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“BE STUPID”

EXPLORATION OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION IN ADVERTISING
ABSTRACT

The main goal of the project is to explore how advertisements function persuasively and what means of persuasion are used to attract target audience’s attention and motivate purchase. An in depth analysis of the three subjectively chosen images of Be Stupid advertising campaign for Diesel is conducted. I concentrate on visual-verbal communication and explore what intended meanings are created by the visual-verbal continuum and how receivers interpret them. The qualitative research is performed in order to obtain data for comparison, that is for confirmation or denial of the findings of the analysis.
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INTRODUCTION: VISUAL PERSUASION

Every day contemporary society is surrounded by all kinds of images which seek to advertise anything from miraculous anti-ageing creams to sexy underwear which usually fits only slim young women or muscular tanned men. Advertisements are created for the purpose of seducing the audience to consume by creating a certain illusion. The word advertisement is derived from a Latin word *advertere* which means *to turn towards*, that is to get peoples’ attention (Goddard, 1998:6). According to this abstract definition, a road sign can also be an advertisement because it is supposed to get peoples’ attention. Yet, an advertisement as it is rooted in our minds is something more than just a mere object which attracts attention. The main difference between a road sign and advertisement is that the aim of the latter is a financial benefit, enhancement of status or image (Goddard, 1998:7).

“Now we are all used to being presented with advertisements that evoke imaginary lifestyles associated with the products or that emphasize the fashionability of the product, or indicate the nature of the ideal and typical consumer of the good in question” (Rampley, 2005:138). In any case, the advertisement seeks to sell the advertised product, service, idea or image and to gain benefit. Why are skillfully made advertisements so powerful and attract our eye so quickly? The answer or at least part of it can be found by employing the study of visual rhetoric and exploring eye-catching and persuasive elements of advertisements. Likewise well-argumented and professionally delivered speeches, good advertisements bear certain rhetorical properties which are designed for the sake of more powerful and effective communication.

*Area of interest and research question*

The idea for this project emerged after a ‘visually intelligent’ walk around the centre of Copenhagen with the aim of spotting interesting, original, ambiguous or any kind of unseen advertisements. My eyes were caught by an odd motto *Be Stupid* above the entrance door to the *Diesel* clothes store. Not to mention, a certain window-dressing also caught my eye because I have never seen a ‘man’ squeezed by an ‘elephant’ before. As it became clear after
seeing a catalogue for this advertising campaign, the idea for the installation was borrowed from a wide variety of images created to convey the current philosophy of Diesel brand.

Thus, an attempt of this project is to analyze the visuals of Be Stupid. By ‘visuals’ I mean only the images which are made for printing and displaying on billboards (or any other means) and in catalogues. I am not attempting at analyzing visual solutions of the campaign’s webpage, though. There are around 40 images made for displaying, every single one of them tells a certain story related to the philosophy of Be Stupid and to the verbal statement on the image. I will take several most outstanding images for exploration of persuasive elements and effect on the audience. My interests lay in the way images are crafted to have the biggest persuasive appeal. To reach this goal I will attempt to do the analysis within the framework of meaning construction (what) and the way it is communicated (how). That is, I seek to find out what is being said by the chosen images and how it is being said. It is obvious that, for instance, in speech communication, rhetorical skills benefit the speech a lot by making it more persuasive, credible and pleasant to listen. In visual communication, advertisements hold the same role as speeches in verbal communication. They convey meanings, truths, illusions, affect knowledge, move to make certain decisions and evoke discussions. If one requires a definition of visual rhetoric, it can be as simple as this: “the way the images work on their own and collaborate with written text to create an argument designed to move a specific audience”\(^1\). The chosen images are not a simple depiction of everyday life; rather they are concerned with telling a story. Hence, apart from having a written hint, or statement, the images also have a certain visual narrative which I will also attempt to analyze and interpret in this project. If considering the nature of the image, it can be said to have two components – presented elements and suggested elements (Smith, Moriarty, Barbatsis, Kenney, 2005). Presented elements are related to image’s formal construction, or the way the image is designed implying such elements as shape, color, composition, models, relation between foreground and background and so on. Whereas suggested elements are “the concepts, ideas, themes, and allusions that a viewer is likely to infer from presented images, as, for example, the ornate gold leafing found on Baroque buildings might suggest wealth, privilege, and power” (Smith,

\(^1\) http://www.stanford.edu/~steener/f03/PWR1/whatisvisrhet.htm
Moriarty, Barbatsis, Kenney, 2005:146). I will employ this framework for an in-depth analysis of the chosen images from *Be Stupid* advertising campaign.

Hence, the research question is as follows:

**How is visual narrative created in the images of *Be Stupid* to have a persuasive appeal?**

In the course of answering the research question I will be also addressing several sub-questions:

1) What messages and meanings are created by the visuals?
2) What elements/symbols/visual metaphors are used for the creation of the visual statement and story?
3) How do written statements relate to the visual story and vice versa?
4) Which characteristics of the images function persuasively?
5) How does the target audience interpret the images?
6) What impact do the images have on the target audience?

**Brief presentation of the campaign**

“May long live stupid”

*Be Stupid* advertising campaign was launched in the beginning of 2010 January and at least in Copenhagen the campaign is planned to be on display until the end of 2010 (according to the store assistants). *Be Stupid* is a new philosophy of *Diesel* brand adhering to the idea of taking risks and going beyond ‘smart’. *Diesel* has always challenged their audiences with brave and original campaigns which usually were well conceived (e.g. *Global Warming Ready; For Successful Living*).

*Diesel* is a fashion brand from Italy, created in 1978. It targets young audience, usually ranging from teenagers to young adults. The brand is distinctive for its provocative advertising strategy which often arises many discussions among the audiences, as well as

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advertising professionals. Thus, after any introduction of Diesel’s new advertising campaign, the brand is usually in the centre of discussions which range from positive to negative.

The latest campaign is called *Be Stupid* and explores a variety of ‘stupid’ actions through a wide range of visuals, video, electronic and print catalogues. The campaign is targeted at the audience ranging from teenagers to young adults up to 25. No less than 15 catchphrases define the philosophy of the campaign with the visuals designed to tell a certain story in relation to every catchphrase. The catchphrases create an opposition between ‘smart’ and ‘stupid’ and always support the latter for being able to explore and enjoy life at its best, e.g.:

“Smart may have brains but stupid has the balls”

“Smart sees what there is, stupid sees what there could be”

“Smart listens to the head. Stupid listens to the heart”

“Smart may have the answers. But stupid has all the interesting questions”

“Smart critiques. Stupid creates”

The campaign works as a philosophy of Diesel because the brand positions itself as being stupid by saying “Check out how stupid Diesel is”\(^3\). In this particular campaign, stupidity is supposed to mean something close to creativity, however, in some visuals stupidity-creativity is depicted rather as stupidity-inanity. “Stupid, you see, is a relentless pursuit of a regret-free life”\(^4\). As an example of stupidity is given the beginning of the brand itself when Renzo Rosso founded the company in 1978 with the goal of designing unconventional clothes and brand image. “Stupid is being the guy in 1978 in a Ford Transit driving around and visiting shop owner after shop owner trying to convince them to sell brand new denim pants made to look worn”\(^5\).

\(^3\) http://www.diesel.com/be-stupid#

\(^4\) http://storage.diesel.com/wwwdieselcom/pdf/Be_Stupid_Catalogue.pdf, p. 2

\(^5\) http://storage.diesel.com/wwwdieselcom/pdf/Be_Stupid_Catalogue.pdf, p. 21
**Perspective towards analysis**

Foundation on which I build my interpretive analysis of persuasive characteristics of the images is hermeneutics. “The term hermeneutics covers both the first order art and the second order theory of understanding and interpretation of linguistic and non-linguistic expressions”\(^6\). I perceive an image as a mode of non-linguistic expression through which meanings are created and communicated. Yet, I see meaning construction not only from the perspective of the author but also from the point of view of receiver (myself), that is I construe my analysis of transmitted meanings through a prism of individual understanding and interpretation. Within the analysis, I attempt to deconstruct the intended meanings by decomposing the images and trying to understand separate parts in relation to the whole, and the whole in relation to separate parts. Thus, I say ‘intended meanings’ grounding on my own interpretation which I will confirm or reject by interviewees’ understanding of the images. I view my analysis as deeply rooted in interpretation which is obtained through a ‘hermeneutical circle’ of meaning creation which is explained by further quotation from Paul Ricoeur: “The interpreter constructs the context as another form of text, which can then, of itself, be critically analyzed so that the meaning construction can be understood as an interpretive act. In this way, the hermeneutic interpreter is simply creating another text on a text (...). Every meaning is constructed, even through the very constructive act of seeking to deconstruct (...)”\(^7\). I analyze the images by creating new understanding and interpretation on the basis of theoretical approaches such as visual rhetoric and semiotics; and compare my findings to the understanding and interpretation of interviewed people. I must clarify here that I do not attempt to perform a hermeneutic analysis of the images as such, rather I employ hermeneutic perspective only to delimit the scope of the project and to indicate for the readers, where I, as an author, stand.

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\(^7\) [http://epress.anu.edu.au/info_systems/mobile_devices/ch06s03.html](http://epress.anu.edu.au/info_systems/mobile_devices/ch06s03.html)
Methodology

The approach to answering the research question is to explore the content of the images and symbolic processes by which images perform communication, catch attention and affect the audience.

The main theoretical approach to the topic is the study of visual rhetoric, or in other words exploration of persuasive properties of images. Rhetoric, as a branch, can be traced back to Ancient Greece, and “is concerned with the study of the symbols to communicate; in the most basic sense, rhetoric is an ancient term for what now typically is called communication” (Smith, Moriarty, Barbatsis, Kenney, 2005:141). In relation to the visual field, the perspective of rhetoric has been applied in the second half of the 20th century. Currently, visual rhetoric is an interdisciplinary field of study, encompassing older studies applied to exploration of the image, such as semiotics, narrative theory and other approaches. “Visual rhetoric constitutes a theoretical perspective that involves the analysis of the symbolic or communicative aspect of an image” (Smith, Moriarty, Barbatsis, Kenney, 2005:145).

