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This paper uses discourse analysis to examine a television ad for Xenical, a pharmaceutical weight loss product promoted as a treatment for obesity. Language and the ways in which language produces meaning are the traditional areas of focus for discourse analysis. As a research approach, discourse analysis exposes or deconstructs the social practices that constitute the conventional meaning structures of social life. Importantly then, discourse analysis examines the ways in which human beings convey information, making the study of advertising a particularly relevant application. Ads are derived from social processes and shared resources and despite the ephemeral nature of advertising, ads are extremely influential in our everyday culture. While discourse analysis often seems to privilege language, important and unique research contributions provided by this paper include the analysis of visual and aural material within the context of a television ad. Importantly, the analysis illustrates how meanings derived from the ‘I’d Like’ ad for Xenical position women as the primary target for the product. Possible implications as well as potential difficulties in analysing televisual communications are also discussed.
Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a relatively recent theoretical development that has emerged from discursive psychology and conversation analysis (Edwards & Potter 1992). Discourse analysis incorporates aspects of semiotics and poststructuralism as a means of investigating meaning and significance (Elliott 1996; Potter & Wetherell 1987; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates 2001).

‘Discourse’ and ‘discourse analysis’ are terms that are frequently used by researchers interested in giving language an important place relative to social, political and cultural formations. The ‘postmodern turn’ (Sherry 1991) is closely associated with the ‘linguistic turn’, and the turn to language emphasises research topics that include conversational structure, people’s stories and narratology, the subtleties of implied meanings, and how language might interact with non-linguistic (e.g. visual) communication (Jaworski & Coupland 1999). But while postmodernism emphasises contingency, uncertainty and ambiguity (in contrast to modernist notions of truth, progress and certainty), this can only be accomplished by rejecting the notion that language is capable of creating fixed meanings (Wetherell et al. 2001).

The structuring potential of language means that it is not a neutral-information carrying vehicle (Taylor 2001), as implied by the transmission model of communication. Instead, language can be likened to a toolbox (Wittgenstein 1953) where discourse becomes a phenomenon or activity, and discourses are forms of social action where language is constructive and constitutive of social life (Wetherell 2001). Parker (1997) speaks of discourse as ‘comprising the many ways that meaning is conveyed through culture, including speech and writing, non-verbal and pictorial
communication, and artistic and poetic imagery’. In postmodern work, Stern (1998) suggests that ‘discourse’ has come to describe fluid rather than fixed communication. Discourses refer to the set of meanings, words, metaphors, representations, idioms, images, rhetorical devices, descriptions, stories, statements and so on that in some way come together to produce a particular version of events (Burr 1995) or perform particular actions (Potter & Edwards 2001).

Foucault (1972) p. 49, describes discourses as the ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’. Parker (1992) expounds on this view by suggesting that:

Discourse constructs ‘representations’ of the world which have a reality almost as coercive as gravity, and like gravity, we know of the objects through their effects… Many of the objects that discourse refers to do not exist outside discourse. There are fuzzy borders between the set of things we know exist outside discourse and the things which have a reality only within it.

As is the case for semiotics, where there is considerable divergence about essential issues (Mick 1997), there are also many debates and varying perspectives within discourse analysis. It is difficult to speak of ‘discourse’ or ‘discourse analysis’ as a singular entity because discourse analysis takes many forms (Jaworski & Coupland 1999) and many discourse approaches subscribe to different philosophical frameworks (Burman & Parker 1993). For example, Parker’s quote above points to the debate between realism and relativism. Rather than attempt to address such matters here, readers are directed to Edwards (1997); Parker (1998) and Potter (1996). As to the ‘type’ of discourse analysis suggested within this paper, it might be
described as a take on versions developed by Potter & Wetherell (1987); Fairclough, (1995); and Parker (1992). Such an approach assumes that linguistic material has an action orientation that is used to perform particular social functions (Coyle 1995). The key task of the discourse analyst is to complete a close and careful inspection of the text in order to identify what these functions might be and how these functions are performed (Coyle 1995). Rather than focusing upon language variation, as suggested by Elliott (1996), the form of discourse analysis suggested in this paper relies more upon an appreciation of language, or discourse, as a strategy that is used by people to purposefully create particular effects (Daymon & Holloway 2002). By examining language in use, discourse analysis searches for particular patterns, trying to find out how communication is constructed and what it achieves, in effect, searching for particular constructions of the world that the material may advocate (Coyle 1995). Because language is constitutive and situated, it becomes the site where meanings are created (and possibly changed) (Taylor 2001).

