




# Masculinity in advertising: The power of verbal cue

## ABSTRACT

*The portrayal of men in print advertisements has been less attentive subject in comparison to woman depiction analysis, even though research on gender advertising has increased over the last decades. This paper examines the effectiveness of print advertisements in which the visual ad register was developed at the level of the "iconogram" of a muscular mesomorph. Comparing the findings of numerous studies which indicate less affective response towards the images of nudity of the same gender, a hypothesis was proposed: the effectiveness mediator of advertisements is the verbal cue of the advertisement when a universal quantifier of muscular mesomorph is being used. In the first study, we conducted the content analysis to target the most frequent representation of a man in advertisements for health and beauty products. The second study was designed to test the proposed hypothesis using photographs from International Affective Picture System database. The stimuli were in a form of advertisements designed for the purpose of research combining IAPS images and the verbal cue. The experiment included 100 male students aged 20 to 31. Overall, our findings confirm negative response to male pictures (ads without verbal cue) when the figure is not fully dressed. However, we discover that visual register significantly affects the increase self-reported positive valence ratings, in health and beauty ads for men when they are depicted as iconogram of muscular mesomorph. This study contributes to our understanding of how male consumers respond to same-sex imagery in print advertisements when there is not fully dressed muscular mesomorph depicted.*

## KEY WORDS

Advertising message, emotional response, muscular mesomorph, verbal register

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## Introduction

According to the cultural theory, the images we are saturated with daily through the means of television, billboards, video games and movies, define us in many ways. The matter is that we do not just choose what we like or dislike but live under the influence of these images that shape our tastes, attitudes, and decisions. Therefore, the progression of male and female beauty ideals and stereotypes considerably results from propaganda messages. Research on gender in advertising has increased during

last decades where most of the gender research focuses on gender roles. Specific interest has been given to role portrayal of women in advertisements, but also to the depiction of men and women together (Goffman 1979; Klassen, Jasper & Schwartz, 1993). Less attention has been given to the portrayal of men. However, definitions of the ideal men and prospects of modern masculinity are more than present in the literature. Stern (2003) outlines how the ideals of masculinity are portrayed over time and proposes a definition of the ideal male body type – muscular mesomorph. According to this descrip-

tion the iconogram of ideal man encodes an average, but well-proportioned build man, satisfied with his body when it depicts the ideal of power and gracefulness. Advertisers mostly rely on these descriptions and social norms when promoting health and beauty products. When reviewing beauty products, women mostly rely on each other's opinion, whereas men rely on advertisements (Nair & Pillai, 2007). However, it can be disputed whether this type of visual codification is the appropriate choice of the advertisers when we take into account the findings of numerous studies (Belch et al., 1982; Lang, Bradley & Cuthbert, 2008; Sciglimpaglia, Belch & Gain, 1979; Simpson, Horton & Brown, 1996) presenting male responses to be more favourable to female nudity and sexual behaviour, and less favourable to nudity of a man and vice versa. Although men's perception to men's beauty and body care has changed drastically in last decades, we can assume that heterosexual men are burdened with the notion of their own sexual orientation when asked to respond emotionally to male nudity. Accordingly, we consider the analysis of print ads for men's beauty products to be of great significance.

## Theories of masculinity and representation of the ideal man

New proposals for definitions of masculinity, according to Seidler as cited by Stern (2003), led to crises of the contemporary meaning of the term which, at the same time, meant termination of monistic concept of masculinity and femininity. We can no longer find one single apprehension of the masculinity, yet there are a great number of various definitions of the term. After the studies of male sexuality have reached considerable amount of success, the male image had changed, leading to redefinition of "What does it mean to be a man?" which could no longer be described as "the social norm" (Stern, 2003). Many will readily accept the notion that modern masculinity is pluralistic and dependent on feminist discourse (Clatterbaugh 2018; Seidler, 1997; Stern, 2003). However, the definition of masculinity is not restricted to that which, is opposed to femininity but also spans to the opposite notion to male countertypes. Until now, considered a symbol of intellectual and moral value, the male ideal of beauty has been signified by numerous stereotypes (superheroes and the emotional macho) with the characteristics of superiority, harmony, well considered movement and temperance in contrast to countertypes whose physical unattractiveness is equated with their inner deformity (Stern, 2003). In the historic context, developed aesthetic criterion of the ideal male differed from unopened outsider whose physical deformity was considered an external expression of inner illness and moral defect (Mosse, 1998). Stern further explains that a new sort

of man emerged in the middle of the 20th century, the so-called third gender, with his disharmony of the body due to the long hair, skinny appearance, and lack of physique he represented an opposition to the tidiness and symmetry of the established masculinity norm. This led to a belief that the male ideal was defined by behavior and appearance that was not only different from that of a woman, but from all other countertypes.