Thus, in the analyses of the chosen images I will also encompass to a certain extent the approach of semiotics. In the process of exploration of meaning construction within the images, I will embrace the relation between the signifier and signified and iconicity of the image. “By virtue to their iconicity, the images can simulate the visual appearance of reality, and they can be used to elicit attitudes and emotions associated with real world people, objects, and places” (Messaris, 1997:22).

After analyzing the images and obtaining prior knowledge, I will conduct a qualitative research (interviews) with the possible target audience for the purpose of getting receivers’ interpretations of the images. I will use the obtained data for comparison with my findings on the subject.
CHAPTER ONE: INFLUENCE OF ADVERTISING

In this chapter I make an overview of advertising as a method of promoting goods, services, images and ideas for a purpose of getting mostly financial benefit. I introduce a general model of advertising (Rogers, 2007) which consists of such features as getting attention, making product/brand name memorable and motivating the purchase, and explore what is the role of images in advertising and how they benefit communication of messages and statements.

What is Advertising?

“Advertisements (...) need to focus our attention on the products, make sure we remember the name of the product, and then motivate our purchase by using extrinsic value” (Rogers, 2007:328). Thus, advertising is a method used by marketers to promote goods, services, products, ideas and so on. The goal of advertising is to increase sales and popularity of the advertised item by persuading the audience to buy the product or use the service. To reach this goal advertisements are carefully constructed employing tools which help to increase the persuasive appeal and to catch and hold attention of the audience. In a very general sense, advertisements are designed to make impression on the audience, and do that very quickly because the amount of advertisements the audience encounters every day is extensive. Thus, advertisements compete among each other for the attention of the audience, and sometimes an advertisement has only few seconds to attract attention since other advertisements are exposed next to it as well. Rogers (2007) elucidates a general model of advertising consisting of several steps which disclose goals of advertising. First and foremost, as it was mentioned above, is getting attention. It can be done by introducing novelty within the way advertisement is made (original, attractive design, new way of looking at an old concept) and within the content of the image which can be a provocative slogan, or a different way of communicating old notions, for e.g. in Be Stupid a notion of stupidity which has more negative connotations than positive, is presented in a positive light, thus challenging the conventional understanding of stupidity. Good attention grabbers are humor, activity within the image and beauty (Rogers, 2007:329).
As it was suggested above, a very important vehicle for catching attention and creating a claim is a catchphrase or a slogan because it is one of the first elements of advertisement that a receiver will encounter. Usually a catchphrase/slogan is emphasized by a big font, vivid color and in a context of the whole image, it is supposed to draw attention to other parts of the image and make a receiver deconstruct the embodied meanings. For instance, image nr. 1 (see p.16.) possesses a catchphrase which conveys a certain philosophy and point of view towards life. By using simple everyday language, it tries to persuade to ‘be stupid’ because being stupid is much more challenging and adventurous, as the image conveys. The image is paradoxically shocking, not only because it displays an attractive young female which has a brave idea of flashing her breast to a security camera but also because the catchphrase challenges the notion of stupidity as it is embedded within the minds of people. Thus, by presenting a catchphrase which indirectly questions a typical meaning of stupid, and coupling it with a humorous and provocative image, the advertisement might catch attention and make the brand memorable because of its shock effect.

It is not enough, though, to catch attention, because the final aim of any advertisement is to move consumer to buy an advertised product, service or image. Thus, the advertisement has to present the good in a memorable way and motivate the intention to buy. Creation of motivation is related to several elements in the process. It is beneficial, if the advertisement creates associations which forms a certain appeal to the audience (Messaris, 1997). For instance, the use of iconic representations which create associations of sexuality, youth, power and so on is very popular and quite effective in advertisements because they appeal to consumers’ emotions. “Associations are often used in clever ways to link a product or service with such moving abstractions as love, sex, youth, power, rebelliousness, security, glamour, roots, self-gratification, health, and elitism” (Rogers, 2007:330).

*Images in Advertising*

According to Messaris who analyses the role of images in advertising, there are three major roles that images in advertising perform (Messaris, 1997:7). “They can elicit emotions
by simulating the appearance of a real person or object; they can serve as photographic proof that something really did happen; and they can establish an implicit link between the thing that is being sold and some other image” (Messaris, 1997:7). Images can function syntactically and semantically (Messaris, 1997:8), yet in my analysis I will not engage with syntactic elements of the images because I am more interested in how certain elements of the images are related to their meanings, thus focusing on semantically oriented description (Messaris, 1997:8). Semantic properties are a concern of semiotics which studies the relationship between signs and their meanings (signifiers, signified). There are three types of signs-iconic, indexical and symbols-which contribute to visual persuasion (Messaris, 1997:8). I will employ only the category of iconicity in the analyses of the images because it deals with creation of associations and eliciting emotion. “The iconicity of visual images serves the process of giving rise to some emotional disposition by making it possible for images to draw upon rich variety of visual stimuli and associated emotions” (Messaris, 1997:34).

Iconic relationship between the content and meanings is reflected through several characteristics of images. For instance, an image can display a simulated reality which bears certain associations although visual characteristics might be different from the real world. “Nevertheless, all of these kinds of pictures are capable of capturing and conveying to our eyes the distinctive features that our brains need in order to be able to figure out what we are looking at” (Messaris, 1997:3).

Simulating reality is also related to visual metaphor, as we can observe in image nr. 2 (see p.17) where it gets a metaphorical dimension because of the part of the image where a group of young people are displayed in a non-realistic position (flipped). In this image the three young people can be said to operate as signifiers and they signify a concept of creativity because the part of a catchphrase “Stupid creates” is in the same position as the three youngsters, thus giving a hint that they are creative (having a different angle of view). “We can define visual metaphor somewhat more narrowly as the representation of an abstract concept through a concrete visual image that bears some analogy to that concept” (Messaris, 1997:10). According to Messaris, simulation of reality might attract attention and image’s metaphorical dimension can add an emotional appeal, therefore serving as persuasive characteristics (Messaris, 1997:13).

Another way that iconicity works is related to eliciting identification with the models or their actions in the image (Messaris, 1997:41). “Identification with the people in images may
be the most common way in which visuals advertisements exploit their iconic relationship to our real world visual and psychological experiences” (Messaris, 1997:44). By presenting ideal models and actions which display sexual success, courage or any behavior that might be attractive for the target audience, images “draw upon our tendencies for identification in order to strengthen our emotional involvement with ads” (Messaris, 1997:44). The images of Be Stupid employ young, sexually active and attractive models who, among other crazy actions, also represent sexual behavior which is a real world experience for most members of the target audience. In this way an iconic relation between image and its meaning is created and “by virtue of iconicity, (...) it is able to erect before our eyes a mirror world, with whose inhabitants we are invited to interact (...)” (Messaris, 1997:266). I will explore this further in the project.

**Construction of a Claim**

When talking about images in advertising, there is no sole way one can describe them. A picture is a complicated mode of visual communication which can be analyzed in relation to color, form, design, other technical properties and so on. However, in my exploration of visual communication in advertising, I am interested in the content, meanings and messages conveyed.

The role of images in advertising is not merely to attract attention and then let the viewer forget what he saw. Their aim is to create positive experiences and feelings associated with the product which might engage receiver’s response. In order to give arguments for buying a product, images communicate assertions, evaluations and express propositions. The images and slogans of Be Stupid advertising campaign propose to explore the notion of stupidity in different ways. By creating a novel understanding of stupidity and asserting it by colorful and eye-catching images, advertisements create a new reality with new philosophy. Rather than selling the product, the images sell the brand which is proud of being stupid in an unconventional way, and an idea which suggests breaking the rules and stereotypes some smart people thought of. “To be stupid is to be brave. When you risk
something, that’s stupid. It’s not smart to take risks. It’s stupid. Stupid stands alone. Smart hides within the safety of huddled masses. The stupid aren’t afraid to fail”8.

The claim within this philosophy is that a person will be happier behaving differently from the masses. The most important thing is not what others think of you and what impression you create. What matters is your inner freedom and possibility to release all the feelings and actions which might be considered stupid by the masses. The meaning of stupidity is created through the prism of creativity, thus the accustomed connotation of stupid as being dumb and dull is rejected by creating a new meaning of stupidity. Diesel asserts that a new notion of stupidity is related to individuality and courage to be different because the stupid are not afraid to stand out of the masses. The advertised stupidity is turned to a certain value, and people who choose it, are considered creative in a new way. Thus, it illustrates how images can construct and express propositions and claims for the product or idea they sell.

In order to understand how advertisements communicate visually, I need to take a closer look into what images are trying to say, what moods, assumptions they convey, and what emotions they express, what is more, I need to explore how it is done, e.g. what linguistic and pictorial devices are used to catch and hold the attention of the target audience (Andren, Ericsson, Ohlsson, Tännsjö, 1978:27). I will explore more on this within the framework of visual rhetoric in chapter two.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTENT AND FORM ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will analyze the selected 3 images from Be Stupid advertising campaign. The selection is made according to personal experience, the existence of certain eye-catching features in the images and the relation between catchphrases and visual narratives in the images. The analysis in this chapter will be conducted in relation to two guiding questions:

1) What is being said in the image? 
2) How it is being said?

8 http://storage.diesel.com/wwwdieselcom/pdf/Be_Stupid_Catalogue.pdf, p.8
By exploring the images according to this framework, I will seek to examine how certain properties such as visual metaphors, interrelation between catchphrases and visual solutions and some others create meanings and messages, and how they contribute to the persuasive effect of the visuals, that is the ability to attract attention, engage emotions and shape attitudes.

Visual Persuasion: Perspective of Rhetoric

Researchers within the study of visual rhetoric assume that some properties of classical rhetoric can and should be applied to analysis and understanding of images in advertising (Scott, 1994).

