

SEXUALISATION OF THE FEMININE IN PERFUME ADVERTISEMENTS IN  
*VOGUE* AND *HER* MAGAZINES FROM DECEMBER 2017- DECEMBER  
2018: A SEMIOTIC AND POSTSTRUCTURAL FEMINIST APPROACH

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH  
STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

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APRIL 2020

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the contemporary world of advertising, the highly sexualised feminine figure sells products (Haugg, 1998). The study examines, through the theoretical lenses of Poststructural Feminism and Semiotic Theories, how women are projected sexually in mass media advertisements, specifically, pictorial perfume advertisements in *Her* and *Vogue* magazines. It examines how such ‘sexualised’ images and (re)presentations of the feminine shape public opinions and perceptions on/about gender and sexualities as well as how the language of these advertising is used in gendered ways. A qualitative research and explorative research design were utilised because of the nature of the study. As a descriptive study, the researcher, describes and analyses the linguistic discourse use of advertising language to establish whether the words accompanying the images (re)present similar forms of objectification of femininity in perfume advertisements and how this affects the overall message of the advertisement. Thirty purposively sampled perfume advertisements utilising images of the female body or projecting the feminine in highly sexualised ways in the magazines were analysed through the theoretical explications of Poststructural Feminist and Semiotic Theories. The two thronged theoretical approach provides us with the critical explanatory lenses through which we can identify instances of image and language usage that evince sexualisation in advertisements. The analysis of the advertisements indicates a purposeful, deliberate high proliferation and usage of sexualised and sexually provocative female images – often barely or scantily dressed. Most of the adverts project women as sex objects as a means to increase the product appeal. Advertisers utilise different provocative postures of women in highly sexualised ways to attract customers. The language used in perfume advertisements is also largely sexist in nature. Advertisers made use of sexist lexis, mostly as slogans and catchphrases to persuade, tempt and convince customers to buy perfume products. In general, it seems that in order to sell

perfumes, perfume manufacturers and advertisers must sell sex and sexual appeal and not the perfume itself – at least not directly.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly, I would like to give my distinct thanks to God almighty, for his grace, wisdom and unconditional support as he has been a pillar of strength during my study.

I wish to register my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Collen Sabao, who relentlessly guided me in the right direction when I strayed off the path. His academic expertise, mentorship and patience; I will forever cherish and appreciate.

My sincere gratitude also goes to my family, especially my parents; Mrs. Hedwig Gabriel and Mr. Engelbert Shikongo and my aunt Mrs. Sarafia Gabriel for their tireless efforts in rendering me all the support. The same gratitude goes to everyone who encouraged and helped me in one way or the other and made valuable contributions to the completion of this study, am forever indebted to you. All I can say is “Thank You Very Much”. I am forever grateful.

Finally, I would like to thank my MAES 2018/2019 classmates and friends especially Peninna Nahole. You were the best of companion. You were at times a source of motivation when I was in the valley of despair. We pushed through this journey together. Thank you.

## **DEDICATION**

I sincerely dedicate this thesis to my grandmother Mariina Amesho.

## DECLARATION

I, Ester Shikongo, hereby declare that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any institution of higher education.

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Ester Shikongo

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
DECLARATION.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER 1.....	1
INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of study.....	2
1.3 Statement of problem.....	3
1.4 Objectives of the study.....	4
1.5 Significance of the study.....	4
1.6 Limitations of the study.....	4
1.7 Delimitations of the study.....	4
1.8 Outline of the chapters.....	5
1.9 Summary.....	5
CHAPTER TWO.....	7
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Theoretical Frameworks.....	7
2.2.1 Semiotic Theory.....	8
2.2.2 Poststructuralist Feminist Theory.....	11
2.3 Advertisements and advertising.....	12
2.3.1 Functions of advertising.....	14
2.4 Stereotypes in advertisements.....	14
2.5 Advertising and gender.....	15
2.5.1 Women and sexuality in advertisements.....	16
2.5.2 Sexual objectification of women in advertisements.....	17
2.6 Sexual Content in Advertisements.....	19

2.6.1 Sexual appeal .....	19
2.6.2 Images .....	19
2.6.3 Body display and nudity .....	20
2.6.3 Sexual embeds .....	20
2.7 Sexually provocative behaviour in advertisement .....	21
2.8 Celebrity endorsements in advertisements .....	22
2.8.1 Likability .....	23
2.8.2 Attractiveness .....	23
2.9 Language of advertising .....	24
2.9.1 Functions of language in advertisements .....	25
2.9.2 The Poetic function of language and advertising .....	25
2.9.3 Text of advertising .....	26
2.9.4 Persuasive language in advertisements .....	26
2.9.5 Sexist language .....	27
2.10 Linguistics aspects of advertisements .....	27
2.10.1 Semantic .....	27
2.10.2 Simile .....	28
2.10.3 Metaphors .....	28
2.10.4 Slogans .....	29
2.11 Negative effects of sexualisation of women in advertisements .....	29
2.12 Summary .....	30
<b>CHAPTER 3 .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>31</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	31
3.2 Research design .....	31
3.3 Population .....	33
3.4 Sample .....	33
3.5 Research instruments .....	34
3.6 Procedure .....	34
3.7 Data analysis .....	34
3.8. Research ethics .....	35
3.9 Summary .....	35

CHAPTER 4 .....	36
DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS .....	36
4.1 Introduction .....	36
4.2 Semiotic Theory and Poststructural Feminist Theory.....	37
4.3 Sexual Perfume advertisement: Analysing the sexualisation of femininity in advertising.	37
4.4 Summary .....	75
CHAPTER 5 .....	76
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	76
5.1 Introduction .....	76
5.1 Summary .....	76
5.2 Conclusions .....	77
5.3 Recommendations .....	78
REFERENCES .....	79

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Introduction

In the contemporary world of advertising, the highly sexualized feminine figure sells products (Haugg, 1998). Sexualised (re)presentations of women have become the common theme running through advertisements for perfume, and these occasionally feature respected, popular and famous women. The study, through the theoretical lenses of Poststructural Feminism and Semiotics, examines the manners in which women are projected sexually in the media and specifically in perfume advertisements. In doing this, the study explores how the media shapes public opinions and perceptions of gender and sexualities as well as how the English language is used in the advertisements in gendered ways. The study is hence Poststructural Feminist and Semiotic analyses of print pictorial advertisements in two magazines, namely *Vogue* and *Her*.

This current chapter comprises the orientation of the study, where background information on how women are projected sexually in perfume advertisements is deliberated on as well as the statement of the problem which discusses the relevance of the study. Three research objectives are formulated to guide the exploration and examination of the manners in which women are sexualised in perfume advertisements and how advertising language and establishable linguistic features are used in perfume advertisements that feature women in the same manner. In addition, an account is given for why this study is significant. This chapter also presents the limitations of the study and justification why it is confined within the stated demarcations. An outline of what each chapter of this study entails is provided and finally the concluding remarks on the chapter are given.

## **1.2 Background of study**

Advertisements are a part of our daily lives and they feature in a variety of public spheres/spaces, both digital and print. We interact with advertisements on TV screens, in newspapers and magazines, on billboards and even on the internet. In brief, we are living as “advertisement human beings” in a world surrounded by advertisements. Advertisements are imagined to have an effective influence on changing or describing our daily life routines and habits. Studies on the representation of women’s sexuality in the media, especially in advertisements, have over the years attracted the interest of researchers and scholars globally (Artx & Venkatesh, 1991; Bianchi, 2011; Frith, Shaw & Cheng, 2005; Saad, 2004 and Tuna, 2012).

Baber & Nwaolikpe (2007) contend that while media representations now reflect social changes in the public arena particularly in the 21st century, highly sexualised feminine representations in the media have been a reason for concern. There has been concern over how sexualised and objectified media representations of the feminine in advertisements are compared to those of the masculine (Butler, 1990; Lobby, 1997 & Nare, 2011). Lobby (1997) and Nare (2011) bemoan such sexist representation of the feminine in the media, arguing how the media seem to have taken profound enthusiasm in concentrating quite a bit on ‘disgracing femininity’ in news reporting and/or on advertisements – objectifying female sexuality through the promotion of goods and services utilising images of semi-naked women.

Bigelow (1992) argues that despite the fact that in the 21st century the media has also shifted to utilising pictures of men in advertisements, the quantity of images and symbols of women still stays high. Relchert (2003) and Krassas (2001) have demonstrated that even in news reporting, nude and semi-nude pictures concentrate more on denigrating the feminine as opposed to the masculine. According to Haugg (1998), women are used in advertisements as sex objects to

enhance sales and as such, advertisements are seen to utilise different provocative postures of women in order to attract the attention of viewers. Such stereotypifications of femininity in the media is negative to society because by doing this, the media is making social generalizations for both men and women that can bring about unfortunate social and physical propensities. The issue is particularly concerning in light of the observation that the more the advertisements utilise sexual substance with respect to ladies, the more viewers appear to become tied up with them.

### **1.3 Statement of problem**

We live in an age where the media shapes individuals' viewpoints in multitudinous ways (Gales, 2010). In this respect, sexualised advertisements or stories can negatively affect society views of women and gender relations within society in general. The representation of women in such a manner through images and language creates a society that views women as nothing but sexual objects (Sabao, 2013). According to Ferrante (1998), female stereotypes in advertisements tend to undervalue women as a group, and reduce them to sexual objects and passive human beings.

Objectifying women in commercials and advertisements for products has desensitised people towards the violence perpetrated against women. The study, through the theoretical lenses of Poststructural Feminism and Semiotics, examines how women are projected sexually in the media and specifically through perfume advertisements. The study seeks to examine the ramifications of such representation of the feminine on society in general. Since the media is extremely persuasive in molding individuals' states of mind (McCombs and Shaw, 2004), the study seeks to explore how the media shapes public opinions and perceptions of gender and sexualities as well as how the English language used in these advertisements is used in gendered ways.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are to:

1.3.1 Examine how women are projected sexually in the media and especially through the semiotic analysis of perfume advertisements;

1.3.2 Explore, through the lenses of Poststructural Feminist Theory, how the language used in perfume advertisements may also reflect sexist attitudes towards the feminine; and

1.3.3 Examine how images used in perfume advertisements evince highly sexualized presentations of the feminine and the effects such projections have on femininity and the feminine.

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

By analysing how the feminine are sexualised through advertisements, the study contributes to our understanding of gender relations and sexualities. As such, it is envisioned that the research will contribute to the ongoing debates on gender based sexualisation of the feminine. It is also hoped that the study will contribute to existing scholarship on gender discourses.

#### **1.6 Limitations of the study**

This study is limited to printed media advertisements from *Vogue* and *Her* magazines from December 2017-December 2018 that utilise images of the female or project the feminine. As such, the findings of the study might not necessarily reflect trends in other publications and other advertisements

#### **1.7 Delimitations of the study**

This study is confined to the semiotic and linguistic analyses of perfume advertisements which use women and present the feminine in objectifying ways using Semiotic and Poststructural Feminist

approaches. All other advertisements will not be considered in this study; hence the findings resulting from this study cannot be generalized to all advertisements or other genders.

### **1.8 Outline of the chapters**

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study area, provides the background of the study, statement of the problem and outlines the research objectives. It also explains why the study is significant, its limitations as well as the structure of the dissertation. Chapter Two reviews existing literature and demonstrates how this investigation is located within the pre-existing corpus of related literature. The research objectives (established in Chapter One) are linked with other studies to identify the gap and justify the need for this study. The theoretical explications in which the study is couched are also discussed in this chapter. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology, detailing information on how the data was collected and analysed. The research design is explained with reasons justifying its suitability for this study are made. Also, the population and the sample that is generated from it, as well as the procedure are discussed. Chapter Four presents the findings of the study under emerging themes. The findings are analysed through the lenses of Poststructuralist Feminist approach and Semiotic theoretical approaches as established in the previous chapters. Chapter Five constitutes the conclusions of the study. It also provides recommendations, suggestions and opportunities for further research.