As the definition of masculinity changed, also the concept of beauty changed, understandably since the concept of beauty is regarded as relative term dependent on specific social group categorizations. Interestingly, beauty was always considered a property of women and in this way determined through the perception and the desire of a man. Perfecting physical beauty through the application of different products mostly connotes feminine activity. As of recent it has become preoccupation of men as well. It is assumed that the number of men using cosmetic products increases from day to day. Iida (2005) argues that the shift in male perception of masculine beauty is often described as the "feminization of masculinity" which is a logical consequence of the "feminization of society" in the modern age where human bodies have been transformed into visible, representative objects. She proposes that this trend among young people in Japan stems from a desire to get closer to girls since this way their gender identity becomes ambiguous and provisory. In conclusion modern magazines, beauty industries and media within the pop-culture cooperate mutually to create a very sensitive aesthetic awareness in the young male.

## Images of the ideal man in advertising

A manly man, according to cultural heritage criteria, should be powerful, strong, efficient, and destructive when needed. The ideal manly body type is "muscular mesomorph", a man with average, yet proportional figure, unlike ectomorph who is thin, or endomorph who is oblique (Mishkind et al., 1986). Stern (2003) describes the features of the ideal man which are by triangular aesthetic – well-built chest, defined arm muscles, and wide shoulders that narrow around the waist. Furthermore, there are features of a physical condition such as high level of energy, flat stomach, stamina, and height/weight in proportion. The attractiveness of the face is very important as well. Therefore, ideal man must have clean skin, healthy hair, sculpted nose, and inconspicuous ears. Altogether, the ideal man is satisfied with his body when it reflects the ideal of power, grace, and potency.

The men are very much aware of their real appearance and the ideal one, so they feel unsatisfied if the two do not match. Considering that men work hard

to lose extensive weight and signs of aging, to ideally shape their body, numerous products can be found in the market for bridging the gap between the real and the ideal body. Stressing the importance of dieting and fitness work out led to the popularization of health clubs, low-fat products, and personal trainers. In 1990s aesthetic surgery has been accepted as transformation means from the real to the ideal state.

Advertising has a great influence on how men and women see themselves in terms of the beauty ideal. Therefore, emission of messages and images of the ideal male body are set in the context related to a need for controlling and improving one's body. In such circumstances, a lot of men are dissatisfied with the way they look (Mishkind et al., 1986) and this situation is recognized as "gold mine for consumerism" (Bordo, 1999). Regardless of the findings from numerous studies which confirm that there is negative affective response towards the same-sex imagery (Belch et al., 1982; Lang, Bradley & Cuthbert, 2008; Sciglimpaglia, Belch & Gain, 1979; Simpson, Horton & Brown, 1996) the "iconogram" of muscular mesomorph is still used intensively in ads for men's health and beauty products. In this light, our intention was to examine if this iconography of ideal man imposed by advertisers is received by male consumers in a positive light.

## Research question

The purpose of this research was to determine in what way advertisements coded with iconogram of muscular mesomorph for men's health and beauty products influence positive valence in the subject's emotional response. According to research findings on consumer response in advertisements the emotional response is the mediator of the attitude toward the brand (Holbrook and Batra, 1987) as well as a powerful predictor of intention (Morris et al., 2002). The question arises whether this type of visual codification is a smart choice from the advertisers' part, considering that men emotionally react more positive to female nudity images and sexual behavior and less positive to male nudity images. Although male perception of men's beauty and health care has changed drastically over the past decades, we can assume that heterosexual men are obsessed with their own sexual orientation when asked to rate their emotions toward male nudity (Etcoff, 2011). A study by Mishkind et al. (1986) shows that male participants are more and more concerned about their physical appearance and the ways to improve it.