Since the world is saturated with images and people deal with visual persuasion attempts of advertisements everyday, application of the study which originally dealt with verbal persuasion can give new insights into visual persuasion. In the critical exploration of persuasive properties of advertisements and how they engage in forming a response, attention is paid not only to the verbal messages but also to the visuals because usually persuasion is created through visual-verbal continuum. “Visuals give persuasive messages more presence, meaning that the messages can command more attention from receivers and perhaps cause more change in receivers because of this presence” (Rogers, 2007:262). There is an interesting relation between visuals and verbal text in advertisements because when these two elements are put together “verbal texts tend to limit what the visual may mean, and the visual tends to expand what the verbal text means” (Rogers, 2007:262).

Thus, visuals may help create new meanings. In the following section I will attempt to carry out an analysis of chosen images thus disclosing and illustrating by concrete examples the application of visual rhetoric perspective to the analysis of persuasive properties of the images.
Be Stupid campaign makes a claim that stupidity can be reassessed and seen in different, more positive perspective. Advertisements visually and verbally display different and unconventional actions which illustrate the new philosophy of Diesel. When applying perspective of visual rhetoric and if assuming that an image has rhetorical elements, I need to explore if the images have certain characteristics. “First, visual elements must be capable of representing concepts, abstractions, actions, metaphors, and modifiers (...). There further must be an ability to guide the order of argumentation via the arrangement of the visual elements. Visual elements must also carry meaningful variation in their manner of delivery, such that the selection of style can suggest an intended evaluation” (Scott, 1994:253).

As it was mentioned above, the claim of the campaign is to be stupid. In the following images argumentation is made through comparison between smart and stupid, trying to prove that to be smart is boring and to be stupid is rather challenging, thus more interesting and adventurous. The visuals further illustrate the idea and display all the interesting and challenging situations the stupid choose to be in. In image nr.1 it is proclaimed that “smart may have the brains but stupid has the balls” and this claim is proved by the image of a young and attractive girl who is displaying her breasts in front of security camera. Thus, the
visual represents a rethought or rather newly presented concept of stupidity (stupid isn’t dumb, stupid is brave) through a display of an action which requires courage (to step on the ladder and expose what is not exposed usually). The metaphor in the verbal text (‘stupid has the balls’) delivers connotations to the youth culture and everyday language, ‘the balls’ meaning having courage, whereas the visual supplements the idea of the catchphrase by displaying a girl who has ‘the balls’.

The advertisement is symbolic and has meanings which a viewer has to interpret, but at the same time it is representational because in the centre of the image there is a product (jeans) which is presented on an attractive body. The associations thus made with the product (jeans) are related to the features presented in the image (youth, slenderness, sexuality, provocation) or connotations rising from visual-verbal continuum. What is more, certain associations are made about the brand itself stemming from the way they present their philosophy. The brand is using visual-verbal tropes to present their claim. “The function of a trope is to present a proposition in a fresh way, so that the audience thinks about a familiar issue from an unexpected perspective. Using a trope is thought to break through habituated perception, skepticism, boredom, or resistance” (Scott, 1994:254).

Thus, by being open to new ways of thinking, the brand creates an image of itself as being unconventional, original and creative which might be appealing to the target audience.
Now let’s take a look at the image nr. 2. The verbal argument for the claim ‘be stupid’ in this image is presented even in a shorter form, using only four words “Smart critiques, stupid creates”. Creativity and criticism are presented as opposite states of mind which is further illustrated by the visual. Juxtaposition is made while displaying two different actions in the same environment. A young man is walking towards a group of young people who are in an unconventional position. The image is made out of two pictures where the first picture with a formally dressed man is a conventional picture depicting a man walking, whereas the second picture is flipped in order to create a different perspective and a sense of looking at things from another angle which corresponds to the whole philosophy of the campaign. “Under a theory of visual rhetoric, we would expect the visual viewpoint, focus, graphics, and layout to be related in a specific way to the message itself, rather than to be independent variable” (Scott, 1994:255).

In image nr. 2 the visual modification supports the idea of taking a new point of view towards everyday life and routines, and not being afraid of taking risks or behaving out of context. “To be stupid is to be brave. When you risk something, that’s stupid. It’s not smart to take risks. It’s stupid”9. Furthermore, verbal text is positioned in two different angles, vertical and horizontal, which works in accordance with the position of people in the picture, thus suggesting who is creative (stupid), and who is critical (smart) is in the image.

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9 http://storage.diesel.com/wwwdieselcom/pdf/Be_Stupid_Catalogue.pdf, p.8
In the third image I would claim that the most important persuasive element is a display of emotion and action leading to the fulfillment of that emotion. What is more, the action is displayed within unusual conditions (kissing in the rain while being in two separate cars) which mean that there are no boundaries for expressing your emotion. This is emphasized by the catchphrase “Smart listen to the head, stupid listen to the heart”. Thus, stupidity is related to the heart which bears connotations of spiritual beyond rational or in other words emotional beyond logical. Differently than in previous images which employed a certain amount of humor, image nr. 3 seems to have a more serious element implied which is a display of love, belonging and passion. This can be related to the rhetorical notion of pathos which means that the main tactic of persuasion is appealing to emotion. The image displays a romantic, though dangerous situation, which might trigger associations, memories and desires. Composition of the image directs attention to the couple which is almost in the centre of the image. The outstanding feature is a red jacket which catches the eye very quickly because it contrasts highly with the overall tone of the picture. What is more, the red color has connotations of love, passion, energy and courage, the feelings which are imbedded in the image. A couple is loving, passionate and courageous because they are not afraid of putting aside rationality and diving into their feelings regardless danger. “Once we
let go of the notion that advertising images must be understood as reflections (or distortions) of reality, we can work with them as a symbol system employed for the purpose of persuasion” (Scott, 1994:265).

**Persuasive Methods**

Persuasion operates within three levels: invention, arrangement and delivery (Scott, 1994). The first level deals with the invention of a concept, a promise and organizing argumentation for the concept. Arrangement is related to the way the argument is arranged. In classical rhetoric it deals with the order in which propositions are made. “Similarly, in advertising, the choice and placement of visual elements helps to modulate the viewer’s experience of the text in time” (Scott, 1994:266).

Delivery is a manner in which proposition is presented. “In advertising, visual delivery will usually suggest evaluation in two ways: (1) the point of view shown and (2) the manner of rendering. Certain camera angles present the product as "heroic"; certain typefaces appear "romantic" (Scott, 1994:267). Fulfillment of the three levels might lead to a bigger persuasive effect. In the process of filling up the framework of invention, arrangement and delivery, several categories such as and eye-catcher, slogan, sexuality appeal, novelty and some others are worth attention. In the following section I will make an exploration of the chosen images in relation to the mentioned categories.

First of all, all the three images contain an eye-catcher. An eye-catcher is a pictorial or graphical element which occupies quite a big space of the image, and it might be informative (containing info about the product) or symbolic (creating connotations and/or associations) (Andren, Ericsson, Ohlsson, Tännsjö, 1978). In the analyzed images the eye-catchers are different but there is one thing they have in common-all of them can be seen as representing an action to different extents. In image nr. 1 the girl’s body which is seen in a context of a provocative action can function as an eye-catcher. The model is positioned on red ladders and not far from the central point of the image, thus attracting the eye by a contrasting color and convenient composition. In image nr.2 the attention is caught by manipulating the ordinary point of view and combining two images in a new perspective. The main figure (group of young people) are in the centre and framed by a catchphrase,
differently than in images nr.1 and nr.2 where the catchphrases are on one or another side, and occupy a big space. By being framed, centrally positioned, and flipped, the models attract the eye and working together with the catchphrase, create associations of stupidity as helping to see the world in different angle. The third image is the most action-based because it displays movement (the cars are supposedly moving forwards) and it presents a reckless behavior. Again, the models are almost in the centre of the image, and the red color automatically attracts the eye because it is displayed in a dark background. However, I would claim that the main eye-catcher is a kiss because it is an intimate moment and associates with experience that is pleasurable.

Secondly, all the three images contain a slogan and catchphrases, formulations which are short and easy to memorize. Slogans are effective for drawing attention and communicating symbolically. “A slogan’s function is usually mnemotechnical, to burrow its way into the recipient’s consciousness, and to remain in his memory after other elements in the advert have been forgotten” (Andren, Ericsson, Ohlsson, Tännsjo, 1978:89). Usually slogans and catchphrases do not contain a lot of direct information about the product advertised; rather they make clear, witty, funny and catchy statements. The slogan Diesel uses is Be Stupid which is accompanied with catchphrases in every image. The catchphrases serve as eye-catchers and arguments for the main statement. What is more, in the analyzed images the catchphrases are displayed in a bigger font than a slogan which is not necessarily the case in advertisements in general. Thus, when a viewer sees the image he/she notices firstly the reason why it is worth to be stupid (catchphrase), and then a slogan which states to be stupid. What message is created by the catchphrases and how can it influence consumer behavior in relation to buying a product or at least devoting some attention to the advertisements? First of all, stupidity is recreated as a certain value or feature which is related to being different. Stupidity is indirectly given such epithets as courage, creativity, freedom, love and emotion by visually emphasizing a different point of view towards these traits. For instance, in image nr.1 the catchphrase relates stupidity with courage (‘the balls’).

Yet, the visual solution is not what many people would normally consider as brave behavior but it might me considered by some audiences as a new form of courage where courage is related to breaking the limits society puts on, or behaving in a shocking way. Since the campaign is targeted to the young audience, it can be assumed that possibility to differentiate from the ‘grey mass’ is appreciated. “By acting stupid, they will assert their own
singularity amongst their peers, a singularity Diesel has decided to turn into a social value (by committing to it). Therefore, by wearing Diesel clothing, the target will join the self-aware of Stupid’s superiority community and will be likely identified by its members as one of them”\(^{10}\). Furthermore, stupidity may help satisfy other needs of a young target audience, such as “to have fun without being ashamed of having fun; to distinguish themselves from the crowd without becoming too singular: they want to be cool, to be recognized as being cool; to be recognized as creative people”\(^ {11}\).