### **1.9 Summary**

The chapter established various aspects of this study. Preliminary highlights on the projection of women sexuality in perfume advertisements have been shared in the orientation of the study. The chapter established that the study largely focuses on negative implications of the sexualised portrayal of women in perfume advertisements, largely projecting them as sex objects. Preliminary studies on advertisements that focus on utilisation of the female body in order to promote and/or

sell a product are also presented. The gap established, is that little, if any, of these studies seemed to have a multitheoretical approach that synthesizes tenets from Poststructural Feminism and Semiotics to examine images of the feminine and the accompanying language in advertisements. Most of researches on the objectification and sexualisation of women in advertisements are based on sociolinguistic approach (Barthes, 1964).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Cresswell (2003) submits that a literature review shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the study being reported. According to Cooper (1984) and Marshall and Rossman, (1999), as cited in Cresswell (2003) a literature review relates a study to other larger on-going dialogues in the literature about a topic. It fills gaps and extends prior studies. This chapter presents different scholars' perspectives regarding aspects of advertising and advertisements and forms of sexualisation embedded in advertisements. Importance is given to their views regarding how the English language is used in advertisements at different levels, and for varied reasons. Cresswell (2003) posits that a literature review provides a framework for establishing the importance of the study, as well as a benchmark for comparing the results of a study with other findings. The Poststructuralist Feminist approach which is discussed later in the chapter was considered to be the most appropriate theory to analyse language usage in this study. In addition, the Semiotic approach, which will be used to analyse pictures of women in advertisements are presented in this chapter.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Frameworks**

The study is theoretically couched within Semiotic Theory (De Saussure, 1915 & Peirce, 1931) and Poststructural Feminist Theory (Butler, 1990) and are discussed individually below. The idea of utilizing the two theories concurrently culminated from the observed fact that together, they offer more explanatory potential to the analysis of the significations of both the images and the text.

### **2.2.1 Semiotic Theory**

‘Semiotics’ also referred to as ‘semiology’ and Poststructuralist Feminist theory as the theoretical frameworks for the study. Fiske (1990) defines “semiotics as the study of signs and the way they work”. Semiotics has its roots in the works of De Saussure (1915) and Peirce (1931). Their works influenced further study from scholars such as Barthes (1964; 1977) who modified and applied it to disciplines such as advertising. Barthes (1964) argues that images are polysemic. Thus this study focuses on the various means that the print advertisements connote and denote meaning, with the major aim of assessing their impact on the sexualisation of the feminine. Therefore this study focuses on Barthesian (1964; 1977) semiotics as the critical tool for analysis.

According to Mick (1986) Semiotics is founded in the conceptions of two visionary yet very different scholars or thinkers, Ferdinand De Saussure (1915) and Charles Sander Peirce (1931). Fiske (1990) states that in semiotics the centre of concern is the sign. A sign is something physical, perceivable by our senses, it refers to something other than itself and it depends upon recognition by its users that it is a sign. This assertion by Fiske (1990) reveals that meaning is the end result that has to be reached in semiotic analysis. The assertion also reveals that meaning is dependent on a reader, who in this case is identified as a user. De Saussure (1915) and Peirce (1931) propound the most influential models of meaning. According to Mick (1986), De Saussure highlights and maintains that language is a system of signs. Fiske (1990) states that for De Saussure (1915) the sign was a physical object with a meaning, or, to use his terms, “a sign consisted of a signifier and the signified” (De Saussure, 1915). De Saussure (1915) argues that signs are arbitrary and conventional; to hear codes is to adopt the values and the bias that guarantee the indigenous worldview.

Peirce (1931) in Fiske (1990) defined a sign as something other than itself, the object, and is understood by somebody thus it has an effect on the user. Peirce's 1931-1958 works set out a variety of classes of the sign that is icon, index and symbol: an icon being a sign that resembles something, such as photographs of people. Barthes's (1964) works were influenced by the ideas of De Saussure (1915). The Barthesian Semiotic Theory is largely interested in analysing the image and the text on it. Lockwood (2001) opines that, Barthes's theory focuses on the social phenomena of signs, specifically photographs. The theory emphasises how signs constitute culture and ideologies in particular ways. According to Barthes (1977) messages are constructed in two ways – denotation: the literal meaning and reference of sign or connotation: the meanings that are suggested or implied by the sign.

Lockwood (2001) further states that Barthes (1977) claims that the denotation status of a photo has every chance of being mythical. Barthes (1977) uses the term “mythical” as a way of describing the characteristics that are associated with common sense, or in other words, the characteristics of a photograph that have the opportunity to represent and convey ideological norms of a culture. Barthes (1977) states that a press photograph is an object that has been worked on, chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional aesthetic or ideologies which are so many factors of connotation. Thus, there is a photographic paradox in which there is a co-existence of denotative and connotative messages. The thorough understanding of a connotative message within a photo entails the following connotative procedures: trick, effect, pose, objects, photogenic, aestheticism and syntax. Although a photo itself holds many connotative messages, the text around it contributes to its connotation (Barthes, 1964; 1977). Barthes (1977) describes the text which he terms anchorage, as parasitic on the image, that is, the text borrows the objectivity

of the image, while at the same time leaving the image with hidden connotation. Thus, words are not just duplicating messages within the photo but also adding new meaning.

Barthes (1964) introduced four classifications of the elements that create the process of semiological analysis. The classifications are borrowed from structural linguistics and consist of the categories of language and speech, signified and signifier, syntagm and system, denotation and connotation. Firstly, language and speech applied the concepts of language or the part of the semiological system which is agreed upon by society, and speech or the individual's selection of symbols to the semiological system. Barthes (1964) claims that a semiological system can essentially exist in contexts where there is language but little or no speech. In this case Barthes (1964) believes that a third element called 'matter', which would provide significance would need to be added to the language/speech system.

Secondly, Barthes (1964) refers to what he terms 'signifier' and 'signified'. This is when he stipulates that for Saussure (1915) 'the signified' was a representation of a concept while 'the signifier' was used to represent the sound image of that concept. Barthes (1964) points out that the importance of both 'the signified' and 'the signifier' is the relationship through which meaning is created. He explains that 'the sign' can no longer be arbitrary when semiological systems are considered. Barthes (1964) shows that once a sign takes on a function or use it will gain its meaning in the process. Thirdly, Barthes (1964) refers to what he terms syntagm and system. Barthes (1964) defines syntagm as a linear combination of signs. Within semantic analysis, this would be something like a sentence where each term is related to other terms in the phrase. The syntagm is compared to the system which explains associations on the same level as have certain words relate on the meaning of other words within our minds, as in the case of relations between meaning 'education' and 'training.' Fourthly, Barthes (1964) refers to denotation and connotation. These

terms were used by Barthes (1964; 1977) for examining the relationship between systems. Each semiological system can be thought of as consisting of an expression, a plan of content and a relation between the two. A connotation then examines how one system can act as a signifier of the relation, specifically how it presents the expression within the first system.

The theory is applicable to the current study in the sense that advertisements are analysed taking into cognisance the classes/classifications that Barthes (1964) propounds. Barthes (1964) argues that images are polysemic thus this study focuses on the various means that the print advertisements connote and denote with the major aim of assessing their impact towards luring would-be perfume buyers. Its applicability to this study is because it also assumes that meaning is literally a matter of encoding and decoding what needs to be communicated and to this end, it therefore shows that our examination of advertisements must analyse and deduct meaning in line with the denotation and connotation aspects of meaning. However the researcher acknowledges that the theory has strengths and weaknesses which both affect the study. The major strength being that the major tenets of the theory will provide the fundamental basis of the analysis and the weakness can be imagined to lie in the limitation that will result in a gap and subsequently creation of new ideas. Therefore the major tenets of the theory will assist in the analysis of the study's collected data.

### **2.2.2 Poststructuralist Feminist Theory**

The study also utilises Poststructural Feminism theory. Poststructural Feminism borrows largely from structural linguistics as propounded by the likes of M.A.K. Halliday, Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes. It is a theory based on the analysis of language in the realisation of gender differences. The importance of language in such a study as this, comes from the observed fact that gender is socially constructed in everyday forms of interaction and communication (Sabao, 2013).

Poststructuralist refers to a loose collection of theoretical positions influenced by, for example, post-Saussurean linguistics, Marxism (particularly Althusser's theory of ideology), Psychoanalysis (especially Lacan's reworkings), Feminism (De Beauvoir, 1997), the "new French Feminists (Kristeva, Cixous, Irigaray), and the work of Derrida, Barthes, and Foucault.

As a general rule, poststructuralists see their theories as based on structuralism's philosophy of language (Saussure) and anthropology (Lévi-Strauss), but they apply those insights to a wider range of topics and radicalise some of structuralism's premises. Poststructuralists differ among themselves in their specific approaches, for some proceed historically, some hermeneutically. Weedon (1987) claims that poststructuralism offers a useful conceptual foundation for feminist practice. Weedon (1987) describes feminist poststructuralism as "a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change" (p. 40-41). As such Poststructural Feminist Theory is apt for this study as it provides for us the critical theoretical lenses through which we can identify instances of language usage that evince sexualisation of women in advertisements.

### **2.3 Advertisements and advertising**

Advertising has become part of everyday life. People are bombarded with thousands of advertising messages on a daily basis and are influenced in one way or the other. According to Bianchi (2011) pioneering studies of advertising were in the works of Barthes (1964) and Eco (1968). Cuhadar (2005, p.5) affirms that in everyday life, people come into contact with many different kinds of advertising. Because of the persuasive aspects of advertising, every person is affected in one way or another. Advertising is presented through various media channels such as newspapers, magazines, leaflets, brochures, radio, and television, billboards, in public transport, the internet

and direct mail advertising, as well as outdoor advertising. In some instances advertisements are also placed in places of public services such as hospitals, schools, banks and police stations. The terms “advertisement” and “advertising” are used interchangeably by some writers; however, there appears to be a difference between the two.

“An advertisement, which is sometimes referred to as “an ad” or an advert” in informal writing, is defined as a notice, picture or film telling people about a product, job or service, while “advertising” is the activity and industry of publicizing products to people on television, in newspapers and on the internet (Cuhadar, 2005). According to Harris and Seldon (1962) as cited in Kangira (2009), advertising is basically a public notice that is “... designed to spread information with the view of promoting marketable goods and services”. In other words, advertising offers publicity for the sale of commercial goods and services. Ali and Shahwar (2011) define advertising as a form of communication that typically attempts to persuade potential customers to purchase or to consume more of a particular brand of product or service.

What all these definitions have in common is the fact that advertising promotes ideas, products or organizations with the aim of giving information and to persuade people to buy the products being advertised in the market place. However, not much information is really shared about what exactly is an advertisement. The researcher understands an advertisement as a design or art form that contains information about the product, service or idea that is being sold, and advertising as the practice of telling or informing people about the products being sold. Advertising has become part of everyday life; people are bombarded with thousands of advertising messages on a daily basis and are influenced in one way or the other. Cuhadar (2005, p. 5) affirms that “in everyday life, people come into contact with many different kinds of advertising”. Because of the persuasive aspects of advertising, every person is affected in one way or another.

### **2.3.1 Functions of advertising**

Advertising aims at persuading a target market to purchase or to consume a product. Chugh and Sharma (2012, p. 158) reveal that “advertising not only offers information but also has a strong element of persuasion”. By using advertisements the makers of products are trying to persuade the consumer to buy their specific product (Ryynänen 2007, 24). Because of the limited space in which to make an impact on the viewer (such as one page in a magazine) advertisements aim to create meanings effectively (Kortti 2007, 105). Thus images familiar to the consumer have to be featured, so that the viewer will be able to recognise the intended message immediately. Symbolic messages are often used, but the media very rarely decodes its messages to a form where the consumer is able to directly see the different elements of this interaction.

Advertisements are designed to attract and persuade potential customers in order to create interest in a certain product. Kangira (2009, p. 39) articulates that “advertising is aimed at selling a product, an idea, a service or an attractive image”. From the economic perspective, advertising has two functions: One is to persuade potential customers, the other is to provide information. According to Ling et al. (1999), it is informative functions that are of paramount importance in advertisements. “Advertising provides valuable information for consumers as they usually have limited data about all available rival products.” (Ling et al., 1999, p.129) This is crucial in a world which is filled with imperfect and uncertain knowledge. Strong (1926) discusses this and believes that advertisement is first, to make a reader want, and second, to present a solution by telling the customer that his/her desire can be adequately satisfied by means of the advertiser's commodity.