According to Eco's (1973) explanation of the levels of the visual register, we can discuss one particular visual figure at the tropological level found to be favorite among advertisers. When describing antonomasy, Eco regards that everything preceding a logical sign, which is called

the universal quantifier, points to the symbol "x" that is interpreted as "all x". This mechanism, relevant in advertising communication, is based on psychological processes of identification where an individual message is interpreted as a universal one. Accordingly, the iconogram of a muscular mesomorph displayed in advertisements is a representative of all males. It imposes a norm that every man must achieve in order to, as the normative definition of masculinity explains (Connell, 2005), identify himself with the ideal imagery that represents the social norm. In addition, Lang, Bradley & Cuthbert (2008) have developed IAPS database providing ratings of affect for color photographs that are emotionally-evocative. While analyzing IASP mean values of ratings for images portraying "muscular mesomorph" it was noted that the emotional response of the male participants is less favorable than that of female participants, and vice versa when female sexuality was depicted. Accordingly, the present material was used as the basis for our experimentation.

## Study 1

The aim of the study 1 is to identify the most frequent representation in advertisements for male health and beauty products. More specifically, we investigate if there is frequent semiotic canon about muscular mesomorph iconogram as proposed by Stern (2003).

## Method

Identification of the male model representation in advertisements for male health and beauty products was performed with content analysis. After the unit of content had been defined the process of content identification was divided in two stages. The first stage started by choosing the magazines where products for men's health and beauty were advertised. After sampling some of the most frequently found men's magazines at the time of the research, six magazines were chosen: Best Man, CKM, Esquire, GQ Maxim, Men's Health, and Men's Journal. Following the magazine selection, the first stage also included the work of two coders. Two trained judges, blind to the treatment, independently scored ads on the perceivable sexuality upon sampling the ads for men's health and beauty products. After the coder's identification, the authors looked at all the ads. Overall, out of 1155 total ads 150 (12,9%) were judged as advertisements for men's health and beauty products. Duplicated ads were counted only once for the purposes of analysis. The second stage involved coding for sexual themes i.e., appeals. Narrative scenes in ads with the sexual appeal, created to offer an assurance for consumers to regard, may include different interpretations such as sexual attractiveness, sexual behavior or sex-esteem (Reichert, 2002). Based on these interpretations, the judges independently coded ads with sexual appeal according to three variables: the main subject of the ad (human

behavior or product), the behavioral patterns of the male model, and the way the male model is depicted.

## Results and discussion

Correlation between the unit of content and advertised themes showed that ads, when analyzed according to the main subject, classify in three distinct layouts. In the first layout the dominant subject is a man (54, 67%); the second layout depicts the product only (11,33%); and in the third layout these two subjects coexist (34%). However, apart from the depiction of product the male model is also paired with a female model, friends, or members of the family. Analyzing ads according to behavioral patterns we concentrated on the way the models in ads are attracting the viewer's attention. The most prominent behavioral pattern was found to be through nudity (35,33%). Also, social acceptance (22,67%), famous people (10,67%), emotional transfer (2,67%), and the stand-alone product (7,335) were present. According to the third variable ads were coded with it was evident that male models can be represented in the surroundings such as nature, modern apartment, or an office, place they use for sports or body care (fitness center, playground, bathroom) which connotes that he is independent, active, and carefree. Sometimes he was accompanied by a female partner, friend, or family member. Therefore, coding values for this variable gave these results: a man standing on its own (82,44%); a female model next to the main male subject (12,89%); a man represented with family members (3,05%); a man represented with friends (1,53%). The results of the first content analysis provided the basis for the second analysis. It was determined that the most frequent portrayal

of a male model in ads for health and beauty was independent (stand-alone), nude or semi-nude male. Another set of coders scored 31 ads on three variables: portrait of a man with torso (64,52%), portrait of a man (22,58%), and the whole male figure (12,9%). For the purposes of the second study, targeted photographs were the ones that had more than 20% appearance in ads i.e., the stimulus for the second study was developed based on a photograph portraying independent, nude man and additional photograph of man's torso added to the content.

## Study 2

Some considerations were considered in selecting visual and verbal material to be featured in the target advertisements. One such consideration was attended with content analysis which provided necessary material for the pictorial part of the ad. Considerations for the verbal part were made by sampling figurative and non-figurative ad copies. Rhetorical figures have been found to be frequent elements in print advertisements (Deighton, 1985; Delbaere, McQuarrie & Philips, 2011; Huhmann & Albinson, 2010; Kim, Baek & Choi, 2012; Leigh, 1994; Myzoughi & Abdelhak, 2011) which resulted in numerous testing of rhetorical perspectives leaving behind elaborative theoretical background (Gkiouzepas & Hogg, 2011; McQuarrie & Mick, 1996; McQuarrie & Mick, 1999; McQuarrie & Mick 2003). McQuarrie and Mick (1996) underline that "any particular figurative expression can deviate to a greater or lesser extent..." supporting their argument firstly, by developing taxonomy of rhetorical figures in advertising and describing how figuration can be integrated relating it to common consumer responses, and