It is also interesting to observe how the catchphrases indirectly communicate connotations of emotional beyond rational. If I try to deconstruct specific words used in the catchphrases and see the underlying meanings, I can make an assumption that in this particular campaign emotion is used for persuasive purposes. The key words used in the catchphrases of analyzed images are ‘brains, balls, critiques, creates, head, heart’ which go together with either ‘smart’ or ‘stupid’. A word ‘brain’, according to the dictionary, refers to “understanding, intellectual power, intelligence”\(^ {12}\) and thus conveys connotations of rationality and sobriety. The word ‘brain’ and underlying meanings are juxtaposed with the word ‘balls’ which has the meanings of “bravery, daring, courage, toughness, dauntlessness”\(^ {13}\). Therefore, in comparison with ‘brains’, ‘balls’ have more emotional weight and conveys possibly more appealing connotations to younger audiences. What is more, the visual part contributes to emotional context by displaying actions which are related particularly to the second part of catchphrases which connote emotion rather than rationality. For instance, in the third image “Smart listens to the head, stupid listens to the heart” we can also observe a comparison between rational and irrational through a juxtaposition of ‘head’ and ‘heart’, and emphasis on the emotional through a visual representation of a couple engaging in a kiss in unexpected circumstances.

Another attention attracting element used in advertisements is sexuality appeal. In “Rhetoric and Ideology in Advertising” the authors describe sexual content as follows: “nude

\(^{10}\) http://www.ep-webeditors.eu/2010/02/a-case-study-new-diesel-campaign/

\(^{11}\) http://www.ep-webeditors.eu/2010/02/a-case-study-new-diesel-campaign/

\(^{12}\) http://www.thefreedictionary.com/brain

\(^{13}\) http://www.thefreedictionary.com/balls
adults or persons whose sexual characteristics are exposed or emphasized in some way or persons with lascivious facial expressions or provocative poses or texts that are sexually stimulating” (Andren, Ericsson, Ohlsson, Tännö, 1978:88). Yet, sexual content might be created not only by displaying nudity or provocative poses but also by using suggestive images such as sexual referents in order to trigger emotions. I will explore and exemplify this element in the next chapter more thoroughly.

CHAPTER THREE: SEXUALITY APPEAL

In this chapter I will explore the notion of sexual content and make an overview of the main elements in the process of creating explicit and implicit meanings in relation to sexual appeal. I will attempt to demonstrate what elements of sexual content are used in Be Stupid advertisements and what meanings they convey.

What is sexual content?

The aim of advertising is to attract attention and ‘sell’ the image, service or good advertised (Goddard, 1998). Many different modes of persuasion are used in order to attract and hold consumers’ attention. One of the most often used ways of attracting attention and engaging emotions, especially in fashion advertising, is a construction of sexual appeal through sexual content or symbols in the image (Reichert, Lambiasse, 2003). Sexual information is usually related with the overall message of image but sometimes it can also function separately and construct additional messages. For instance, in the analyzed images, the main message conveyed by the catchphrases such as “Smart may have the brains, but stupid has the balls” or “Smart listens to the head, stupid listens to the heart” is that acting stupidly is a positive mode of behavior because it engages you to be brave, creative and interesting for others. Thus, it does not have a sexual content in itself as such. Yet, the images which support these catchphrases consist of certain sexual content, for instance, a young girl showing her breasts in front of the security camera. Thus, in some way the images suggest that being stupid might mean being sexual because when you are stupid you have courage to show some nude parts of your body or have a kiss within dangerous situation
which is supposed to be a stupid but interesting idea. Thereby, in this way the image attains a double-faceted message by implying and representing a certain sexual behavior in relation to the proposition (being stupid is not only being brave, it is also being sexual) (Reichert, Lambiasse, 2006).

Why sexual content?

“Sex sells. It always has, beyond that cliché’s inevitable appearance in media and marketing conversations. Obvious sexual availability serves as both attention-getter and deal-maker, and it is as old as our species” (Reichert, Lambiase, 2006:preface).

Apart from attracting attention, sexual content can appeal to the audiences in other ways as well. Sexuality has imbedded meanings of pleasure, thus seeing a sexual model might produce a pleasurable experience which means that a viewer will look at the advertisement longer. Marketers tend to use sexually attractive content because they are concerned with the popularity of the brand and products, and by implicit or explicit sexual imageries they seek to hold the attention on the ad, construct or evoke feelings about the brand, make the advertisements memorable and thus arise potential intentions to buy a product (Reichert, Lambiase, 2003).

By implicitly or explicitly using sexual content, Diesel so to say promises that a person who buys their production, wears Diesel’s jeans or underwear, will become more sexually attractive for others which means that he or she will likely engage into sexual behavior more often and more pleasurably, and feel more sensual and confident about his/her sexuality. “Advertisers not only use sexual appeals to attract attention to their ads, but to position their brands as sexual, and to suggest that sex-related benefits can accrue to the brand purchasers” (Reichert, Lambiase, 2003:33). Although Diesel has been positioned differently throughout the period of its existence, currently the brand is playing and counting on the advertisements which imply sexual content to a certain degree. This can be illustrated not only by Be Stupid advertisements but also by another campaign from Diesel which is designed to promote specifically denim jeans and is called Sex Sells but we Sell Jeans. The images of this campaign are highly based on sexual imagery displaying various sex poses while wearing the promoted jeans.
**Elements of Sexual Content**

Sexual content comprises several elements which are used to attract attention, persuade and trigger any kind of emotional response of the audience. Sexual information delivered by the support of nudity, physical attractiveness, sexual embeds and sexual referents can be explicit or implicit depending on the way the information is presented. For instance, some advertisements may reveal the nude body of the model laying in a emotionally stimulating pose, others may employ only a subtle detail or symbol which might create a sexual appeal subconsciously.

**Nudity**

In the study of Reichert and Ramirez (2000), people were asked to think of main features that make an advertisement sexually appealing for them. “Without exception, physical aspects of the people in ads—physiques and revealing clothing—were mentioned most often. Common responses referred to chiseled chests, short skirts, tight tops, muscular arms, breasts, bikinis, bare midriffs, and lingerie” (Reichert, Lambiase, 2003:13, 14). Since complete nudity is very rare in mainstream advertising, the term *nudity* is usually used to describe the amount and style of clothes models are wearing. General term *nudity* consists of more detailed stages such as partially suggestive nudity (tight clothes, open blouse etc) and revealing nudity (underwear, bikinis etc) (Reichert, Lambiase, 2003).

Nude or partially nude body is used to first attract attention of the viewer because it is not a case that a viewer sees nude bodies everyday, thus his or her attention will be most
definitely caught by an attractive nude model in an advertisement. Almost all images of *Be Stupid* campaign are designed by involving a partially nude model, usually in a certain contact with another model. For instance, in the image nr.4 a young couple is playing some sort of a game on the bed while being almost nude. In this particular image the centre of attention is a young man who lies in an open position displaying all his body while the girl’s appearance is not so personal because her face is cut out of the image. He is wearing tight *Diesel* underwear whereas the rest part of the body is nude and a viewer is given a chance to explore the physique. In another image, nr.5 in particular, a girl is exposed in a frontal position while engaging into an act which communicates sexual connotations. The girl’s complexion is very attractive since she is thin, has a smooth skin, shiny hair and red lips. In addition to sexually provocative action of taking a picture of her most intimate place of the body, these elements constitute a sexual content which catches viewer’s attention very quickly, engages emotions and might shape a certain attitude towards advertised products or brand (Reichert, Lambiase, 2003). For instance, the two images mentioned above, create associations of crazy, brave, sexual, youthful and reckless brand which might be a reason for young people to use *Diesel’s* production. “Youth starts thinking emotionally and not logically when getting attracted to the product” (app.A, q.17).
**Sexual behavior**

Although the actual sex act is not displayed in mainstream advertisements, many variations of sexually provocative behavior are represented. Models are photographed in positions which might raise allusions of an intimate act. The display of models engaging in a certain sexual contact is a very powerful tool in evoking responses in the viewer (Reichert, Lambiase, 2003). Sexual behavior can be constructed in two ways. One way is related to personal behavior between the two models, and the other mode is interpersonal interaction between a model and a viewer (Reichert, Lambiase, 2003). It means that the attention of an audience might be caught by displaying flirt or more provocative behavior between the two models or engaging a model to communicate interpersonally with a viewer through frontal position, seductive eye-contact, open posture and so on. “In these ways, models can communicate sexual interest with the viewer or simply attempt to elicit sexual arousal” (Reichert, Lambiase, 2003:18)

In the analyzed images of *Be Stupid* both ways of displaying sexual behavior are applied, however the personal contact between the models appears in the ads more frequently than a seductive glance to the viewer. For instance, image nr.6 portrays a young couple sharing a passionate kiss within quite dangerous conditions (while driving separate cars). Image nr.7 makes allusions to a sexual intercourse, although only the legs of a couple are shown. Image nr.4 displays more revealing nudity while portraying a couple in underwear on the bed. Although the image is more playful than seductive, allusions to sexual life are suggested by such iconic signs as bed and two half nude bodies.

**Physical Attractiveness**

Physical attractiveness is linked to certain properties of the model’s body such as hair, face, overall complexion and harmonic relations among different traits (Reichert, Lambiase, 2003). According to specific physical traits, models can be classified into different types, and affect audiences differently. For instance, in one research female models were classified into six different types. “Ashmore, and Longo (1992) differentiated between six types of physical attractiveness: classic beauty, cuteness, sex kitten, sensuality, girl-next-door, and trendy” (Reichert, Lambiase, 2003:23).
Good looking models also serve as metaphors for a brand and form or maintain a certain image of a brand. For instance, if the brand uses ‘classic beauty’ model, it might be implied in the ad that the brand appreciates tradition, is mature and trustworthy, whereas if a model is represented as trendy, playful, colorful and reckless, different meanings are communicated. In the images of Be Stupid I can observe a certain type of a model as well. In short, Diesel brand and clothes are advertised by models who are neither ‘classical beauties’, nor typical ‘sex kittens’ with blond hair and full lips. Rather, they are playful, trendy, a bit wild and not afraid of taking risks. “I think they really reflect the true nature of Diesel-creating/creative youth (…), brave and not afraid to stand out from the crowd (…) as well as adventurous, and not scared to risk or try new things in life” (app.C, q.3). The models and actions that they are engaging into elicit certain curiosity for the viewers (‘I wonder what they will think of in the next image?’) by representing irrational behavior, youthfulness, and thus taking some of the viewers back to their reckless youth, or leading some of the young audiences to identify with the models. “Encouraging viewer’s identification with the people in images may be the most common way in which advertisements exploit their iconic relationship to our real-world visual and psychological experiences” (Messaris, 1997:44).