### **2.4 Stereotypes in advertisements**

According to Smit (2012) stereotypes exist in every reader's mind and in different groups or categories. Every individual in any group is imagined to be homogeneous and to behave in the

same way. Smit (2012) further believes that “stereotyping is a useful literary technique as it enables a character to be described accurately in few words” (p, 217). Women in print and magazine advertisements seem to be portrayed in decorative roles, and female roles vary significantly across magazine types. Advertising is characterized by a special focus on visual cues such as expression, postures, and gestures that reflect social values, prevailing norms, beliefs and stereotypes in society. Lazar (2006) observes that advertising contributes to gender inequality by promoting sexism and distorted body image ideals as valid and acceptable.

## **2.5 Advertising and gender**

Erving Goffman’s groundbreaking work *Gender Advertisements* (1979) is often referred to as the first book to systematically analyze gendered advertisements in magazines. He observes that the advertisements we see are not focused on male and female attitudes, but how we think they behave or are supposed to behave. Goffman (1979) argues that we should focus on how the advertisements are put together to portray a social situation and how they are constructed to achieve a certain meaning. He notes that the most common theme in those advertisements was of female subordination. In the book, *Gender Advertisements* (1976), Erving Goffman describes how femininity and masculinity are displayed within Western media. By looking at over 500 different photo advertisements and analyzing the different poses, positioning of the body, clothing, and so on, he observes stark contrasts between how males and females are portrayed. In a variety of ways, women are portrayed as soft, vulnerable, fragile, powerless, dreamy, child-like, and submissive. To affect the behaviour of the consumer, gender and sex are some of the most used strategies in this symbolic interaction. Gender and sex have a large variety of recognizable features and out of all the forms of cultural communication, advertising uses gender and sex the most. A gendered and sexualized body is an economical way of communicating a desired message. “Pictures of gender

and sex appeal have been used in advertising ever since an image of a woman first appeared on a magazine cover as a way for the publication to draw the attention of potential readers in the 1890's" (Kitch 2001, p.4). The picture became a selling tool and the image of the woman on the front cover represented "both a specific type of female beauty and a 'style' that conveyed model attributes of youth, innocence, sophistication, modernity, upward mobility" (Kitch 2001, p. 5).

### **2.5.1 Women and sexuality in advertisements**

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the representation of women's sexuality in advertisements. Graydon (2001) postulates that women are represented as the highlighter in promoting many products. In Iran several attempts have been made to analyse women's image in commercials. Amini (2010) claims that in typical advertisements in the modern world, instead of stereotypical imaging, women are sexually projected in advertisements. In support of this, Stankiewicz and Rosselli (2008) note that in their study of advertisements in American media, on average, one of two advertisement that featured women, portrayed them as sex objects. Researches on magazine and television advertising conducted in many countries suggest a high degree of sexism toward women, for example, Matud, Rodriguez and Espinosa's (2010), study on Spanish daily newspapers and Arima's (2003) studies on Japanese television advertisements. Bock (2004) examines how women are presented in advertisements using a feminist approach and claims that women sexuality is not only about naked bodies and sexualities but sexy language and words are the complementary part of this sexualisation.

In a 2008 study of 1,988 advertisements from 50 well known American magazines, researchers from Wesleyan University observed that half of the advertisements depict women as sex objects. A woman was considered a sex object depending on her posture, facial expression, make-up, activity, camera angle and amount of skin shown. In images where women were shown in

victimized roles, the study observed that most of the time they were also portrayed as sex objects. The authors noted that such images may function to normalize violence against women.

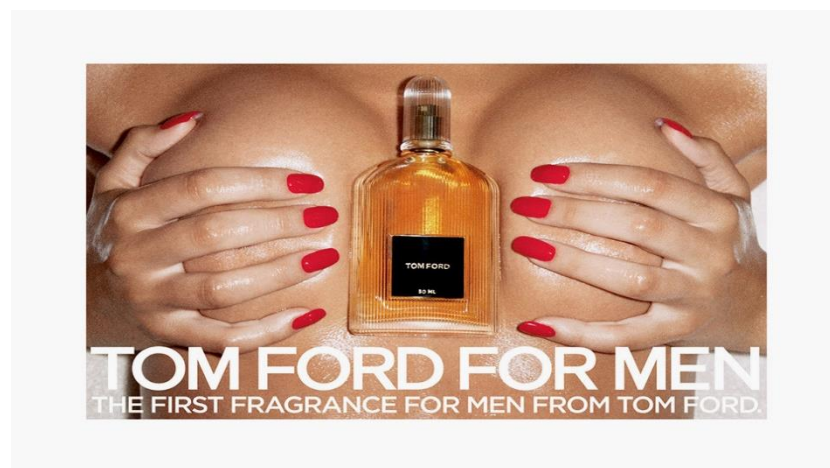
Although several studies have examined the representation of women sexuality in advertisements worldwide, very little has been done, in terms of study, on the representation of women's sexuality in perfume advertisements. It would be very astute if researches on the sexualisation of feminine in advertisements are carried out in the area of semiotic strategies as most of researches on the objectification and sexualisation of women in advertisements are based on sociolinguistic approaches (Barthes, 1964). Clare (2010) and Barthes (1964) provide a similarity to this study in that both analyse the photographic image which is also the text being analysed in this study. However, the shift or gap of the study is that it focuses on how women are sexualised in perfume advertisements through the lenses of Semiotic and Poststructuralist Feminist theoretic approaches. Focus is on the syntax, semantic and pragmatics in selected perfume advertisements that utilize images of the female or project the feminine.

### **2.5.2 Sexual objectification of women in advertisements**

Research consistently finds that women are sexualised and objectified in advertising and mass media (Ward, 2016). Nussbaum (1995) describes sexual objectification as “treating like an object something that is really not an object, what is, in fact, a human being” (p. 257). Moreover, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) relate the term to “situations where women are treated as bodies that exist for the use and pleasure of other people.” Additionally, Kilbourne's (1999) states that a woman is defined as a sex object if her sexuality is being used to sell a product. Sexual objectification in advertising can be interpreted in various forms such as nudity, stereotypical activities performed by women, or their body language (Lanis & Covell, 1995; Reichert & Lambiase, 2003). According to Reichert, LaTour & Ford (2011), it has been observed that

advertisements that illustrate nudity and sexually explicit imagery may result in more favorable consumer attitudes.

Women's body parts as "sex object" are determined by facial expression (e.g., a woman's looks suggested sexual desire), posture (e.g., a woman positioned with her legs spread open, activity (e.g., a woman caressing another person in a sexually suggestive manner), make-up (e.g., a women wore bright red lipstick), camera angle (e.g., the camera angle emphasized a woman's breasts, hips, buttocks, lower abdomen, or inner thighs), and the amount of skin shown (Sullivan,1988). Similarly, in perfume advertisements from fashion magazines women are depicted as sex object as their bodies are displayed through nudity and body revealing clothes to attract customers. The picture below (Figure 1) shows an example of a perfume advertisement from a magazine that sexually objectifies a woman. The image includes a bottle of men's Tom Ford cologne resting between a woman's breasts. The woman in the photograph is being shown as solely a sexual object for men to enjoy.



*Figure 1: A perfume advertisement with woman whose body is sexually objectified*

## **2.6 Sexual Content in Advertisements**

### **2.6.1 Sexual appeal**

Sexual appeal can be described as the use of sexual information and innuendo while communicating brand information or in the context of advertising and other persuasive appeals (Ismail & Melewar, 2014; Raghuram, Mahajan & Poddar, 2015). The ability of sexual appeal to attract the attention of consumers is one main reason for the rapid rise in the use of erotic advertisements (Anabila, Tagoe and Asare, 2015). Sexual appeal acts as a manner of attracting and keeping the attention of the audience (Anabila, Tagoe & Asare, 2015; Ismail & Melewar, 2014; Reichert, Heckler & Jackson, 2001). The sexual nature of the message makes it easier to remember the product (Popoola, 2014). It acts as a good persuasive mechanism for the audience to buy the product. Lastly, it can improve and even boost the brand's image (Anabila, Tagoe, Asare, 2015; Ismail & Melewar, 2014; Sugiarto & Barnier, 2013). Coltrane and Adams (1997) classified the use of sexual appeal in advertising as wearing provocative clothing which includes half-dressed model, tight fitting clothing, sexy clothes or full nudity.

### **2.6.2 Images**

According to Christelle (2012), the language of advertisements is often accompanied by images. Images attract the attention of the customers. Christelle (2012) further states that “images evoke situations and realities in our lives or encourage us to dream about things that we would like to have or do” (p. 26). In the same vein, Smith (2008) submits that “much of the significance of advertising messages lies in the connotations they can trigger, and, as the many advertisements without much written text amply show, the visual plays a key role in setting off a stream of associations” (p.51). Salomo (2015) posits that images are used frequently to catch the attention of the customers. It is important for advertisers to use images when designing their advertisements,

because images may draw the customers' attention. In perfume advertisements, marketers use sexualized images of women to attract the customer's attention. Advertisements often feature provocative images of well-defined women (and men) in revealing outfits and postures.

### **2.6.3 Body display and nudity**

Body display and nudity category involves the use of nudity, partial nudity, physical attractiveness, and suggestive gestures. In many cases, the models tend to be entirely or partially naked, sometimes undressing or with a form of clothing that allows one to imagine their body (Notaro, 2013). The physical characteristics such as clothing, either half naked or with short & tight dresses, and showing body parts such as cleavage, nipples, and chest all are part of body display (Anabila, Tagoe, Asare, 2015; Ben Amor et al., 2013; Chuan, 2012; Reichert, 2002; Reichert & Ramirez, 2000). Nudity acts as apparent sexual stimuli to the viewers of the advertisements. In many advertisements, full nudity is represented through nudity that is either implied or by using side shots (Ben Amor et al., 2013). Balgaradean & Babut (n.d) emphasize that advertiser's concentrate on the model's body with less emphasis on the face of the model. Physical attractiveness is in this category, which includes the use of the physical appearance, facial beauty, and complexion as a way of conjuring sexual interest (Anabila, Tagoe, Asare, 2015).

### **2.6.3 Sexual embeds**

Sexual embeds and symbolism refers to mannerisms that can be subconsciously perceived as forms of sexual representations. It includes the use of objects or shapes that mimic genitalia, and hidden messages of naked people and body parts (Anabila, Tagoe, Asare, 2015; Balgaradean & Babut, n.d). Sexual embeds are sublime messages that act as sexual representations that are perceived subconsciously by the consumer (Chuan, 2012). Sexual embeds are a controversial form of sex in advertising, and explicitly depict sexual acts or genitalia. For example, a perfume bottle could

mimic a phallic shape and its positioning could suggest sexual intercourse. Embeds are especially effective as they unconsciously trigger sexual arousal in the consumer which drives motivation and goal directed behaviour such as purchase intention. Marketers often use tactics such as using sexual imagery in their advertisements to capture the consumer's attention for longer. In perfume advertisements the latter is communicated by the models using flirtatious body language, open posture and making eye contact with the viewer.

## **2.7 Sexually provocative behaviour in advertisement**

According to Notaro, (2013) sexual behaviour consists of any movements and sounds of people using any provocative sexual references within the advertisement. Anabila, Tagoe, Asare, (2015) note that sexual behaviour involves cases where the models utilize sexualised behaviour such as the use of eye contact, different sexual facial expressions, flirting, inviting smiles and provocative movements. The poses and position of an individual model or pair of model can suggest sexually provocative behaviour (Klug and Vigar-Ellis, 2012). Monk-Turner et al., (2008) examined 477 advertisements from nine randomly selected magazines and found that 99% of the advertisements had sexually provocative behaviour. The results of the study by Dahl, Sengupta & Vohs (2009) observes that women's attitude towards sexually explicit advertisement varies with the change in the relationship commitment in the advertisement.