**Table 1**

Male model depictions in magazine advertisements: indicators and values on three established variables

Variables	Values	Indicators
The main subject of the ad	Dominance of a man	Business efficiency, elegance, sports activities, grooming
	Dominance of a product	Water, workspace, product with verbal message
	Division of domination	Touching, hugging, strength as courage, casualness, seduction
The behavioral patterns of the male model	Nudity	Parts of the body without clothes
	Integration into society (Success, acceptance)	Cars, modern environment (flats, offices), classic business look (clothing)
	Use of rhetorical figures	Surreal scenes
	Famous individuals who confirm the quality of the product	Actors, athletes
	The glorification of the product	Exaggeration
	Emotional transfer	Parent-child relationship
The way the male model is depicted	Depiction of single man	Parts of the body without clothes, activities in the nature, grooming
	Depiction of a man with a woman	Parts of the body without clothes, activities, seduction
	Depiction of a man with family	Children, parents
	Depiction of a man with friends	Hanging out with friends in the nature, hanging out with friends in a café

secondly, by offering what are beneficial effects of artful deviation regarding the persuasiveness of the printed ad. Another study by the same authors (McQuarrie & Mick, 1999) investigates application of rhetorical figures parallel to those found in language on both verbal and visual part of advertisement varying the level of motivation to process the ad. When testing the incidental-exposure condition rhetorical figures highly influenced positive response, enhancing ad recall and ad attitudes. The importance of their findings also lies in presenting that visual figures have a greater impact than verbal figures under the same condition of incidental exposure. However, pictorial part of advertisements is greatly supported by verbal cue since visual signs can be ambiguous and mislead inferences (Eco, 1973). Therefore, a pretest was conducted using 50 male students to assess emotional response towards four ad verbal cues enhanced by rhetorical figure and four that were non-figurative. Verbal cues were rated on three-dimension SAM scale (will be explained later in text). Independent samples t-test was used for the analysis. Means on arousal dimension (figurative:  $M = 5.93$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ; non-figurative:  $M = 5.61$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ;  $p < .05$ ) indicate participants did experience emotional variability along different figuration levels. Dimensions pleasure and dominance were not significant.

After conducting content analyses, it was disclosed that advertisements for men's products and use visual convention of the male model where most images depicted a man by himself (82,4%) and less when he is accompanied by a woman, family or friends. Also, the analysis presented that most popular way of getting the viewers' attention was through male sensuality and seductiveness. In the research of Simpson, Horton & Brown (1996), the effects of male dress level were examined. Their findings indicate that female respondents react much more favorably to ads enhanced by increasing level of male nudity, whereas male respondents react favorably to ads that contain no model and the full-dress ad. Male respondents accepted nudity only when there was a strong logical connection between model nudity and the product. Based on these findings we can conclude that favorability to male nudity in ads depends on the picture-product connection which, alongside the data obtained from prior research and content analysis in the first study, led us to construct the research question: is the emotional response of men to "muscular mesomorph" dependent on the context of the image alone or on the context of the advertised message? The advertised message as a whole communicates through two interconnected levels, the visual and the verbal register. As it was discussed by Eco (1973) the chief function of the verbal register is to determine the message mainly because the visual components alone often give the impression of being ambiguous. Based on these questions and assumptions the main hypothesis was presumed:

H1: The emotional response of men towards print advertisements will be more positive when the iconogram of muscular mesomorph is complemented with verbal register i.e., when put in the function of advertised message.

## Method

### Stimulus development

Considering that the computer technology enables manipulation of graphic elements between stimuli treatment, the stimuli used were ads designed exclusively for the purposes of this research. The development of the ads utilized computer graphic software to produce the final visual solution. The ads were designed by adding a verbal message and a fictional logotype of the brand (consisting of only one word) to the IAPS photos (#4525, #4574). The verbal message for Ad#1 read: A day without a smile is a day without the sunshine. The fictional product advertised here was Unforgivable, Men's Cosmetics. The verbal message for Ad#2 read: It's not a luxury to feel good—it's a necessity! The fictional product advertised here was Clean, Men's Cosmetics. For each of the ads within the experiment, the same font was used, a uniform logotype and similar positioning of verbal elements by which any typography induced variability was excluded (Figure 1).



» **Figure 1:** An example of stimuli design used in the experiment<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the IAPS rules, the researchers are not allowed to publish the photographs from this database in any print format. Therefore, we used pictures with similar content and the stimuli that resembles the ones we used in the experiment.