CHAPTER FOUR: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ANALYSIS

After introducing and discussing my findings on the topic, I attempt to carry out qualitative research in order to confirm or reject my discoveries. I choose to perform qualitative interviews with five representatives of potential target audience and by acquiring additional interpretations on the topic make comparisons, construe new meanings, and thus make more precise conclusions. The analysis of qualitative data is based on deductive approach which means that I analyze collected data and make generalizations in relation to prior knowledge and findings I obtained while analyzing the persuasive characteristics of the images. Grounding on general ideas, or concepts which I applied to the analysis of the images, I form a hypothesis which is tested through the analysis of interviews. The analysis is built on the foundations of hermeneutics which means that I am not attempting to deliver explicit explanations; rather I explore creation and recreation of meanings through a process
of interpretation, “given that the emphasis in qualitative research is on understanding and interpretation as opposed to explanation and verification.”

**Approach to Research**

As I have mentioned above, deductive approach is implemented into the research. Deductive reasoning takes a point of departure from a theory or prior research in order to make one or several hypotheses which are going to be tested by observations and thus confirmed or denied, depending on the conclusions from the data analysis. That is, deductive reasoning works from more general to more specific.

Since the analysis of the persuasive properties and their possible effects was conducted in an interpretive manner, the hypothesis I raise, observations and confirmations I make are of interpretive origin as well. In my research I am interested in the meanings and new interpretations created by the respondents in relation to the idea, design, slogans, catchphrases and other characteristics of the analyzed images of *Be Stupid*. Hence, the hypothesis I erect is related to my prior findings and by testing it I seek at the same time to verify my analysis.


15 http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/dedind.php

16 http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/dedind.php
The research is related to the ‘hermeneutical circle’ of understanding. “Understanding can be viewed as an interpretive oscillation between several layers or perspectives”\(^ {17}\). First of all, understanding can be gained through interpreting separate parts or characteristics of the images, and then relating them to the whole, and/or vice versa. Stemming from this, interview questions are designed to obtain new knowledge about separate parts of the images in relation to the whole, and the whole in relation to separate parts. Thus, respondents construe meanings within the ‘hermeneutical circle’, starting from the whole, going deeper to the details and going back to the whole again. Secondly, “if understanding can be described as a stable oscillation between the parts of a whole and each individual part exhibiting consistency, then the very act of ‘searching for understanding’ would be the actual oscillation or (hermeneutic) cyclic action”\(^ {18}\). Thus, the process of searching for understanding and interpreting which not only the analysis of data, but also analysis of images are based on, relies upon ‘hermeneutic circle’.

**Research Design**

As I have made an analysis of persuasive characteristics of images prior the qualitative research, the hypothesis I formulate is related to my prior findings:

“The analyzed properties of images such as slogan, catchphrases, claims and sexual content are attention grabbers, form new point of view and function persuasively.”

Research is designed according to Kvale’s *seven stages of interview investigation* (Kvale, 1996).

**Thematizing** – the main theme of investigation is persuasive characteristics of the images. The purpose is to find out what latter characteristics respondents notice in the images and how they understand and interpret them, moreover, how (if) mentioned characteristics form their view about the product and brand.

**Designing** – 17 interview questions are designed in order to obtain the intended knowledge which will be used for the comparison between my findings on the subject and respondents’ interpretations. Interview questions are close-ended, as well as open-ended in

\(^ {17}\) http://epress.anu.edu.au/info_systems/mobile_devices/ch06s02.html

\(^ {18}\) http://epress.anu.edu.au/info_systems/mobile_devices/ch06s02.html
order to engage respondents into a process of meaning creation and thus achieve more interpretative material for further discussion. Three printed advertisements which were analyzed in the project are shown to the respondents during the interview.

The respondents are chosen according to their relevance for the potential target audience, thus the age of respondents range up to 25. In total, 5 people are interviewed, 2 males and 3 females in order to obtain the perspective of both sexes.

**Interviewing** – interviews are conducted based on interview guide, the atmosphere of interview situation is informal and relaxing letting the respondent feel comfortable. Interviews take place in different locations which seem most convenient for the interviewee.

**Transcribing** – due to a relatively small scope of investigation and amount of time, transcription takes place on the spot.

**Analyzing, Generalizing and Reporting** – since I attempted to make an analysis of images in relation to hermeneutical understanding (yet, as mentioned in the introduction, I did not attempt to make a *hermeneutical analysis* as such), the interpretation of meaning is of central importance. This path I also apply to the analysis and discussion of data collected. The findings I report in the overall discussion stem from comparison between my own and respondents’ interpretations of the images.

The purpose of discussion of data gathered is to obtain a valid understanding of meanings created in relation to the images and overall subject matter of the project, though I must stress here that it is of interpretive nature. Analysis and interpretation of data take place through a ‘hermeneutical circle’ which means that I decompose data into separate parts and attempt to analyze them in relation to the global meaning, and global meaning in relation to separate parts. “The closer determination of the meaning of the separate parts may eventually change the originally anticipated meaning of the totality, which again influences the meaning of the separate parts, and so on” (Kvale,1996:47).

**Data Reading**

In this section I would like to disclose a general overview of data collected which will help for further discussion and clarify certain patterns emerging in the data.
First impression – all respondents admitted to different extents that analyzed advertisements attract their attention because they are skillfully made, present novel, original statements, the design (colors, perspective etc.) are well chosen and most important the ads have a shock effect which according to one respondent, stems from paradox displayed. Only one respondent (the youngest) noticed the clothes in the advertisements, others claimed that the product has a secondary role in the ads.

Claim – although some of the respondents mentioned afterwards that the word ‘stupid’ has negative connotations to them, they reconstructed the claim in a positive manner. Some of the respondents interpreted the claim in relation to a general notion of stupidity, that is they tried to understand how the advertisements challenge it. Stupidity as portrayed in analyzed images was related to being cool, having fun, being creative, more free and not bound by stereotypes. Yet, one respondent saw the proposition to be stupid as a matter of fashion and noted that it is a very superficial claim. Others interpreted the claim in relation to the image portrayed. They said that, according to the ads, people who wear Diesel production are free from stereotypes, and they use every possibility to have fun and be more relaxed. They are also original, playful and not scared to stand out of the crowd.

Eye-catchers – all respondents indicated the portrayed situations as eye-catchers. To be more specific, the male respondents especially noted that the half nude girl serves as an eye catcher in one of the images because of her nudity. Female respondents were not so specific, they rather indicated uncommon point of view that makes images catchy, for instance, different perspective in image nr. 2 or unusual situation for a kiss in image nr. 3.

Messages – respondents interpreted messages similarly as a claim. In relation to different parts of the images, they perceived them as conveying another approach to the notion of stupidity. They related stupidity to breaking the rules, being creative challenging and sensual. One of interviewee saw messages as having two sides: one, they encouraged smart people be more relaxed, and other they valued rebellious way of life. A paradox, irony and emotion were named as strong features for creating appealing images.

Models – models were identified as attractive, yet the opinion about identification with the models fractured. Some said that models are eye-catching but they would not identify with them because of the philosophy the models communicate, others claimed that models look like people ‘next door’, thus making them trustful.
Catchphrases – all interviewees find catchphrases catchy but not motivating to buy. They note that catchphrases do not have an argument implemented, yet they grab the attention and make receivers think about the verbal side in relation to the visual one. According to some respondents, images and a slogan go well together and make a strong effect, though do not motivate as much as shock or entertain.

Sexual Content – all interviewees indicated presence of sexual content in the images. Though some of them claimed that it does not appeal to them, all of them agreed that sexual content is a powerful mean for attracting and holding attention. Nude body of the girl in image nr. 1 was especially noted for its sexuality. Some interviewees interpreted sexuality in the ads as subtle, youth-like and triggering emotion but not being a core of the ads, others saw this mean of advertising as a cheap way of grabbing youth’s attention.

I asked to evaluate the overall effect of the ads according to these characteristics: attracting attention, holding attention, idea, persuasiveness and overall visual solution within the 5 grade scale, 0 being the lowest and 5 being the highest effect. The average value in a descending order is as follows:

- Attracting attention 4,8
- Holding attention 4,7
- Overall visual solution 4,2
- Idea 3,7
- Persuasiveness 3,2

Comparison and Discussion

The analysis of visual communication of Be Stupid advertisements and the data obtained through qualitative interviews reveal how advertisements communicate ideas, propositions and statements through visual and verbal continuum, and how receivers interpret them in different ways. In the beginning of my analysis of the three advertisements I claim that the goal of advertising is to focus peoples’ attention on the products, make the product, service, idea or brand name memorable and motivate the purchase. According to collected data, the first two goals are reached by Be Stupid advertising campaign. Although strong motivation to buy Diesel products is not created, shocking and paradoxical advertisements have an ability to adhere to memory. Let me compare and discuss what particular characteristics of the ads
had an effect on the researched potential target audience and why they found them attracting attention, memorable and/or persuasive.

First of all, while analyzing the advertisements, I disclosed that they bear iconic relationship between the content and meaning through simulated reality and visual metaphors. Iconicity of the images attracts attention and “draws upon visual stimuli and associated emotions” (Messaris, 1997:34). The respondents’ interpretations confirm that their attention when looking at the images is caught by objects which are out of the ordinary, in other words which are not seen in reality very often and operates in a symbolical level creating some associations. Eye-catchers are said to be “situations portrayed; I think they’re all very gutsy and uncommon, out of the ordinary” (app.E, q.6). For instance, manipulated reality in image nr.2 is said to be attention grabber because it represents a “paradox” (app.A). “Sitting on the wall attracts attention similarly as walking on the ceiling would do. I think paradox is one of the most effective means in advertising for attracting attention because it creates surprise” (app.A, q.3b). The latter image also creates connotations of “being different, creating something new, yet inexperienced, original” because of the “imitation of being upside down” (app.C, q.6).