Grazer and Keesilng (1995) maintain that the purchase intention for adverts is higher when the brand is advertised using appropriate levels of sexual intensity. Wyllie et al. (2014) in an examination of sexual stimuli intensity in print advertising and its influence on advertising effectiveness in Australian consumers, maintain that the consumer attitude and behavioural responses were more positive at the mild level of intensity than at the explicit level.

## **2.8 Celebrity endorsements in advertisements**

The use of physically attractive models in advertising is a form of sexualisation in advertising. Physical attractiveness can be conveyed through facial beauty, physique, hair, skin complexion as well as by the model's inferred personality. This form of sexualisation in advertising is effective as it draws attention and influences the overall feeling of the advertisement. Furthermore, such ads create an association between physical attractiveness and the product which sends a message to the consumer that buying and using the product will help them achieve that physique. The sexual arousal possibly elicited by physical attractiveness in adverts is thought to transfer onto the advertised product. Han, Rashad and Yazdanifard (2015) refer to celebrity endorsement as the use of a famous person's image to sell products or services by embracing the individual's wealth, popularity, or fame to endorse the products or services. Bekk and Spörrle (2010) stipulate that endorsement occurs when a celebrity lends his/her name to and appears on behalf of a product or service on which he or she may or may not be an expert. Celebrity endorsement advertising can appear in different ways. For example, when a celebrity appears in the advertisement using the manufacturer's product or brand. In other instances a celebrity may give a testimonial about a brand's features and benefits and recommend that consumers use it. In addition, some celebrity endorsements involve celebrities giving expert opinions, being a spokesperson for a product or just being associated with the product.

The celebrity endorsement tactic is used by many advertisers because it is effective. Creswell (2008) opines that there are examples that suggest that celebrity endorsements actually lead to higher sales. Its effectiveness is brought about by the fact that most people like to identify with famous people, and readers tend to believe whatever these famous people say. Barnes (2011) and Han et al. (2015) postulate that celebrity advertising influences consumer purchases in allowing

the consumer to think that products will work for them as they did for a celebrity. In perfume advertisements for instance, marketers associate their brands with famous celebrities or simply use their images to advertise their perfumes. Therefore people would assume that those celebrities use them, so they would want to smell like the celebrity that is featured in an advertisement.

### **2.8.1 Likability**

Likeability is the “affection for the source as a result of the source’s physical appearance and behavior” (McGuire, 1985, p. 239). In addition, McGuire (1985) states that when people like the celebrity they will also like the accompanying brand. Perfume advertisements use famous celebrities to increase the likability of the product or brand by the consumers. People are more likely to purchase a particular fragrance because it is associated with a celebrity they like without considering the product itself.

### **2.8.2 Attractiveness**

The concept of attractiveness does not only entail the physical attractiveness. Attractiveness also entails concepts such as intellectual skills, personality properties, way of living, athletic performances, and skills of endorsers (Erdogan, 1999). Physical attractiveness suggests that a celebrity determines the effectiveness of persuasion as a result of that consumers want to be like the endorser and want to identify themselves with that endorser (Cohen & Golden, 1972). In the perfume industry, marketers usually choose beautiful celebrities to appear in advertisements. The celebrity endorser being attractive and beautiful will provide a perfect match-up with the promoted product. The latter can induce the moving of meanings from celebrity to product to consumer. Women would feel confident, beautiful, and satisfied when using celebrity endorsed perfumes.

In addition, images of sexualized celebrities are used by marketers to attract men to purchase the product because of the “sexiness” projected in the advertisement picture. Additionally, using sexualized images attract women to purchase the product as well. Because women want to be sexy and the adverts lead them to believe that buying a particular product, which used a sexualized celebrity will help them to become sexy or they simply want to be as sexy as that celebrity used in an advert, they buy the product. An example is an advert of the “Nude” perfume brand which used Rihanna (a popular music artist of the RnB genre) as an endorser for the brand whereby she is sexually objectified. People are attracted to Rihanna. As Rihanna is such a well-known and respected woman, an image of her represented in this sexualized way may give the impression to women that, if they purchase the perfume they will smell sexy like Rihanna. She is extremely credible and attractive and has a high degree of similarity; people want to be like her. Men are physically attracted to her appearance or her sexuality.

## **2.9 Language of advertising**

Leech (1972 p.25) writes, that the language of advertising belongs to so called ‘loaded language’. It also can be described as using Roman Jakobson’s Poetic Function of language. The poetic function signals a situation in which language is used in flowery and attractive ways that attract the listener or hearer. It often makes use of catchy phrases and sometimes utilises the artistic structures of language such as metaphor, simile, idiophones etc. Advertising language can either follow “a prescribed path of advertising clichés” or have the freedom to “deviate from it and from the rules of the language itself” (Leech, 1972: 4). Moreover, advertising different kinds of products “means making different choices of language and in particular different choices of vocabulary” (Leech, 1972:57). In perfume advertisements, marketers use an advertising discourse which attract the attention of the viewer.

### **2.9.1 Functions of language in advertisements**

The function of language in advertising is to express feelings, offer advice, inform and persuade, describe or create. Language is not “a transparent carrier of meanings”, rather it is “a medium which imposes its own constraints on the meaning which is constructed” (Mills, 1995 p.11). Language has an influence over people and their behaviour. Leech (1979) states that loaded language has the aim to change the will, opinions, or attitudes of its audience. The choice of language to convey specific messages with the intention of influencing people is vitally important. Visual content and design in advertising have a very great impact on the consumer, but it is language that helps people to identify a product and remember it.

### **2.9.2 The Poetic function of language and advertising**

One of approaches concerning language functions is proposed by Roman Jakobson (1980). The approaches is divided into six kinds of language function; referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic. The poetic function is defined by Jakobson as “the attitude towards the message itself, centering on the message itself” (Jakobson, 1960). According to Jakobson (1980), poetic function focuses on message on its own terms. It can be found in poetry and slogans. The poetic function emphasizes the concrete side sign of the language, deepening the fundamental opposition between what is intelligible and what is perceptible, between the linguistic sign as a means of intelligible knowledge and the objects of the reference reality (Narcis, 2017). The Poetic Function, also known as the aesthetic function, deals with language whose primary focus is the beauty of the language itself. The richness of sound and texture, and the balance that makes it a work of auditory art or poetic utterance” (Holenstein, 1974.). Such richness is attractive to the ear, mind and eye and is exploited by advertisers to captivate the readership seeing the advertisement. Shortly, poetic function is a language function that concerns itself with the artistic nature. The

poetic function of language is used in every form of communication included in advertising. In perfume advertisements, advertisers make their advertisements as interesting as possible to attract people to use the product, through the use of poetic devices such as, rhyme, alliteration, figurative language, and others.

### **2.9.3 Text of advertising**

Text is a structured unit consisting of smaller units. It is “a stretch of language which makes coherent sense in the context of its units. It may be spoken or written; it may be as long as a book or as short as a cry for help.” (Quirk et al. 1990 p.434). Advertising, if we mean the verbal one, is a type of text. We can find advertising texts in printed materials or, in spoken form, broadcast on radio or TV. In printed advertising, the text may serve only for captivating the reader’s attention, provide information about the product or serve as an anchorage (the link between the image and its context; some guidance to the reader) for the image.

### **2.9.4 Persuasive language in advertisements**

Persuasive language is language which is used to change people’s views about the things in the world around them. According to Vaičėnienė (2006) “the goal of advertising is to persuade consumers to act or think in a textually determined way in order to boost sales of particular commodities and services” (p.43). In order to capture attention, convey the message and persuade the consumer, advertising texts use a range of manipulative language devices (Vaičėnienė, 2006). In advertisements, language is used to persuade people to buy the products or services that are being advertised. Marketers of perfume advertisements make use of persuading and manipulative language especially the subtitle of the advertisement to attract potential customer’s attention to these advertisements. For example, a subtitle of *Bond Girl 007* fragrance advertisement is “impossible to resist”. This text build an image that the sexy scent of this perfume is impossible

to resist for the women to use it or try it. Any woman reading that would not want to resist it therefore she might just buy that perfume. Additionally perfume advertisements marketers use sexist words in order to attract the viewers' attention.

### **2.9.5 Sexist language**

People are exposed to sexist language in everyday life, at home, at school, in the street, and through the media, such as cinema, television and magazines. Contemporary advertisements tend to also use sexist language, especially that which undermines the feminine. According to Mills (1995, p. 83), a statement is sexist when “its use constitutes, promotes or exploits an unfair or irrelevant or impertinent distinction between the sexes”. Another definition by Henley (1987, p.64) suggests that sexist language is “language that ignores women; language that defines women narrowly; and language that depreciates women” (Weatherall, 2002, p. 13). Previous studies demonstrated that sexuality in advertising is rampant and heavily exploited that its explicitness borders on soft pornography (Dhanyashree, 2015; Jacobson & Mazur, 1995). Scholars further indicate that inserting sexuality names is an instant means to appear impactful simply because sex sells (Gill, 2008; Perez, 2013; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). Regardless of the advertisement contents, there is a considerable evidence pointing to the concerning depictions of femininity

## **2.10 Linguistics aspects of advertisements**

### **2.10.1 Semantic**

Popova (2010, p. 21) acknowledges that words are not restricted to one single meaning. “Most words have several meanings, which are classified as either denotative or connotative. The denotative meaning is the literal meaning of a word, while the connotative meaning comprise the emotions and feelings that the word generates”. Popova (2010) further explains that “advertising makes an extensive use of the connotative meanings of words in order to achieve its main goal -

make people purchase particular goods mostly by manipulating their emotions”. Given the fact that words and phrases can be used in different sentence environments and acquire different meanings, advertisers take advantage of that when designing their advertisements.

### **2.10.2 Simile**

Simile is a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another, in such a way as to clarify and enhance an image. It is an explicit comparison recognizable by the use of the words “like” or “as” (Cuddon, 1999, p.830). Similarly Chetia (2014) defines a simile as a device that compares two things by making use of words such as “like” and “as”. According to Ding (2003), simile usually helps to promote some positive characteristics of the advertised product (or service) and/or highlight and strengthen emotional representation of its features. A good example “smell like a flower” which implies that because flowers smell good, if you purchase that perfume you will smell good.

### **2.10.3 Metaphors**

A metaphor is a direct comparison of things. Smit (2012) defines a metaphor as a “change or transfer in significance from one object to another” (p. 158). Lakoff and Johnson 1980, p. 154) define metaphor as “statements and/or pictures which cause a receiver to experience one thing in terms of another”. Metaphor contains an implied comparison in which a word or phrase that is ordinarily or primarily used for one thing is transferred to another without giving a formal acknowledgement that any comparison is made. The use of metaphors in advertising is a common way for copywriters to communicate a point to the consumer. For the purpose of this study, perfume advertisers frequently use metaphors which are sexist in nature, or visually with pictures. Salda (2009) highlights that “consumers see the connection between the literal and figurative

meaning of an item” (p. 19). This helps customers decide on whether they will buy the product or not.

#### **2.10.4 Slogans**

Leech (1972) maintains that the slogan is a short phrase used by the company in its advertisements to reinforce the identity of the brand. Furthermore in Clow and Baack’s (2012) view, the advertising slogan is an easily remembered catchy phrase that makes a key point about the company’s image to the customer. Otaala (2004) maintains that advertisers use slogans to first persuade customers to identify a product or service, then to remember that a certain product exists, and finally to persuade people that the specific product is worth buying. Similarly Sindano (2014) points out that a slogan is vital, because it will remain in people’s minds. Slogans are meant to captivate and stimulate people’s interest. Sindano (2014) also states that slogans are catchy and they are usually written in short phrases or sentences to attract the attention of the customers.