The third element of the ad was the logotype of the brand product whose function was to define the verbal message more accurately. All logotypes were designed with the same sans serif font, set in white color and capital letters and framed with a same white line. The selected brand products fall into a group of beauty and health products for men and are unheard of in the Serbian and regional market.

## Procedure

The experiment was designed to test the hypothesis that addresses the affective response of consumers to male figures in advertising. The experiment was conducted in the university laboratory where, upon their arrival, the participants were randomly assigned to one of the two treatments. They were presented with an electronic booklet containing eight print ads in the experimental group, and eight images and rating scales in the control group. The print ads/images were randomly placed, two target ads and six, filler ads, i.e., two target and six filler images. Firstly, the participants in the control group rated the images, and the participants in the experimental group rated the print ads. They were given six seconds for this task. After viewing each image, the participants were asked to rate their emotions on a three-dimension SAM scale—pleasure, arousal, and domination. Each dimension had nine fields, and the participants were asked to mark the field that represented their emotions the best at that moment. Participants had 15 seconds for the rating process. For each of the ads within the experiment the same font was used, a uniform logotype and similar positioning of verbal elements by which any typography induced variability was excluded.

## Participants

In the experiment 100 male students participated with age range 20-31 years old, with an average age of 24,3 years. The participants were students from three universities from the University of Novi Sad, University of Nis and the University of Belgrade. The students were chosen for this experiment since they are the target group of such advertisements, and we chose them as participants because we believed that their response would be most relevant for our research.

## Variables

The dependent variables used were PAD (pleasure, arousal, and dominance) values of SAM, a graphic representation of the three fundamental emotional dimensions. Each dimension groups some factors that connect existing feeling states to other indices of emotional response. These values were chosen because they are one of the most accepted measures of the emotional response when it comes to self-assessment (Bradley & Lang, 1994; Morris et al., 2002).

## Results and discussion

Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, paired samples t-test, and ANOVA. Age factor did not appear to have significantly affected perceptions of male models in stimuli material. This factor will be excluded from further analysis. The data analysis of participant's emotional response was performed through t-test for independent samples. The values acquired based on self-assessment emotion measurement for target ads in the control group were compared to the IAPS responses.

**Table 2**

The difference between experimental and control groups—pleasure

Group			SD				
Pleasure, stimuli 1	Experimental (viewed ads)	0	,5400	652	2,36	,707	091
	Control (viewed photographs)	0	,8000	831	1,94		
Pleasure, stimuli 2	Experimental (viewed ads)	0	,3200	561	1,69	,197	000
	Control (viewed photographs)	0	,2400	059	1,66		

**Table 3**

The difference between experimental and control groups—arousal

Group			SD				
Arousal, stimuli 1	Experimental (viewed ads)	0	,0400	156	2,38	,863	065
	Control (viewed photographs)	0	,1600	181	2,34		
Arousal, stimuli 2	Experimental (viewed ads)	0	,5200	196	1,98	,772	000
	Control (viewed photographs)	0	,2200	296	2,00		

**Table 4**

The difference between experimental and control groups—dominance

Group			SD				
Dominance, stimuli 1	Experimental (viewed ads)	0	,1000	463	2,22	,145	000
	Control (viewed photographs)	0	,3400	636	2,01		
Dominance, stimuli 2	Experimental (viewed ads)	0	,5800	092	2,00	,194	000
	Control (viewed photographs)	0	,1400	791	1,93		

Using independent samples t-test, data between experimental and control group was analyzed on eight images and eight print ads for the three dimensions. For the pleasure dimensions, results indicate that there is a significant difference in participant's response within experimental ( $M = 6.54$ ,  $SD = 2.37$ ) and control group ( $M = 5.80$ ,  $SD = 1.95$ ) for stimuli 1, and within experimental ( $M = 7.32$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ) and control group ( $M = 5.24$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ) for stimuli 2 (Table 2).