As mentioned above, one of the respondents identified the situations portrayed in the ads as paradoxical and irrational and he admitted that visual paradox and irony appeal to his emotion (app.A). “I like the shocking effect of rather simple images combined with paradoxical notion/idea” (app.A, q.11). Paradox is one of persuasive methods used in advertising which can raise certain deliberations, although in itself paradox is not argumentative (Andren, Ericsson, Ohlsson, Tännsjö, 1978:90). Although other respondents did not identify uncommon propositions and situations portrayed in the ads as paradox, they definitely noticed that aberrant and eccentric advertisements create some deliberations. “They make me think about the paradigm and the way I perceive these ‘stupid’ people” (app.E, q.14).

Secondly, in my analysis I disclosed that advertisements communicate propositions and arguments in order to motivate a purchase. I found out in the analysis of the three advertisements of Diesel that they do not give arguments as such, rather they appeal by pathos, that is by communicating statements and stories through emotional paradigm and creating a shock. “I can see the emotion in the ads” (app.B, q.5). “It is attention grabbing, as the campaigners are not scared to somehow shock the receivers of the campaign by using
quite a negative word stupid” (app.C, q.3). Emotional appeal is created through illustrating the catchphrases visually and communicating connotations through a comparison of smart and stupid. “The first part of catchphrases portrays stereotype, the second breaks the stereotype” (app.B, q.8). Respondents agreed that the emotional effect is strong, yet the argumentation is weak. I can observe from the interpretations obtained that argumentation is not the main mean of persuasion in the analyzed images because the images are build on astonishment which can lead to either positive, or negative experiences in any case making one think what he/she has just seen. Neither of the respondents had totally negative responses in relation to the three ads, yet I noticed that the use of word ‘stupid’ created ambiguous experiences. “I don’t really like the fact that they chose the word ‘stupid’, in my head it have negative connotations; I translate it more like the opposite of smart instead of reckless (...) which I believe is the meaning they are striving for” (app.E, q.15). Nevertheless, since advertisements have an ironic twist, respondents interpret them in a positive way and claim that they attract and hold their attention. “What is being said in the images is not argumented but probably this is the trick (self irony), to reveal stupidity from ironical point of view” (app.A, q.3).

Although the respondents claimed that the ads are not motivating as such, they identified the images as appealing to them and to young audiences in general for different reasons (irony, shock, paradox, novelty, playfulness, sexual content and so on). “It is very appealing to youth customers as it is modern, playful, contemporary and lively” (app.C, q.3). It is interesting to observe the difference between male and female respondents in relation to the eye-catchers, though in general they all identified the portrayed situations as eye-catchers. Within the male perspective, a half nude body in image nr. 1 was emphasized as a feature that makes the ad catchy and memorable. Meanwhile, the female respondents’ attention was more attracted by manipulated reality and subtle and romantic expression of feelings. Manipulated reality is considered as being “very original and weird” (app.E, q.12), whereas a kiss in one of the images is identified as reminding an episode from a romantic movie. Nevertheless, one female respondent also indicated a half nude girl as the most eye-catching because “it is shocking, different and most youth appealing” (app.C, q.12). This tendency relates to my exploration on sexuality content as being one of the effective means for catching attention, creating associations and emotional appeal. Although the respondents admit that nudity, sexual models, romantic and passionate situations are an
effective way of attracting youth’s attention in this campaign because “through clothes young people emphasize their attractiveness and sexuality” (app.E, q.16), some of them see this advertising strategy as cheap and “in that case stupidity goes very well – youth starts thinking emotionally and not logically when getting attracted to the product” (app.A, q.17). For most of the respondents catchphrases and visuals communicated connotations of stupidity as being given the qualities of creativity and rebelliousness, or “being cool”, and stemming from this, sexual content was interpreted negatively as it “seems that Diesel wants us to think that if you want to be cool you have to show what God gave you” (app.D, q.16).

CONCLUSION

In the project I have given a discussion about the ways in which visual persuasion operate within advertisements. I analyzed the persuasive characteristics of the three chosen images of Diesel advertising campaign Be Stupid and the ways intended and received meanings are interpreted. Within my analysis and interpretation I used a concept of visual rhetoric frequently which I would like to summarize here. Visual rhetoric was used as a method to investigate the effect of pictorial and linguistic devices of advertisements that bear an intention of catching attention, motivating the purchase, creating certain deliberations in recipient’s mind which might affect the choice. The concept of rhetoric was used relatively extensively and I attempted to define the rhetorical intentions of advertising through the perspective of two kinds of ‘rhetoric’: argumentation and persuasion. The difference between the two kinds is that argumentation communicates tenable propositions, whereas persuasion is more manipulative and does not necessarily give strong arguments meaning that it does not appeal to rationality so much (Andren, Ericsson, Ohlsson, Tännsjö, 1978). I noticed through my analysis of the images and qualitative research that in Be Stupid namely persuasion is used not argumentation. In the claims and propositions of Be Stupid there were no validity, rather efficiency by which I mean that the advertisements attracted attention and were likely to influence the purchase but they did not prove that we ought to buy Diesel production. Hence, I can conclude here that rhetoric of the image in the case of Be Stupid advertisements had a strong distinction between argumentation and persuasion, that is rational and non-rational influence.
messages and characteristics were not subjected to recipient’s rational criticism, rather they appealed emotionally through irony, paradox, shock value and sexuality.

In my research question I used a concept ‘visual narrative’ by which I meant the overall story of the images. I attempted to explore which devices were used in the creation of visual narrative and how persuasive characteristics were implied in the process of meaning creation and communication. I found out that the analyzed images have a story line not only from textual perspective but also from the visual one, and that through visual-verbal continuum the persuasive effect is created more efficiently. I set out to explore such characteristics as catchphrases, eye-catchers, claims, sexual content and overall design of the images assuming that they make the advertisements more catchy and effective. I found out that the presence and the level of intensity of these elements carried an effect, and as the qualitative research showed, the advertisements of Be Stupid were identified as attracting attention and creating deliberations about what was being said in/with the images. Yet, in the data collected there was no indication that the advertisements had argument or created motivation to buy immediately.

Apart from devoting the bigger part of the project for the analysis of the three images in relation to visual persuasion, I also attempted to explore more on sexual content. I identified several characteristics of sexual content such as nudity, physical attractiveness and sexual behavior, and attempted to illustrate and briefly explore them in relation to Be Stupid advertisements. I found out through the qualitative research analysis that the presence of sexual content in the images had a strong eye-catching effect. It raised curiosity and pleasurable associations in some of the respondents’ minds and stemming from this they identified sexual content as an effective persuasive characteristic in advertising.

The qualitative research analyzes was done in accordance with deductive reasoning which means that I used my findings and prior knowledge to make interview questions and form hypothesis. The findings of qualitative data analyzes corresponded with my prior explorations on the subject, to be more precise, the respondents interpreted the images and identified the properties and messages that make images catchy in a similar manner as I did, thus confirming my findings. Nevertheless, some new insights were created through the analyses of data. First of all, a paradox was named as one of the most effective mean of attracting attention in advertising, secondly I observed the important difference in the interpretations of male and female respondents in relation to sexual content letting me
assume that the target audience of male representatives was more sensitive to sexuality and prone to be influenced by sexual content.

**FURTHER THOUGHTS**

First of all, I see the element of sexual content as worth of more in depth analysis in relation to Diesel advertisements. Through the course of searching for information on my subject, I came across other advertising campaigns of Diesel and I noticed that sex is highly implemented in promoting the brand and their products. As a hint for further exploration on sexuality appeal I could give their latest advertising campaign of *Sex Sells, Unfortunately We Sell Jeans*. Secondly, since the element of ironical paradox and controversy is also present in the ads of Diesel, it would be interesting to explore more on that in relation to other brands who also employ this element for attracting attention, and perhaps make a comparison of how different brands use paradox as a way of attracting attention and creating motivation.
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Šio projekto pagrindinė užduotis yra ištirti, kokios priemonės reklamoje yra naudojamos patraukti tikslinės grupės dėmesiui ir motyvuoti būtent reklamuojamo produkto, paslaugos arba idėjos pasirinkimą. Kiekvieną dieną žmonės susiduria su begale reklamu, nuo televizijos, žurnalų puslapių iki interneto bei lauko reklamų. Todėl reklama turi būti išsiskirianti, kad sugebėtų patraukti dėmesį tarp gausybės kitų reklamų. Šiame projekte aš nagrinėju manipuliacines, arba galimai įtikinančias priemones, rastas Be Stupid (būk kvailas, aut.past.) reklaminėje kampanijoje. Mane domina vizualioji reklaminio plakatų dalis, tačiau tai yra neatsiejama nuo verbalinės dalies taip pat. Taigi, aš analizuoju, kokios žinutės yra komunikuojamos ir kokiomis priemonėmis (kas ir kaip). Nuodugniai analizei pasirinkau tris reklaminius plakatus, kuriuosose krepšiu dėmesį į tai, kaip formuojamas teiginys, interpretuoju šukį bei pagalbines frazes, analizuoju, kaip vizualioji dalis atitinka šukį, tyrinėju, kokie modeliai naudojami perteikti idėjai, kaip reklamos yra sukurtos iš dizaino perspektyvos, kas labiausiai traukia akį ir kodėl bei kam ir kaip yra panaudotas seksualinis turinys. Analizės metu remiuosi vizualinės retorikos bei semiotikos teorijomis. Kadangi analizė yra interpretacine pobūdžio, kaip pagrindas yra hermeneutika, tačiau analizė nėra atliekama pagal hermeneutikos kanonus. Dėl to, kad patikrinčiau savo analizės rezultatus bei turėčiau su kuo jūs palyginti, atlikau kokybįny turimą. Šeši potencialūs tikslinės grupės atstovai (trys merginos bei trys vaikinai) buvo apklausti interviu metodu, gauta medžiaga išanalizuota bei panaudota palyginimui bei nuodugnioms išvados padaryti.
Appendix A: male, age 25