#### **2.11 Negative effects of sexualisation of women in advertisements**

Sugiarto & Barnier (2013) submit that some sexualised advertisements have elicited criticism that has led to many negative, and even positive reactions of the viewer. Sexually objectified portrayals of women in advertisements can affect views of sex and sexual behaviour (Kuczynski, 2002). Reichert (2002) observes that sexual explicitness in advertisements increases the self-reported general arousal and the affective reaction varies depending on the sexual explicitness of the advertisement, gender of the audience and the gender of the model. Girls exposed to these images become more sexually aggressive, and sexual experimentation is beginning earlier (English, 2003). Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) illustrate that girls and women often adopt and internalize the observer’s perspective on how to perceive their physical selves. For example, some studies established that sexual objectification in combination with wrong ideals result in negative

psychological variables, such as body dissatisfaction, appearance anxiety and low self-esteem (Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn & Thompson, 2011; Gurung & Chrouser, 2007; Tiggemann & Williams, 2012)

## **2.12 Summary**

This chapter focused on reviewing and engaging literature about advertising, particularly perfume advertisements. The chapter also presents information on the sexist nature of images and the language used in advertising. It traces the history of studies on advertising and semiotics. The study also provides a discussion about the theoretical foundations of the theories guiding this study - Semiotics and Poststructural Feminism. The next chapter will focus on methodology used in the current study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The term “methodology” refers to a system of explicit rules and procedure in which research is based and against which claims of knowledge are evaluated (Ojo, 2003). This chapter explains in detail the methodology used in gathering the information necessary for this study. It highlights the sources of data and the research design, which includes the sampling plan and data analysis methods employed. The steps involved are elaborated in details, and these have been carried out systematically in order to achieve a high degree of reliability and validity. The chapter concludes by presenting the ethical that are related t data collection and analysis processes in this study.

#### 3.2 Research design

Kothari (2004, p.31) defines a research design as “the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure.” Similarly Blaikie (2000, p.21) describes a research design as “a unified statement of justifications for the additional technical choices involved in planning a research project and a process, analogous to the activities of an object, analogous to the activities of an architect designing a building”. To justify why the design is important in research Kothari (2004) explains that it facilitates the smooth sailing of various research operations.

This study utilised a qualitative approach which is descriptive in nature because the researcher described the images and discourse used in perfume advertisements. According to Bell and Bryman (2011, p. 61) “qualitative research is the collection and analysis of primarily non-numerical data (words, pictures and actions)”. A qualitative approach is defined by Hennink,

Hutter & Bailey (2011) as an approach used by researchers in order for them to gain a detailed insight of underlying reasons, beliefs and motivation (p. 17). In addition, they also state that a quantitative approach is used by the researchers to test an existing theory. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), a qualitative approach allows the scholar to gain new understandings about a certain phenomenon and to ascertain the problems that occur within the phenomenon. McMillan and Schumacher (1993, p. 479) opine that qualitative is, “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories.” This definition implies that data and meanings emerge “organically” from the research context.

Furthermore this study employed an exploratory and descriptive approach since it seeks to linguistically and semiotically analyse the language and images used in selected perfume advertisement discourses that use the female model/gender. Blandford (2013) argues that the purpose of exploratory research is to merely explore the research questions with no intention to offer final or conclusive solutions to existing problems. Exploratory studies are a valuable means of understanding what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomenon in a new light (Yin, 1994). An exploratory research may develop hypotheses, but it does not seek to test them (Darabi, 2007). The reason for selecting an explorative approach is substantiated by Flick (2009), who postulates that the main objective of explorative research is to explore phenomena that are not well understood and, thus, attempt to find possible explanations. Aligning this to the research objectives, it was observed that the advertising styles and the language used in perfume advertisements are not well understood in terms of how they reflect sexist attitudes towards the feminine. Therefore the study undertook a closer familiarisation with behaviour patterns with regards to feminine sexualisation in advertisements.

The study also employed the descriptive approach in order to fully and adequately describe the discourse used in advertisements to establish whether the words accompanying the images represent the objectification of femininity in perfume advertisements and how this affects the overall message of the advertisement. Eunsook and Willis (2000) posit that the aim of the descriptive research design is to render a good account of reality by observing, describing and documenting different phenomena surrounding a research problem. When a particular phenomenon is under study, research is needed to describe it, to clarify and explain its inner relationships and properties (Huczynski and Buchana, 1991). Descriptive research in contrast with exploratory research defines questions, people surveyed and the method of analysis prior to beginning of data collection. In other words, descriptive research defines the research aspects such as who, what, where, when, why and sometimes how of the research. However, descriptive research should be thought of as a means to an end rather than an end unto itself (Yin, 1994).

### **3.3 Population**

The population of this study constitutes of all perfume advertisements that use the females or the feminine in advertising or promotional discourse in *VOGUE* and *HER* magazines, published from December 2017 to December 2018. This time frame was chosen because all the perfume advertisements that project women in sexualised in the two magazines for all the years cannot be accommodated in a single study. These two magazines were selected because they mainly advertise products that generally utilize women images.

### **3.4 Sample**

Purposive sampling was utilized in collecting research materials for the study. Purposive sampling is a method which involves the deliberate selection of particular units of the universe constituting a sample which represents the universe. In this work, purposive sampling was used to select thirty

perfume advertisements that utilise images of the women or project the feminine in highly sexualised ways in the selected magazines, as they would contain the information that the researcher will need to answer the research questions and discover other dimensions of the research under investigation. The researcher selected 15 perfume adverts from the *HER* and 15 adverts from *VOGUE* magazines published from December 2017 to December 2018.

### **3.5 Research instruments**

The research collected perfume advertisements from the selected magazines under study. The advertisements were captured and presented in the main document of the study.

### **3.6 Procedure**

The researcher gathered the materials which are perfume advertisements from *HER* and *VOGUE* magazines that utilize images of women or project the feminine in highly sexualized ways. The researcher took pictures of them and analysed them semiotically as well as linguistically. The materials gathered were analysed using the Semiotic analysis to establish how and why the visuals can be construed of as sexist and Poststructural Feminism was be used to analyse the style and diction used in advertisements (how it can also be viewed as sexist).

### **3.7 Data analysis**

The research was largely a semiotic one and as such, data analysis was largely through the interpretation of perfume advertisements/pictures utilising Semiotic Theory (Barthes, 1964, 1973, 1977; Eco, 1968; Pierce, 1931). The language within the advertisements was also analysed through the theoretical spectacles of Poststructural Feminism. Language was analysed to establish whether it is sexist in nature.

### **3.8. Research ethics**

Bhattacharjee (2012) defines ethics as “conformance to the standard of conduct of a given profession or group” (p. 137). The researcher sought permission to conduct the research from the University of Namibia’s Research Ethics Committee (UREC). The data collected in this study was used purely for academic purposes and not for the researcher’s personal benefit or economic reasons. The study was conducted in an academic and professional manner and adheres to the ethical code prescribed by the University of Namibia. The researcher attempted as best as they could to maintain the objectivity and integrity of the study by writing the findings in full. All the sources used are referenced in accordance with acceptable academic standards. The researcher did not fabricate or falsify the results of this study.

### **3.9 Summary**

This chapter presented and discussed the methods, procedures and strategies used in the study. The discussion of the methodology included that of the research design, population and sampling procedures. The research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and ethical consideration were also discussed in this chapter. The next chapter presents the data and analyses it.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the collected data and the analysis. The collected data was analysed and interpreted through the theoretical formulations of Semiotics and Poststructural Feminism, focusing specifically perfume advertisements that utilise female figures/bodies. The outlined findings were based on the principles that the tenets of Poststructural Feminist theory contain some important aspects concerning the gender identities and relations. The advertisements examined provided the most important and effective process through which appropriate undertakings were laid down throughout the study (Lather, 1992). The study focused on females because they are seen to be major victims of objectification of advertisements and have been discriminated against due to the way in which they expose themselves. The essence of ethical narratives in the society is no longer something of consideration.

The study aimed at establishing answers to the posted research questions in chapter one which are;

- i. How are women projected sexually in the media and especially through the semiotic analysis of perfume advertisements?
- ii. What ways do the lenses of Poststructural Feminist Theory aid in our understanding of sexual objectification in advertisements, and how language is used in perfume advertisements in ways that also reflect sexist attitudes towards the feminine? and
- iii. How are images used in perfume advertisements evince sexualized representations of the feminine?

The results presented are in line with the themes emerging from the data analysed. All analysed advertisements were provided with detailed semiotic and poststructural feminist analyses. The presentations were clearly structured to espouse the most important components of the results.

#### **4.2 Semiotic Theory and Poststructural Feminist Theory**

The feminist considerations of Semiotic Theory have observed great problems in the way in which females are viewed in the society. As a supplement, the feminists deconstruct the presumptions of semiotics to be in a position to expose unexplained binary oppositions privileging the aspect of masculine identity and of women to be unnamed constituents (Redmond, 2003). The feminist critique identified the ideologies of semiotic interpretations and how they have contributed to the explanation of critical representations of the feminine in images of advertising. This is one major highlight that have been completed and effectively done in a way to understand semiotic theory. It is observed that feminist relations to semiotic theory are imagined to be ambivalent and cannot be fully comprehended. According to Redmond (2003), the theory, has sophisticated outlines of women subordination conditions being largely cultural and never natural. Even though feminists have made significant contributions to semiotic theory, their frequent marginalization within the mainstream semiotics is properly structured (Hutcheon, 1985). The gap identified is observed to have greater identity and realization through the feminist channels.

#### **4.3 Sexual Perfume advertisement: Analysing the sexualisation of femininity in advertising**

Some of the perfumes advertisements are considered to be sexualised and denigrating to women and the feminine even though our first impression of them creates a sense of effectiveness. *Advertisement 1* below (taken from *Her* magazine) clearly shows a celebrity (Beyonce), whose body pose is very sexually attractive and elegant.



### *Advertisement 1*

In the advertisement, the model is wearing a short dress which stops at her upper thighs suggesting an attempt at seductiveness. Her breasts are well revealed. The colour red connotes sexiness and provocativeness which is the colour of her short dress. The name of the perfume “HEAT” means hot, sizzling, glow, steam- all words that have connotations of a sexual nature. The slogan of the perfume “catch the fever” is sexist in nature and it is written over the model’s cleavage to bring attention to her breasts making the perfume appear sensual. The message the advert clearly communicates is the fact that the perfume makes men to be on heat. Every woman using the perfume will create the impressions they deserve.

Another highly sexualised advert is the *Shalimar* perfume advertisement, extracted from *Vogue* magazine, and labelled as Advertisement 2, below.



### *Advertisement 2*

The advertisement shows a young beautiful girl who poses completely naked. This is in obvious sexual reference and it is used to sell the perfume - making the consumer feel that they will become more intimate by purchasing it. Multiple desirable features are featured on the advertised model to draw the viewer's attention and to consequently sell the perfume. One feature is her deep eye contact which builds a connection between the model and the consumers and advertisers. The model's gaze appears "inviting" and seductive. This advertisement, it seems, is selling the model's body, her sexuality not the fragrance. There is not much in terms of text to analyse.

The perfume advertisement for the *Dior Addict* perfume which is presented as Advertisement 3 below and extracted from *Vogue* magazine, is also sexualised.



### *Advertisement 3*

The perfume advert is very objectifying of the female model and highly sexualised, considering the fact that it exposes some private parts of the model. The image of the woman depicted here seems to be that of a “sex addict”. The model appears to be sexually posed and exposed. Even though it was a perfume advertisement, this is not appropriate depiction of women. Poststructural Feminism disprove of these form of the body of the feminine for sexual connotations. The model’s facial expression is sexually suggestive as well. The model seems to be in throes of desire that she cannot control.

Analysed from a Poststructural Feminist stance, the tagline “admit it” is suggestive of sexual behaviour. This hypersexuality is not accepted and the negative connotation of the term “addict” suggests that it is a problem. Therefore the semiotic component that was considered in the perfume advert was the discrimination and lack of moral consideration of the female.

The woman in Advertisement 4 below, extracted from *Her* magazine, - a *Calvin Klein* perfume advertisement - is seen wriggling in bed concealing only her most private parts.



#### ***Advertisement 4***

The denotative meaning of this advertisement is that there is an irresistible woman naked in front of you. This connotes that the woman is being submissive, willing to be taken and ready to be someone's property. The background which is white, is a good photographic background to expose the naked body. The model's evinces shows sexual submissiveness and willingness. The text "secret obsession" implies that a sexually attractive woman is the obsession of a man and also women are property of man. Therefore this advertisement is simply reinforcing the fact that "sex sells" effectively in the media.

