are most often advertised. The name, which entered the Polish vocabulary, is a combination of the Polish word "kult" (i.e. cult) and the English word "cool". The name "cool" is identified with approval and respect. Students call a person "cool" to express how much they approve of his way of behaviour and fashion style [Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2006, p. 106; Wiśniewska 2009, p. 75]. The word "kultowy" has a similar meaning. It refers to something important. It is an example to follow or even a thing that should be adored or worshipped. So a film, band or director can be "kultowy" [*Kultowy-potoczny* 1998, p. 288; *Kultowy* 2006, p. 719; Drabik, Sobol 2007, pp. 126–127]. This analysis leads to another observation: The magazine does not influence the vocabulary used by teenagers but copywriters use this language, commonly adopted and known, in order to attract a great number of customers.

The common use of Polish – English vocabulary combinations leads to intermingling cultures and a question of education [Kusiło 2007, pp. 243–251]. In Bravo magazine we are not able to find any references to various cultures and nations. Hence, we can conclude that readers of the magazine did not meet any of the national stereotypes typically observed in advertisements addressed to a wider

audience. However, the question arises: Did the designers of the adverts decide that young people do not understand or accept other cultures? Such a thesis would be justified if advertisements in this magazine promoted Polish culture and discredited other traditions. On the contrary, the magazine does not clearly emphasize the importance or unique character of Polish culture. Bearing this fact in mind, we can suppose that a sizeable proportion of young people does not understand or accept the national tradition, or simply does not find it worth caring about. We can add that the magazine also lacks advertisements which contain multicultural aspects. This fact is not, however, unusual. Few elements of ethnic diversity can be found in advertisements in the “Newsweek” magazine [Ignatowski 2012, p. 34]. It might be a little surprising as this magazine is a Polish version of the American edition, published in an extremely multicultural and multiethnic society.

Before we finish the article we should make one more general conclusion. We live in times in which an image, rather than any text, even the most interesting one, becomes fixed in a student’s mind. Not only young people, but also an older generation, have changed their mode of communication to using clear and simple phrases. This simplicity does not allow for the expression of more sophisticated thoughts or more complex feelings. Such a simple mode of communication is used by the creators of advertisements, who want to attract a potential customer. One such customer is a young person, who in the same way as copywriters, will start using this “advertising” terminology. Therefore, parents and teachers should do our best to make these consumers aware that the world of advertising slogans is not a true source of knowledge. They should work systematically to become critical to the surrounding world. One such solution includes adopting a reasonable attitude towards presented advertisements: a task for students, parents, educators and teachers.

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