

# **COSMOPOLITAN GOES INTERCULTURAL**

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A Semiotic  
Analysis of  
Cosmopolitan  
Magazine  
Covers

# ABSTRACT

This project focused on an analysis of the messages portrayed through four covers of *Cosmopolitan's* international magazines in November of 2015. This study investigated if and how *Cosmopolitan* creates a single, worldwide ideal image for women. Using Arthur Asa Berger's method of semiotic analysis, the four covers were analyzed according to five categories: the model's story or significance in the world today, the model's race, clothing and other artifacts worn by the model, the model's body language, and the words and phrases printed on the cover. This study uncovered three consistent, major themes: sex, fitness, and success in terms of wealth. The ideologies contained in these themes are spread across the countries in which *Cosmopolitan* distributes their magazine, giving women worldwide the idea that these are the expectations of their gender and that these values should be embraced. The study suggests that if all themes represented in the covers portray and glorify U.S. centric values there is potential to override or devalue the cultural values of other countries in which the magazine is distributed.

# PURPOSE STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTION

- Analyze and interpret the messages portrayed on the covers of four of *Cosmopolitan's* international editions
- Do the messages that *Cosmopolitan* advertises to women worldwide communicate a single ideal image to which women are encouraged to aspire?

# ARTIFACTS

- *Cosmopolitan Covers*
  - *Cosmopolitan*
  - *Cosmopolitan UK*
  - *Cosmopolitan Chile*
  - *Cosmopolitan HK*
- **November 2015 Edition**

# COSMOPOLITAN CHILE

# COSMOPOLITAN UK



"Zinio." Zinio. Web. 03 May 2016.



"Zinio." Zinio. Web. 03 May 2016.

# COSMOPOLITAN (U.S.)

# COSMOPOLITAN HK



"Zinio." Zinio. Web. 03 May 2016.



productid=500663429

"Zinio." Zinio. Web. 03 May 2016.



# METHOD: SEMIOTICS

## ■ Early Theorists

- Ferdinand de Saussure
- Charles Sanders Peirce

## ■ Arthur Asa Berger's Semiotic Method of Analysis

- Isolate and analyze the important signs in the texts
- Identify the central structure, theme, or model of the text
- Identify the narrative structure of the text

# ANALYSIS

The analysis focused on the following aspects of the magazine covers.

- Who are the models?
  - Status/Profession
  - Race
- Clothing/Artifacts
- Body Language
- Headlines



# ANALYSIS

Three major themes were identified in the analysis.

## ■ Sex

- Explicitly stated through words and phrases
- Suggested through the body language of the models
  - “Inside the Orgasm Club” and pose of model (*Cosmopolitan UK*)

## ■ Fitness

- Prevalent in headlines
- Suggested by model body type
  - “Easiest Workout for an Epic Ass!” (*Cosmopolitan US*)
  - Pose/Body type of model (*Cosmopolitan Chile*)

# ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

- **Success**
  - **Mentioned in headlines**
  - **Portrayed through status/celebrity of models**
    - **Chiara Ferragni (Chile) – Fashion Blogger**
    - **Naomi Harris (UK) – Actress**
    - **Kardashians (US) Reality Television Stars**
    - **Fiona Sit (HK) - Singer**

# CONCLUSION

- The messages portrayed by *Cosmopolitan* on their U.S. and international covers communicate a single ideal image to which women are encouraged to aspire.
- Although *Cosmopolitan* caters somewhat to particular cultures, there are still common expectations or themes intermixed among the various magazine covers. These include sex, fitness, and success.
- Since these themes appear to be grounded in U.S. centric values there is potential to override or devalue the values of other countries to which the magazine is exported.

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