*Dior Pure Poison* advertisement, taken from *Her* magazine and marked as Advertisement 5 below, uses a striking close up photo of a young woman's face and an ambiguous product name to promote the product.



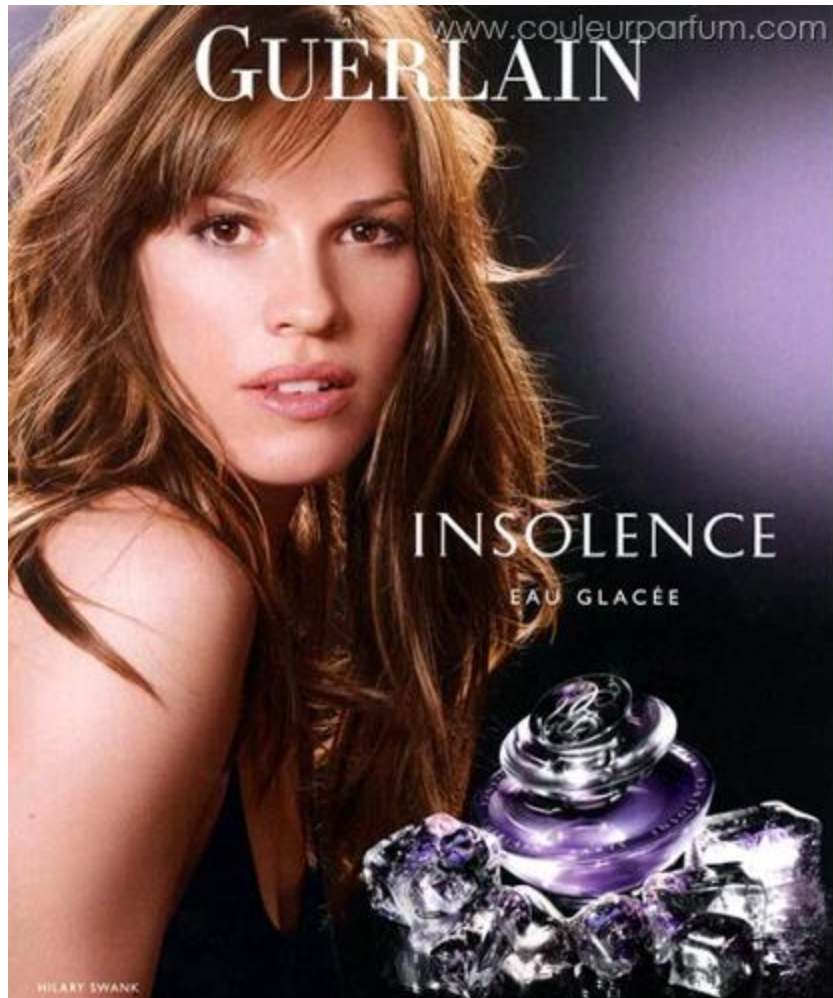
### *Advertisement 5*

The advert uses a few simple words with alliteration and repetition. The product name “Pure Poison” is reflected on the advert. The words “pure” and “poison” are contrasting words. The denotation meaning of “pure” means clean and in case of pure love it means free from defilement. The denotation meaning of “poison” a noun meaning substance which can cause harm, destroy or corrupt. Therefore the name of the perfume “pure poison” together with the image of the perfume as well as the way the model poses connotes that by using this perfume the female gender has the power to lure and draw man towards her. This is a purely sexist statement and not healthy for the realization of a gender neutral environment. This use of those words is very clever as it contains subliminal message that the women can be in control of the man she wants to seduce or sexually attract.

The other key advertisements are the classical perfume advertisements which commercialises a pretty face model with the models gazing provocatively into the camera. The impression created by the gaze is of sexual provocation to the viewer. The perfume bottle and the name of the perfume in another way maximizes the potential of effective advertising. In addition, some of the words that can be used in the advert such as “dreamy”, “sweet fragrance”, “aromatic” among others captures the attention of most users. The words are structured in a way that it inculcates a feeling that was initially not present to its viewers. This is the best approach that has been considered and enables effectiveness to be enhanced.

In the Advertisement 6 below (taken from *Vogue* magazine), the elements mentioned above – model, bottle and fragrance name have been outlined clearly. There is a direct provocative gaze by the model to the camera which creates an attitude to the readers. The style of the model is also another important aspect that affects the fragrance which is ineffective in the entire process. The advert creates an impressive aspect which shows the way in which the definition of insolence has been outlined. The statement made is clear sexualized approach that ought not to have been used in such a scenario.

The model in the advertisement breaks the boundaries which consider her not to be girly. The model is insolent and hopefully wants to make the users want to smell like her and spend several hundred on the bottle of the perfume that has not been considered appropriate. The message passed across the advert is inappropriate and caused significant critical elements to the way in which insolent aspects were considered.



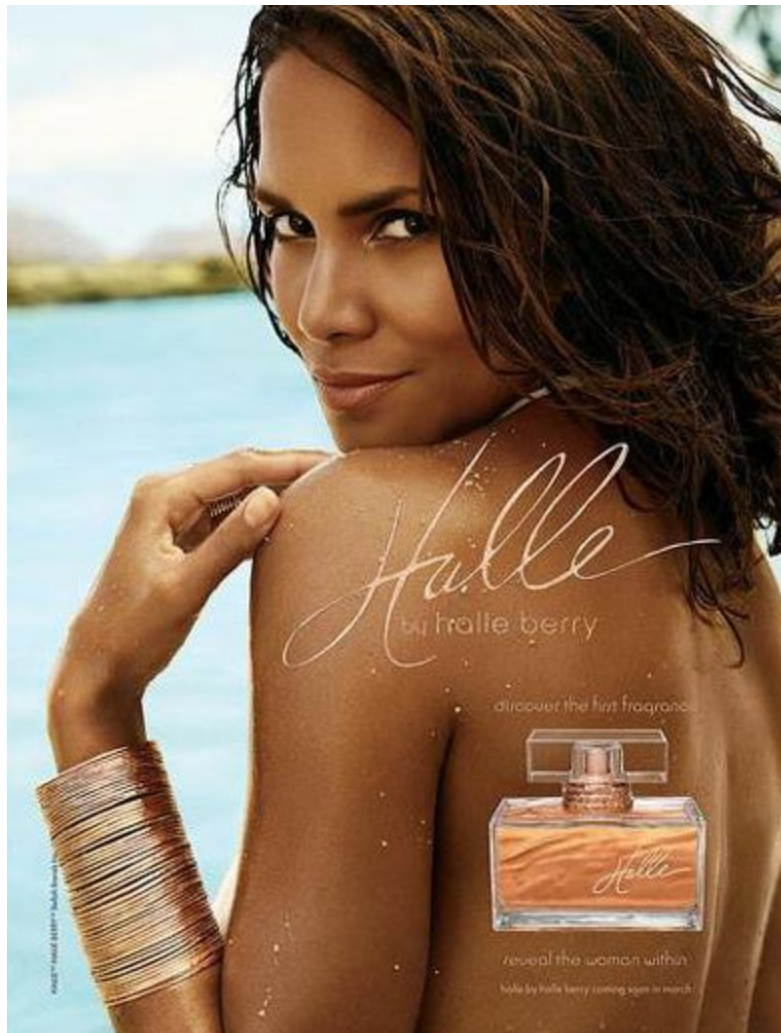
### ***Advertisement 6***

Advert 7 below for *Britney Spears* perfume (taken from *Her* magazine) is featured with the waist up with barely much clothed. She is portrayed as looking for a lover. Britney Spears in this advert is posing sexually. The given evocative name is interestingly painted from the way in which the bottle has been made. The little birds suggest that the model could be considered to be unchanged little songbird that is somewhere in paradise (LaTour, & Henthorne, 1993). The dreamy greens and whites imply that it probably smells sweet, fresh and clean which will make you feel sexy. The pose of the model is also sexual in nature.



### *Advertisement 7*

Advertisement 8 below, extracted from *Vogue* magazine, represents a similar approach of the gaze of the model to the camera. When the person buys the perfume, he or she buys a bottle of the model which is the effective impression that was intended. Judging by the background of the advert, it is attempting to express the reality of sweetness, beauty and perfection.



### ***Advertisement 8***

The model appears to be sexier with eyes overlooking directly to the viewer in a way that suggests sexually related expressions. The advertisement has a bottle which has glittering contents, making the user expect something that is more than gold. It generates effective expectations to the users of the perfume. Further, the writings, tagline “reveal the woman within” on the advert, from a Poststructural Feminist perspective can be viewed in one way as a celebration of womanhood. On the other hand, it connotes that if you wear this perfume you will be sexy, you will have the confidence to be free, and to reveal your true self. The use of the image of Halle Berry, considered

one of the most beautiful and sexiest actresses in Hollywood is also symbolic of the sex appeal that the advertisement attempts to project.

Advertisement 9 below (extracted from *Her* magazine) encompasses all the three elements of model gaze, bottle and fragrance. The other key aspect is the neckline which is all about impression creation - with the model's red mouth and cleavage exposed and the name of the perfume runs over the model's cleavage.

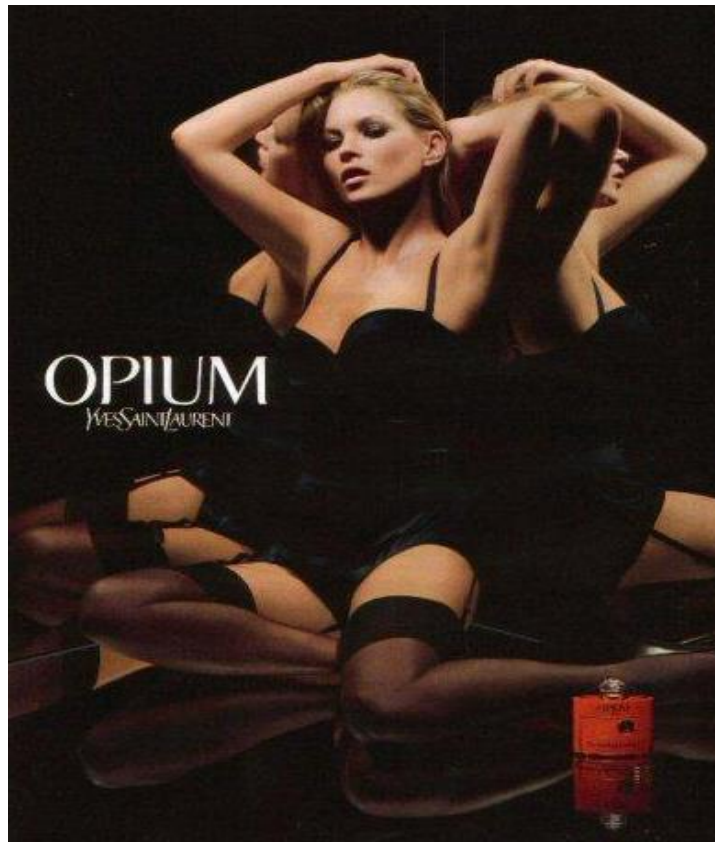


### ***Advertisement 9***

The woman's red lips connote lust, passion and seductiveness. Her lips are wide open which connotes sexual desire. The color of the bottle is also subjective to an impressive thought and brings out clearly what has been enhanced and completed through which the right aspects have been outlined (McIntyre, 2013).

The words/tagline on the advert “The one” clearly indicates the way in which the right aspects have been completed in the advertisement. It implies that by using this perfume men will be sexually attracted to you.

Advertisement 10 below, taken from *Vogue* magazine, is sexualized as well, especially when looking at the posture of the model.



***Advertisement 10***

The model is wearing an exactly similar neckline that captures the attention of the viewers as the previous advertisement. The composition of color draws the attention of the smoky gaze of the individual and brings the predominant shade in the image - which is black and the name of the bottle leaping out in contrast of the color (Boddewyn, & Kunz, 1991). The black, red and white

combinations are seen to be a combination of sexual drama and ineffective components of the model and brings out the stripper components of the model.

The advertisement creates an impression of a sexually provocative approach which is against appropriate social and oftentimes cultural ethical standards. In a manner of speaking, the image highly sexualizes the model and makes one question whether the advertisement is selling the woman or the perfume. It seems to be selling as the main attraction, the body of the model and not the perfume. The name of the perfume itself – OPIUM – is suggestive of an addictive products once one starts using it.