1) How much are you familiar with ‘Diesel’ brand? I’m not familiar
2) Are you familiar with the newest ‘Be Stupid’ campaign? No, I’m not familiar
3) What is your first general impression of the three ads? Do they attract attention/appeal to emotion etc? What elements do you find appealing? Challenging paradox and irrational supposition that what is stupid is valuable, and what is smart is worthless. The visuals attract attention because of the paradox. I think the images are really professionally made. However, what is being said in the images, I think it is not argumented but probably this is the trick (self-irony), to reveal stupidity from ironical point of view. Overall paradox and irony appeal to my emotion but not the visuals directly.

a) What is paradoxical in each image? (additional question) The paradox in the flipped image is that gravity is rejected. But by doing so they do not create anything valuable, although it is stated that stupid creates, and they suppose that a different angle is very creative. I mean the picture is creative, but the people in the picture are not. But as I mentioned the image itself is effective and artistic, yet the message inside the image plainly shows that what is silly is silly. In the nude breast image, perhaps there is less paradox, it is more related to rejecting morality and displaying yourself in public. It’s an apparent emphasizing of courage.

b) Why is paradox effective? (additional question) Because it grabs attention. Sitting on the wall attracts attention similarly as walking on the ceiling would do. I think paradox is one of the most effective means in advertising for attracting attention because it creates surprise. For instance, you see an image with a cow in the field, it does not surprise you because it is a usual view. But if you see a violet cow in the Alps with a note ‘Milka’, then it is grabbing attention and making you think because it’s a paradox.

c) How would you define paradox then? Breaking the rules, stereotypes, juxtaposing reality and fantasy.

4) What are the advertisers trying to get you to believe? How would you reconstruct the claim? To make me believe that being stupid is more than ok, that it’s fashion, or otherwise
that being stupid is laughable (irony) and therefore you would admit their product to be the object of irony. It is not clear what their point is actually, because one has to determine whether it is said with irony or not.

5) Do the ads appeal to your needs such as sexuality, youthfulness, originality and so on?
No, I have other needs.

6) What could you define as eye catchers in the images? As a rule- human’s body. Professional visual expression and idea. In the nude breast image the nude breast attracts attention, in the flipped image-manipulated situation, bunch of people who are not in a realistic position. The third image attracts attention because of the kiss and its situation.

7) What are the associations ads creates about the product/brand? That their product will help you to be creative, brave and fashionably stupid.

8) Please identify the messages. The message is strong because of the paradox. It communicates that there is another approach or truth about stupidity, but because of its playful expression I admit it ironical. Another message of course is the fashion of product in the way of being more creative and challenging.

9) Do you find the models attractive/catching your eye/similar to you? Yes, attractive and catching my eye but I wouldn’t identify with them because of the philosophy they are living up to.

10) How could you name the purpose of the ad? Shock, persuade, entertain, other? Shock and entertain, it does not persuade me.

11) What characteristics of the ads you like/dislike? why? I like the shocking effect of rather simple images combined with paradoxical notion/idea and the artistic expression of combining text and image. I dislike, however, the cheap effects of sexuality and specially stupidity as the matter of creation and appealing to the youth, that seems to be a bit immoral.

12) Which of the three ads you find most eye-catching? Why? The one with the nude breast because it’s pleasant to see, and the one with manipulated situation because it is different.

13) Do you find the ads memorable? Yes because they are novel and different, situations portrayed are interesting.

14) Do the ads motivate your purchase/move you/make you think about what you saw?
Yes they do make me think of what I saw because of the strong expression, but they do not motivate me personally to purchase because I do not want to be stupid.
15) What do you think about the catchphrases and slogan? Do you find them catchy and persuasive? I find them to be catchy but really not persuasive. They attract my attention because of the paradox - being stupid is better than being smart. That do not persuade me even with the given images. However, they relate to the visuals very well in the terms of art, but not in the terms of logical reasoning. Images and slogans go well together in making strong effect on me, but do not make change my mind, rather I see the message as an irony.

16) Do you think advertisements have a sexual content? If yes, please identify several elements of it. How does it affect you? Yes, a kiss, partly nude body, sexual models...It does not affect me a lot but it grabs my attention and makes me take a longer look at the ads.

17) Do you think that sexual content is an effective mean in these images? Why? In some of them-yes. It is hard to dismiss the sexuality dimension especially in the naked woman image. In my opinion, that is a cheap way of attracting youth and in that case stupidity goes very well-youth starts thinking emotionally and not logically when getting attracted to the product.

Please give grades to these characteristics, 5 being the highest, 0 being the lowest
Attracting attention: 5; Persuasiveness: 0; Holding attention: 5; Idea: 4; Visual solution: 5

Appendix B: male, age 24

1) How much are you familiar with ‘Diesel’ brand? I’ve seen the ads through music channels and I used to wear Diesel production some time ago.

2) Are you familiar with the newest ‘Be Stupid’ campaign? No

3) What is your first general impression of the three ads? Do they attract attention/appeal to emotion etc? What elements do you find appealing? In all the three images behavior of models is crazy and reckless. I think that this kind of behavior seems strange for some people, others would not dare to behave ‘out of box’. My personal opinion is that portraying a different and perhaps awkward behavior is a good trick, and it grabs attention and show that the brand is exceptional and not afraid to be different. The ads definitely attract attention, and I think that models, situation and comparison between smart and stupid attracts attention.

4) What are the advertisers trying to get you to believe? How would you reconstruct the claim?
I suppose they claim that people who choose to wear Diesel show that they are different in a good way. They are young, crazy, and they take everything what they can from life. The ads make me believe that some things should be reconsidered and that people should not be conservative and put stereotypes.

5) Do the ads appeal to your needs such as sexuality, youthfulness, originality and so on? Yes because I can see the emotion in the ads, and the idea is intriguing. I think youth and sexuality is revealed in the ads, that is why those who want to be young and sexual are appealed, I am one of them.

6) What could you define as eye catchers in the images? The centre of the ads which usually frames the situation (kiss, display of nude body, young people on the pavement); models and catchphrases in a big font which attract attention a lot.

7) What are the associations the ads create about the product/brand? I think they tell that Diesel is a choice for those who are young and/or want to be. From these ads my image of the brand is that Diesel is not afraid of breaking stereotypes and they do that successfully.

8) Please identify the messages It is said and showed that being stupid is not being dumb, it is being creative. The first part of catchphrases portrays stereotype, the second breaks the stereotype. The visual solution confirms the second part of catchphrases and I think that the visuals make the idea of stupidity as creativity more credible. Visuals appeal by emotion, not by argument.

9) Do you find the models attractive/catching your eye/similar to you? I could not memorize the appearance of models but their behavior stuck in my mind. The models are more or less similar to me because I like to behave ‘out of box’ as well. I could identify with them.

10) How could you name the purpose of the ad? Shock, persuade, entertain, other. The purpose is to create a new, different and shocking images which help to sell better.

11) What characteristics of the ads you like/dislike? why? I personally like the half naked girl because she attracts attention and is beautiful.

12) Which of the three ads you find most eye-catching? Why? The girl with ‘the balls’. This picture illustrates the catchphrase very accurately, and the nudity catches attention.

13) Do you find the ads memorable? I memorized the ad with the half naked girl, others are not so memorable for me. I think it is because I’m a guy, and woman’s body is more eye-catching than for instance a bunch of young people on the pavement.
14) Do the ads motivate your purchase/move you/makes you think about what you saw?
I do not pay much attention to clothes, so the ads do not motivate me but they attract attention definitely, and from a bunch of other ads, my eye would probably be caught by these ones.

15) What do you think about the catchphrases and slogan? Do you find them catchy and persuasive? They are catchy but not very persuasive because they lack argument. But they really make you think about what was told to you, and this is good because the more you think about the brand the bigger possibility is that you might visit the store. I find the catchphrase and the visual part of the girl with a nude breast most eye-catching.

16) Do you think advertisements have a sexual content? If yes, please identify several elements of it. How does it affect you? Yes, half nude girl, kissing couple. It attracts my attention.

17) Do you think that sexual content is an effective mean in these images? Yes, because it serves as an eye catcher and might trigger some emotion. For me it is pleasant to see a kiss or subtly nude body parts.

Please give grades to these characteristics, 5 being the highest, 0 being the lowest.
Attracting attention 5; Persuasiveness 3; Holding attention 5; Idea 3; Visual solution 5

Appendix C: female, age 23

1) How much are you familiar with ‘Diesel’ brand? Very familiar. Seen ads, purchased goods
2) Are you familiar with the newest ‘Be Stupid’ campaign? Yes. Seen it on the windows of the stores, in media
3) What is your first general impression of the three ads? Do they attract attention/appeal to emotion etc? What elements do you find appealing? My impression is very good because of many reasons. Firstly, it is attention grabbing, as the campaigners are not scared to somehow shock the receivers of the campaign by using quite a negative word ‘Stupid’. In such a way it is not like all other campaigns. Secondly, it is very appealing to youth customers as it is modern, playful, contemporary and lively. And thirdly, it is different from other campaigns. And finally, I think they really reflect the true nature of ‘Diesel’- creating/creative youth (‘smart critiques, stupid creates’) brave and not afraid to stand out
from the crowd (‘Got the balls’) as well as adventurous, and not scared to risk or try new things in life (‘Smart listens to the head, but stupid listens to the heart’).

4) What are the advertisers trying to get you to believe? How would you reconstruct the claim? That the ones, who purchase and wear ‘Diesel’ are those adventurous, playful, contemporary and modern youth not scared to stand out from the crowd, to experiment and try new things in live, those creative and ‘alive’ young people. If you want to be like those, you have to purchase ‘Diesel’ products.

5) Do the ads appeal to your needs such as sexuality, youthfulness, originality and so on? It really appeals to all the needs of mine and other young people, likewise being original, lively, playful, standing out, different, etc.