The results of the second dimension of arousal also indicate that there is a significant difference in participant's response within experimental ( $M = 5.04$ ,  $SD = 2.38$ ) and control group ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 2.34$ ) for stimuli 1, and within experimental ( $M = 5.52$ ,  $SD = 1.98$ ) and control group ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 2.00$ ) for stimuli 2 (Table 3). There is noticeably smaller difference for the stimuli 1 ( $p < .1$ ) whereas the difference is much more significant for the stimuli 2 ( $p < .000$ ). Results of control groups (negative valence) were expected considering the IAPS stimuli are standardized based on ratings of pleasure and arousal. On the other hand, associative activation was positively charged when participants viewed stimuli with verbal cue i.e., male model (muscular mesomorph) was received with pleasant feelings. The third dimension of dominance for both stimuli shows more positive response (stimuli 1  $p < .000$ ; stimuli 2  $p < .000$ ) in favor of the print ads (stimuli 1: experimental group  $M = 6.10$ ,  $SD = 2.22$ , control group  $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 2.01$ ; stimuli 2: experimental group  $M = 6.58$ ,  $SD = 2.00$ , control group  $M = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ ). Dominance ratings are highly correlated with ratings of hedonic valence, and based on our results, we can conclude that significant difference on this dimension is present due to increased interest in the advertised stimuli. Here, the viewer rates stimuli highly when it starts to dominate over him i.e., the viewer is a factor in communication. These results can be explained by the change of context the picture of muscular mesomorph is set in. When asked to respond to associative activation of the image, participants had negative ratings. Once the picture was determined with verbal cue and the viewer became an active participant in the communication, he reacted more favorably to presented male model.

Considering that the codes in advertisements function through two distinct registers, verbal and visual, we analyzed the visual register without the verbal

one to achieve valid results and test our hypothesis. Later we analyzed the combination of the two registers within one ad. We determined that there is the significant statistical difference between the values of the control group that represents emotional response to IAPS photographs and the values of the emotional response to the ads (stimuli with the verbal message). These results imply verbal message leads to a significant increment of the emotional rating. This notion confirms the alternative hypothesis. We can see this when comparing values of all three dimensions. The verbal cue determines the meaning of the overall message by increasing its effectiveness and consequently changing the attitudes of the participants toward the message; it eliminates the ambiguity of the message by describing the product more clearly and establishing the connection between the viewer (customer) and the ad. The message is being decoded on a personal level that connects it directly to the viewer (customer).

Interpretation of the ad message, among other things, depends on the way it has been encoded and on the target group it has been encoded for. Through the research with experiments, testing its effectiveness, we discovered that these messages influence a positive emotional response of the participants; more positive than neutral for pleasure dimension; neutral instead of negative for arousal dimension; more positive than neutral for dominance dimension. The verbal register determines the message placing it in the context of the media message the subject is accustomed to be guided towards. That way, the iconogram of a muscular mesomorph gains an antonomastic value by which males identify themselves "all of you who are MM" or "all of you who would like to be MM". Therefore, the social norm of masculinity despite the pluralistic interpretation of masculinity is imposed today by the advertisers as the muscular mesomorph, a man full of confidence who uses beauty products.

## Conclusion

This study examines the effectiveness of male imagery portraying the iconogram of muscular mesomorph on consumer affective response on two levels of interest: when images are viewed without complementary verbal

cue, and when images are determined by verbal cue. Results indicate there is the significant difference in responses to these two conditions. Male respondents reacted much more favorably to images depicting muscular mesomorph when they were complemented with a verbal cue. Our hypothesis was confirmed giving support to prevailing practice of advertisers to use muscular mesomorph in health and beauty products advertising context. This finding is significant because emotional response dominates over cognition (Morris et al., 2002) which represents more of the variance in conative attitude. Benefits of a figurative verbal cue are also presented in the pre-phase of the second study. The artful deviation is known to enhance persuasiveness, and in the case of merging rhetorical figures in ad copy with male nudity in the pictorial part, participants responded with higher emotional rating. Consequently, this study provides implications to advertisers concerning the use of pictorial conventions in advertisements targeting males. We propose that advertisers may use newly imposed norms of masculinity, emphasizing the necessity to embody the self-representation in the form of a muscular mesomorph. However, this study had limitation in the selection of advertising context for testing. Advertisements for products such as shoes, cars, denim, etc. were not included. Future research should attempt to examine male response to the image of muscular mesomorph when depicted in advertisements for products not connected to health and beauty (body care). In the process of developing our first study, it was noted that disputed iconography was present in, for example, sunglasses and denim advertising. It is possible that favorability toward nude male body will be low in this case since there is small congruency with male dress level and advertised product (Simpson, Horton & Brown, 1996). Furthermore, future studies should consider testing different levels of verbal figuration alongside the semiotic analysis of male portrayal. We base this proposal on previous research of verbal register in advertisements which mostly focuses on the rhetorical figures (schemes and tropes) and less on the language functions (Jakobson, 1960) which through associated factors relate to an effective verbal communication.

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