Advertisement 11 below that was featured in the *Vogue Magazine* evinces the nuances of gendered sexual provocation.



*Advertisement 11*

The advertisement creates the impression that women should behave in a sexualised feminine way to be noticed and recognised (Redmond, 2003). The brand has various sexually provocative ways that have been considered and utilised to ensure that the right components that sexualise the feminine have been achieved. The construction of the “muse” resembles how the model has been used to project women as sex objects and inferior.

The gaze of the model and the positioning of the words and the bottle open up a clear path through which subsequent components of the advertisement have been constructed. It is through such constructions and components that we are guided towards a sexualised imaging of the woman. The exposed body through which such reflections have been completed provides the most effective approach and determinism of effectiveness.

Seconds into the Victoria Heavenly advertisement (in advertisement 12, below and taken from *Her* magazine), the researcher observed that the model is skinny, with an ideal body, and is also half naked.



### ***Advertisement 12***

This advertisement targets both sexes, not just women. The image of the ideal body draws women in, and men are also interested because of the open sexuality. However, the image of women being portrayed is harmful to social views of womanhood and femininity in general, and discriminates against women. Again one gets the feeling that what is being sold is the woman and not the product as evidenced by what is given more prominence in the picture. The words used on the advert “romantic”, “luminous” are related to intimacy and have implicit connotations of sex and one wonders how the advert draws the nexus between the perfume and sex and sexuality.

The advertisement for Rihanna’s *Rogue* perfume from *Her* magazine is also sexualised since most of the content in the advertisement is sexual in nature.



### ***Advertisement 13***

The advertisement is directly sexually suggestive as Rihanna (a popular and renowned musician in America) is seen posing nearly naked, with her legs raised in the air, wearing only a pair of heels. First impressions of the advertisement reveal a deliberate depiction of the model who seems relaxed and not concerning herself with anything around her. The sexual content and its intent passed across in the advertisement highlights the deliberate sexualisation of the female body in the quest to sell a deodorant. One is tempted to ask if it was necessary to project nudity for the purposes of selling a perfume. This gets one imagining that there is, it seems, a deliberate connection of sex and perfume. In the end, the resultant effect is the objectification of the woman and the female body for selling purposes.

Advertisement 14 below (extracted from *Vogue* magazine) for *Coco Mademoiselle* perfume also exhibits nudity in a sexualised way – sexist too, especially from the appearance and the setting of colors.



***Advertisement 14***

Advertisement 15 below for *Yves Saint Laurent* perfume, taken from *Her* magazine, uses words which are captivating - drawing the attention of the users.



***Advertisement 15***

The woman who appears to be serious and confident in her gaze suggestively gives a confident smile. The advertisement reveals part of the woman's cleavage which provokes men and can really attract more women clients towards using the perfume. Her blazer does not cover her breasts and most is the cleavage is deliberately exposed. The colour contrasts between her black blazer and her white skin gives prominence to her exposed cleavage and tempts one to concentrate on that part of her body in a sexual way. The setting of the advertisement, considering the background

used and the fragrance in the woman's hand gives a suitable way of understanding the entire highlight. The gaze in her eyes is also sexually provocative, including the very bright red lipstick that she wears which many men relate with sex and sexual attraction,

Advertisement 16 below for *Opium* perfume from *Vogue Magazine*, features a female model reclining on her back with her knees raised and legs slightly apart.

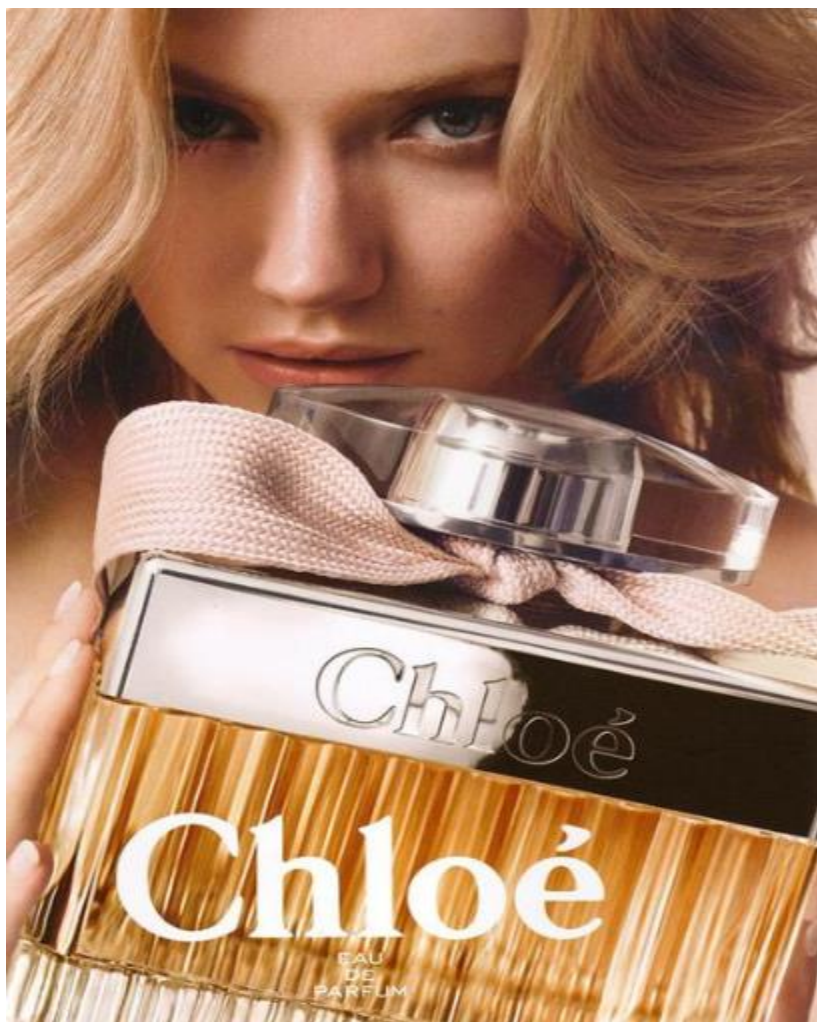


### ***Advertisement 16***

Clearly the sign 'Opium' has connotations of addictiveness and indulgent pleasures which derive from the codes for representing sexual abandonment, and the connotations of the advertisement's visual signs supports them. The mythic meaning of the advertisement connects the perfume, feminine beauty, and exotic sensual pleasure. The posture the woman assumes in the advertisement is sexually inviting, with both her cleavage and legs exposed and the legs positioned in a sexually inviting manner. The leisurely, but also seemingly dreamy, sleepiness represented by the posture

she assume is also potentially capable of being imagined as sexual invitation, In the same vein, the shirt she is wearing is barely covering her private parts and this again represents a highly sexualised form of advertising.

The *Cloe* fragrance advertisement, extracted from *Vogue* magazine and featured as Advertisement 17 below, features a woman behind the bottle of the perfume with sexually provocative gaze in her eyes.



*Advertisement 17*

The name is clearly painted in front of the woman which is an appropriate and suitably fit process which enables the model to approach the entire process in a sequential and effective way. The gold like substance creates an impression of sweet fragrance that would relax the mind through the conducive environment it creates.

The gaze of the woman in advertisement 18 for *Coco Mademoiselle* extracted from *Her* magazine creates an essence of passion to the viewer.



### *Advertisement 18*

The model projects a sexy look and the way she poses licking the bottle is in essence meant to provoke attitude and sexual emotions. The advertisement which is presented as a simple one, however communicates a lot especially in the way in which it creates a construct that expresses sexual appeal to the users and viewers, offering them the potential to be easily attracted to the product that is being sold. While the woman is not stereotypically presented in the nude, her gaze, make up and general aura projects sexual provocation and intent,

Advertisement 19, taken from *Vogue* magazine, for *Emporio Armani* perfume is quite semiotically interesting in terms of how it uses both color and image.



### *Advertisement 19*

The colors of the advertisement are very suitable and fit with the color of the background. In their semi darkness they also evince a sexual scene kind of aura – the dimming of lights to create a romantic atmosphere. The advert shows a model with exposed cleavage/breasts. Her mouth is half opened in what can be described as a lusty pose. The gaze of the woman shows the confidence the model has with the perfume. Her pose is seen as sexy and adds intimacy to the model conforming to the objectification of woman. The free flow of her hair is also sexually suggestive. The tagline on the perfume “can you resist?” is a rhetorical question which seems to suggest or connote that by wearing this perfume a man will not be able to resist being sexually attracted to the woman. The weepy gaze in her eyes as well as the half open mouth can also be imagined as sexual provocation tactics and add to the sexual aura that the model assumes or seeks to project.

The *Aqua di Goa* advertisement, labelled as advertisement 20 below, encompasses an oceanic view which can be imagined as showing the benevolence of the perfume and the way in which it would provide a sensational fulfillment to the users.



*Advertisement 20*

The model projects confidence and both her posture and gaze are sexually seductive and suggestive. Besides, her hair is frizzled and undone, which can also have sexual connotations. Her gaze is penetrating in a sexual way and the dress she is wearing is at best lingerie – again suggesting a sexual import.

Advertisement 21 for *Mon Guerlain* (from *Her* magazine) evinces an essence of sexual enticement from the posture to the looks of the woman.



lipsticked lips and her posture are all inviting in a sexual manner. The advertisement is also considered sexualised based on the appearance of the model. The model used in the advertisement is Angelina Jolie, one of the women regarded as the sexiest in the American film industry. In this regard, the advertisement plays into the category explicated earlier on – the use of celebrity endorsements as well. The impression created is that the woman is intentionally provoking the viewer’s sexual feelings.

The *Elizabeth Arden Red Door* advertisement, labelled Advertisement 22 below (extracted from *Her* magazine), is another exemplification of what can be termed “heat advertising”: where the model poses in a manner to both sexually entertain and provoke emotions.

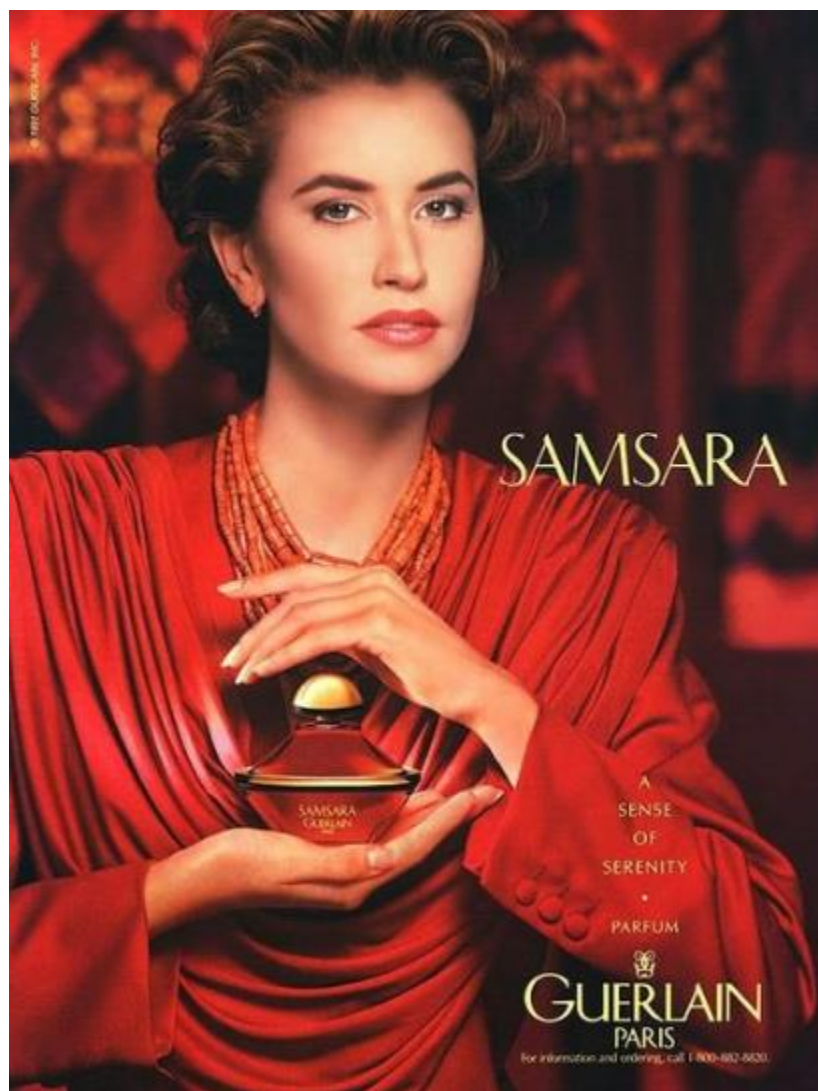


### ***Advertisement 22***

The writing “red door” and the color chosen for the clothes, background and the bottle are a clear essence of creating a provocative and romantic aura. The look and the direct gaze of the woman is another aspect that depicts sexual arousal, invitation and interest. The predominant red colour is also deliberately utilised. It symbolically represents, in many cultures, the concept of love and associated feelings and concerns. The posture of the woman, while behind the door, is also “naughty” and sexually inviting. She can be supposed to be naked as suggested by the fact that she

looks naked from the shoulders to the cleavage (which is all we can see) and her naughty look and smirk seem to invite the readers to come and see what is behind the door – in a sexually provocative and naughty manner. Looking at the advertisement creates an impression that the perfume is very “hot” and would transform the women to attracting the attention of all men.