6) What could you define as eye catchers in the images? Flipped photo- imitation of being upside down (being different, creating something new, yet inexperienced, original). Photo with a kiss- a couple kissing in the rain (doing what one feel like doing) Photo with a nude breast- a young girl half naked in front of the camera. (Playful and lively) Eye-catchers- red letters, red signs in the advertisements.

7) What are the associations the ads create about the product/brand? That the brand is not afraid to experiment and be different.

8) Please identify the messages. Be original, different, create something different, do, stand out from the crowd, listen to your heart, senses, risk.

9) Do you find the models attractive/catching your eye/similar to you? Yes, they look modern, contemporary, attractive, fashionable, and comfortable in their own ‘skin’.

10) How could you name the purpose of the ad? Shock, persuade, entertain, other. Persuade and appeal to youth by creating unconventional images.

11) What characteristics of the ads you like/dislike? why? Like that they are appealing to youth and that they really reflect the ideology of ‘Diesel’. Dislike- maybe better use a word ‘crazy’ instead of ‘Stupid’. Maybe people in the ad could be dressed more standing out than that casual as far as the ones not familiar with ‘Diesel’ would not understand what they are advertising, clothing or perfume or sport shoes, or... etc.

12) Which of the three ads you find most eye-catching? Why? Most eye catching- the half naked girl, as it is shocking, different and most youth appealing.

13) Do you find the ads memorable? Yes, because they are funky and innovative.
14) Do the ads motivate your purchase/move you/makes you think about what you saw? Yes, they really do because as I said they are fresh and innovative, presents a strange claim.

15) What do you think about the catchphrases and slogan? Do you find them catchy and persuasive? Catchy and persuasive, but the word ‘Stupid’ still has a bit negative connotation to me.

16) Do you think advertisements have a sexual content? If yes, please identify several elements of it. How does it affect you? The half naked girl, of course. A couple kissing in the rain. Reminds a bit of the scene from a love movie. It does not have a negative effect on me; rather I find it really youth-like.

17) Do you think that sexual content is an effective mean in these images? Yes because it works very well with grabbing attention.

Please give grades to these characteristics, 5 being the highest, 0 being the lowest. Attracting attention 4; Persuasiveness 5; Holding attention 4; Idea 4; Visual solution 3.

Appendix D: female, age 22

1) How much are you familiar with ‘Diesel’ brand? I know Diesel brand quite well but only regarding the product they sell- jeans and casual clothes.

2) Are you familiar with the newest ‘Be Stupid’ campaign? Not long time ago I saw this campaign in the front window of the Diesel shop and also in a several fashion magazines. It is their first campaign I’ve noticed.

3) What is your first general impression of the three ads? Do they attract attention/appeal to emotion etc? What elements do you find appealing? They are attractive because photographs are really made by professional people. Nice colours in them; also they have sexual perspective what is always intriguing. I just think that my attention goes more on pictures than on clothes. Actually I wouldn’t say it is clothes brand, I mean from these ads not in general.

4) What are the advertisers trying to get you to believe? How would you reconstruct the claim? Maybe that if you put Diesel clothes on, you become crazy and creative? Even if they are not very fashionable, the most important thing is how you feel dressed. Diesel is trying
to make their clothes as comfortable as possible so wearing them you feel too comfortable to be serious and brainy. Diesel clothes let you be stupid and crazy.

5) Do the ads appeal to your needs such as sexuality, youthfulness, originality and so on? Yes because they represents these needs.

6) What could you define as eye catchers in the images? Catchphrases and situations.

7) What are the associations the ads create about the product/brand? That clothes are practical/ comfortable/ casual. They are suitable for especially young and creative/ crazy people who love to make art and to communicate. They love to have fun.

8) Please identify the messages. I don’t think I know what Diesel means by saying ‘stupid’. I think they should change that word into crazy. Because stupid I understand as mentally- ill person or one who is unconsciously dumb, but not the one who is cool, and crazy and creative and so on.

9) Do you find the models attractive/catching your eye/similar to you? I think Diesel wanted to choose models who would be as our ‘friends’ The same as we are. Not sort of unreal, skinny models. I think it is their communication plan. It helps to sell the product. Because the idea is that these young people, as ‘our friends’ recommend to buy this and that because they like it. And it makes me trust them because they are ‘real’, they are the same as me.

10) How could you name the purpose of the ad? Shock, persuade, entertain, other. Diesel wanted to be different. They wanted to be distinguished.

11) What characteristics of the ads you like/dislike? Why? I like that people are very real in the pictures but I don’t like that they are kind of condemning smart people. I think that smart people can also be cool. And mostly they are.

12) Which of the three ads you find most eye-catching? Why? The one with a boy and a girl kissing. The pic is really cool and the catchphrase fits very well. When you’re in love you don’t use your brains at all, what you have to do is only to listen to your heart. That is what those guys are doing in the pic.

13) Do you find the ads memorable? Yes, of course. They are different.

14) Do the ads motivate your purchase/move you/makes you think about what you saw? Not all of them. The one with couple kissing is really fitted. But other two seems a bit like out of blue. Picture says one thing, and the catchphrase- another. Especially the one with two boys and a girl.
15) What do you think about the catchphrases and slogan? Do you find them catchy and persuasive? Sure. They are really cool and young people will definitely like them.

16) Do you think advertisements have a sexual content? If yes, please identify several elements of it. How does it affect you? Yes they have. Seems that Diesel wants us to think that if you want to be cool you have to show ‘what God gave you.’ If you are not afraid of nudity you are cool. This is a bit silly for me.

17) Do you think that sexual content is an effective mean in these images? Yes, I think so. Because sexuality and nudity are in the top for young people.

Please give grades to these characteristics, 5 being the highest, 0 being the lowest.
Attracting attention 5; Persuasiveness 4; Holding attention 5; Idea 4; Visual solution 5.

Appendix E: female, age 24

1) How much are you familiar with ‘Diesel’ brand? Pretty familiar - I’ve seen their shops and have owned some products. I didn’t pay too much attention to their ads before.

2) Are you familiar with the newest ‘Be Stupid’ campaign? To some extent, I’ve seen a shop window.

3) What is your first general impression of the three ads? Do they attract attention/appeal to emotion etc? What elements do you find appealing? The ads attract my attention - the pictures are eye-catching, novel, original, and in my opinion go with the statements/claims; if I see somebody flashing at anything/anybody I do think “Man! he/she has some balls!” and love is said to be stupid most of the times.

4) What are the advertisers trying to get you to believe? How would you reconstruct the claim? I think they try to convey the message that being “stupid” is cool; “stupid” people have more fun, they live outside the rules, think outside the box and are generally more free than the smart people which are bound by their rationality. They could have tried “Be foolish!”, “Be crazy!” or even better “Be a rebel!”

5) Do the ads appeal to your needs such as sexuality, youthfulness, originality and so on. Not really, but it’s probably because of my personality - I’m one of the smart ones.

6) What could you define as eye catchers in the images? The situations portrayed; I think they’re all very gutsy and uncommon. Out of the ordinary.
7) What are the associations the ad creates about the product/brand? That it’s a cool brand, original, out of the ordinary and different/special. It brings a new twist.

8) Please identify the messages The messages say that “stupid” people are creative, passionate and gutsy. I think it took the qualities which are considered to make a person “cool”. In my opinion being cool nowadays means that you are somewhat of a daredevil, a bit of an outcast from the conformism, a rebel. This kind of people usually like to shock other people, by doing something outrageous and are usually told not to be stupid. The message, in my opinion has two roles: it encourages “smart” people to “loosen up” and “live a little” while it validates the rebellious life style of “stupid” people. It does this by offering another view on the topic of “being stupid”, showing it’s positive aspects.

9) Do you find the models attractive/catching your eye/similar to you? Not really, but it is a matter of taste.

10) How could you name the purpose of the ad? Shock, persuade, entertain, other. The main would be revelation- because it makes you see things differently, surpassing your prejudices. They are also entertaining and encouraging.

11) What characteristics of the ads you like/dislike? Why? I like the images they used- they’re different from what you usually see in this kind of ads and I find that refreshing. I dislike the slogan because of the choice of words; nonetheless I believe it does the trick for the campaign.

12) Which of the three ads you find most eye-catching? Why? Picture with a group of young people laying on the street, because I consider it to be very original and weird. I’m attracted to that sort of thing.

13) Do you find the ads memorable? To some extent; the pictures that impress me the most are those of social issues (eg. The united colors of benneton ads) I find the statements more memorable than the images.

14) Do the ads motivate your purchase/move you/makes you think about what you saw? They do not motivate me to purchase, but they do motivate me to go in and take a closer look. They make me think about the paradigm and the way I perceive these “stupid” people.

15) What do you think about the catchphrases and slogan? Do you find them catchy and persuasive? I don’t really like the fact that they chose the word “stupid”. In my head it has a negative connotation; I translate it more like the opposite of smart instead of reckless, irrational,
risky, free-spirited- which I believe is the meaning they are striving for. The catchphrases are pretty smart, in spite of the slogan. They give the whole message an unexpected/original, positive twist, which makes the whole thing more catchy.

16) Do you think advertisements have a sexual content? If yes, please identify several elements of it. How does it affect you? I do think they have a sexual content; it’s a brand of clothes for young people- through clothes they emphasis their attractiveness and sexuality. But in this case, compared to other brands of the sort, it’s more subtle. I could almost call it a hinted sexuality: the woman between two guy, a good one and a “bad” one, can make you think about a love triangle; the kiss makes you think of passion, adrenaline, love, plus the wet clothes. One picture contains a half naked girl, so that one is quite blunt, but the setting makes it the nudity asexual.

17) Do you think that sexual content is an effective mean in these images? I don’t think it’s supposed to be the main thing in the adds, and because it is co convoluted it adds that “something special” to them.

Please give grades to these characteristics, 5 being the highest, 0 being the lowest. Attracting attention 5; Persuasiveness 3; Holding attention 4; Idea 4; Visual solution 3