The commercial for *Samsara* perfume (Advertisement 23, below), from *Her* magazine, is another example of a “heat” advertisement.



*Advertisement 23*

The model is not naked in any parts of her body and for all intents, seems overdressed. What is important to observe is the usage of color in the advertisement. The clothing and the background chosen complement with the bottle she is holding and provokes an emotional essence of love. The dominant colour again, as in the previous advertisement, is red and is symbolic of love and romance. The model appears to present the perfume to the user which inculcates an impression that the perfume is tested to be effective and they should also have a taste of it.

The advertisement for the *Magie Noire* perfume from *Vogue* magazine, presented as Advertisement 24 below, evinces both overt and implicit sexual content and makes the users imagine what the perfume can be able to do.



*Advertisement 24*

Part of the model's body is exposed. The woman appears to be holding the lid of the bottle and one drop of the perfume is seen flowing over her cleavage and landing on her breasts. This indicates the way in which the perfume will be able to provide intensity of fragrance for the entire body of the users. The implications perhaps are that you do not necessarily need to use a lot of it since it is powerful and strong. But the question is; why is the drop used on her breasts/cleavage and not any other part of the body? This was deliberate and meant to direct the eyes of the viewers to that particular area of her body – and this is part of sexualised advertising that casts the feminine as a sexual object to lust over. The goldish color of the perfume also indicates its impressive value and worthiness.

Advertisement 25 below, for *Dolce and Gabbana's Dolce* perfume from *Her* magazine, can be argued to be not so sexualized.



**Advertisement 25**

The advert has an impressive background dominated by beautifully laid out flowers. The lid of the perfume itself is a flower which complements the background. The woman gives a simple look at the viewer while holding the bottle. The writings on the advert also evinces a great alignment with the way in which the advertisement communicates in simple and clear language. The only interesting concern here is that it qualifies as one of the “pretty model” advertisements, in which sexually attractive and beautiful women are used to lure the viewer eyes to the advertisement and in the process possibly generate interest in the product. The manipulation of feminine beauty and the image of the stereotypical beautiful woman is a subjective enterprise and gender insensitive. The commercialization of the feminine and their beauty is highly sexualised behaviour.

Advertisement 26 for *Sensual* perfume, taken from *Vogue* magazine, is possibly one of the most highly sexualised advertisements in this study.



***Advertisement 26***

The advertisement is not only sexualised through imaging but text as well. It is a quite an unsettling advertisement with the text itself pointing towards sexual content and context. The posture of the woman is in itself sexualised and is directed towards provoking sexual emotions. The woman is in the semi-nude, possibly in the process of undressing. We are able to see her undergarments (the bra and panties). She has her legs spread wide, semi exposing her privates in a manner that is highly sexually suggestive. Her gaze and general posture are also revealing of the sexual context and content of the advertisement. The word “sensual” indicates an essence of gratification and sexual sensitivity and pleasure. There is also a male hand groping at her leg in a sexually suggesting manner.

The perfume is imagined to bring a sensual feeling to the user (Redmond, 2003). Furthermore the use of the phrase “Make You Guy Long For MORE” complementing the semi-nude image of the model leaves very little to imagination in as far as it references sexual intercourse. It would imply that women should always make themselves sexually attractive to men – sexually objectifying them in the process. The advertisement clearly indicates the inappropriateness of the perfume advertisement from all the composition and the way in which it has been advertised. Clearly, this advertisement seems to be selling sex and the female sexuality (sexual object that the model represents) and not the perfume. The advertisement thus represents in all facets the exploitation of the female body and femininity for sales purposes.

Advertisement 27 below, extracted from *Vogue* magazine and advertising the *Givenchy Hot Couture* deodorant also evinces nuances of the abuse of the female body and femininity for sales purposes.



### *Advertisement 27*

The advertisement depicts a provocative sexual pose by the model, whose dress is revealing her thigh up to her waist line. This is some form of nudity that has nuances of sexual provocation. The woman's posture is also sexually inviting in nature. The audience looking at the advertisement will know clearly that the perfume being advertised is directed towards making one believe that it will enable one to have a sensational sexual feeling. There are also several pairs of hands that are groping at the woman as if competing to grab her. This can be signifying that the perfume is one that many should aspire for just like the many people with the hands in the image aspire to have -

the sexually attractive woman. There is also a pair of hands using a pair of scissors to cut her dress bit by bit. This can be imagined as a process of making her more nude and revealing her body. There is a play with the female body through its revelations, and this has sexual nuances. The perfume name, “Hot”, complementing the semi-nude image signifies sexual gimmicks. The concept of “hotness” is associated with sex and sexual attraction and behaviour. Clearly there is an exploitation of the sexuality and sexual attraction that the beautiful model and her semi-nudity represent.

Advertisement 28 below, for *Katty Perry's Mad Potion* perfume, taken from *Vogue* magazine, at the surface looks very innocent but there are nuances of sexuality within it.



***Advertisement 28***

Firstly, the model is a beautiful and popular music figure all over the world. Her popularity and beauty is surely geared towards attracting customers – exploiting her fame and sexuality. The advertisement is very clear from the first look. The woman is giving a clear look with a posture that shows the perfume being advertised. Most parts of the woman's body are not covered, which also evinces an essence of provocative sexual behaviour through nudity. For example, almost half

of her breasts (cleavage) are deliberately left out for all to see. Her posture and gaze can also be argued to have sexual provocation nuances – inviting gaze and posture.

Advertisement 29 for *Moschino Pink Bouquet* perfume, extracted from *Her* magazine, is also an example of the sexualisation of both femininity and the female body.



### ***Advertisement 29***

The *Moschino* model in the advertisement reflects an impressive look to the users as she blends in with the color of the background. The position the woman is assuming is compromising and exposes her to suggestions of it being a provocative sexual position. While not wearing any revealing clothing that are sexually suggestive, her posture is. She is depicted as lying in bed in a sexually inviting sensual behaviour. Her gaze and general demeanor are sexually suggestive and

inviting. The background colours of red and pink are also synonymous with passion, romance and love. There are no accompanying words to analyse.

The *Miss Dior* advertisement (Advertisement 30), from *Her* magazine, features a model who is semi-nude and lying in a sexually inviting and provocative manner.



### ***Advertisement 30***

The image exposes the model's body - with the cloth she is holding only covering the most private, sensual and sensitive parts. The level of nudity, revealing all of her leg in a manner that suggests the absence of undergarments, for example, leaves nothing to imagination with regards to the sexual provocativeness of the image. This arouses arguments regarding the message being conveyed. It clearly demonstrates that in order to sell perfumes, the advertisers sell sex and sexual attraction. The woman has a confident look even though she is in a sexualized position. Her gaze

and the manner in which she presses on her bosom are also sexually provocative attributes of the advertisement. There is also a unique blend which provokes the feelings of the users who would opt for the product.

#### **4.4 Summary**

This chapter has been able to explain the way in which different types of perfume advertisements that utilise the female body/modes evince sexualisation of the female body and femininity. The proliferation of the concept of projecting/selling sex and sexual attraction in perfume advertisements seems to cut across the divide in terms of perfume manufacturers and sellers. The advertisements generally depict women in sexualized postures as both sex symbols and sexual objects. Different female models have been identified and used for their beauty and bodies in order to sell perfume products with little or no regard for the impressions this would create in terms of the social relations between the genders as well as the positioning of females in the social strata. The advertisements generally seems to not consider the ramifications of such sexualised projections of the female on the general ethical standards of society. The next chapter presents the general conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the general conclusions and the possible recommendations from the study's findings. The conclusions drawn from the study are made with the feminist perspectives and the research objectives established at the beginning of the study. The chapter also discusses the possible recommendations for further study for future researches.

#### 5.1 Summary

Through the use of the principles of Semiotic Theory, the research observed that there is a high proliferation of highly sexualised advertisements for perfume products. Advertisements are designed in manners that utilise the sexuality and sexual provocativeness of the female body and the feminine. The research in this regard, concludes that such projections are denigrating and cast the feminine and female only as a sexual object to be lusted over. The advertisements that illustrate these notions through semiotic principles evince a number of different types of women exposing most of their private parts through the poses they assume in the images and the clothes they wore. Some of the women are seen posing semi-naked like in advertisement 13. It is observed that a number of advertisements expose women in sexually provocative ways. They inculcate an essence of sexual provocation and appeal to the viewers. This explains why most of the advertisements that have been considered are seen to be highly sexual in nature. The social and cultural appropriateness of the various advertisements is also questionable, especially from observing the design of the advertisements that have been presented and analysed. Through the lenses of Poststructural Feminist Theory, we have been able to establish that the language (text) on the

visual/pictorial advertisements, in most instances, are also highly sexually nuanced. The texts are constructed utilizing linguistic resources and structure that appeal to sexual desire and sexual provocation. This is largely in an attempt to reinforce the sexual symbolism that the images represent.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The major conclusion that can be drawn from the study is that in the world of advertising, sex sells. Analyses of the advertisements demonstrates deliberate and calculated moves and desires by marketers and perfume producers to highly sexualise advertisements. This is probably because of the firm belief that sexual appeal and sexual provocation will attract attention to the advertisements and hence promote sales. This however is done at the detriment of the dignity of the female body and the feminine as ultimately, the woman is projected as nothing else but a sexual symbol/object. The literature review, for example, established and provides a number of different features of advertising and advertisements that have made the character of advertisements to become a great issue of concern in the world – especially with female figures being main targets of sexual and social denigration. The female figures are being considered, in the reviewed literature and in particular this study, to be subjected to sexual misuse from the way they are used as sexual objects in advertisements of goods and services. According to Lather (1992), some of the women who take part in the advertisement in leading organizations are never paid in line with the work they complete. Instead, most of them have been found in the midst of controversies. This is an important limitation and framework that has been considered over the years. The study, observing sociocultural aspects in the society also identifies that women need to review some of the trends that construct their identities, sexualities and gender. Women need to become the main agents that

reform and transform some of the imaging of them that take place in the society and in advertising - they should not subject themselves to discrimination and sexualisation.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The sexualisation of women and the gender discrimination that it represents is a huge challenge that affects the society at large in multitudinous ways. Advertisements have adopted a policy of selling sex and feminine sexuality first before the product, it seems. Going forward, it is imperative that research focuses on and challenges the patriarchal hegemonic tendencies that influence the objectification of femininity and the female body in selling products. Whereas the current study focuses on the sexualisation of the feminine in advertisements, further future studies could either concentrate on the frames and depiction of the male and masculine sexuality – the goal being to establish if such projections are as highly sexualised as the feminine and the female body. Another possibility for future further research would be to comparatively examine advertisements that feature men and the masculine with those that feature women and femininity to examine and establish if there are equal proportions of sexualisation in order to sell products.

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