**Discourse Analysis and Advertising**

The study of advertising as discourse is not new. For example, Cook’s (1992) text *The Discourse of Advertising* explores theories of linguistics and poetics in the study of advertising. Similarly, Myers’ (1994) book *Words in Ads* examines the verbal language of advertising, including sentence construction, the use of pronouns, metaphors, punning and the construction of slogans. Leiss, Kline, & Jhally (1990) analysed the discourses of ads using a large empirical study as a means of investigating their cultural meanings. Advertising as a type of discourse can be seen in a number of other publications, especially in relation to ‘ideology’ (of capitalism,
materialism, sexism, etc.) (e.g. Barthes (1977); Williamson (1978); Goldman (1992) and Goldman & Papson (1996)).

However, while there are numerous examples of advertising as discourse, there are far fewer examples of advertising as a subject for discourse analysis. Indeed Elliott (1996) suggests that very few discourse analytic studies have been applied to marketing phenomena at all. Some studies of advertising using discourse analysis have been reported, including Morgan, Tuffin, Frederikson, Lyons, & Stephens (1994); Elliott, Jones, Benfield, & Barlow (1995); Pearce (1997); and Proctor Papasolomou-Doukakis, & Proctor (2001). However, the important contribution of the current study is the application of discourse analysis to a television ad. So although Proctor et al. (2001) also applied discourse analysis within the context of a television ad, the current study is unique in that it emphasises the combining effect of the pictorial and aural discourses (as texts) that weave together to convey meaning.

Pearce (1997) suggests that discourse analysis enables the researcher to read between the lines for implications and assumptions and to identify accounts of the world that might be suggested by the ad (the discourses), and examine the ways in which the ad works to address and relate to viewers. Importantly, discourse analysis is concerned with the examination of meaning and the complex processes through which social meanings are produced (Tonkiss 1998).

To date, the study of discourse has been fundamentally language-oriented, and mainly confined to speech and writing (Parker 1999). As a result, discourse analysis has been largely insensitive to visual codings and representations, but as Deacon, Pickering,
Golding, & Murdock (1999) suggest, this does not mean that visual images cannot be seen in terms of discourse. Scott (1994) argues that advertising images are a discursive form, that like writing, are capable of subtle nuances in communication.

If advertising is to be seen as a type of discourse and ads are to be analysed as discourses, then it is important for advertising imagery to be incorporated into such an analysis. As Dyer (1989) suggests, an analysis of the content of ads involves looking at both the verbal and visual aspects of an advertising text. According to Dyer (1989), visual images can be ‘easier’ to understand and may have more impact than words where they generally offer greater opportunity for the communication of excitement, mood and imagination. Visual imagery in advertising, suggest McQuarrie & Mick (1999), is a necessary, meaningful, and culturally embedded characteristic of contemporary marketing communication.

Images within advertising fused with discourses of art demonstrate how advertising has appropriated the techniques, ideas, and even personnel from art forms that include photography, cinema, pop music, comic strips and television programmes (O'Donohue 1997). See for example Nava (1996) and Davidson (1992). Berger (2000, p.12-13) suggests that television ads can be seen as works of art in their own right, and that as such they have their own conventions:

…they might be best thought of as mini-dramas that employ all the techniques of the theatre and the cinema to achieve their aims. At their best, they use language brilliantly, they are dramatic, they employ the most sophisticated techniques of lighting and editing, they have wonderful actors who use body
language and facial expressions to get their message across, and they often cost enormous amounts of money, relatively speaking, to produce.

The vast majority of studies involving images and visual aspects in advertising have focused on print advertising, probably because in terms of representation, print ads are easily reproduced to simulate the original and intended appearance (exceptions might include size, positioning and glossy colour reduced to black and white). In contrast to print advertising, television ads are much more complex and contain a great deal more information (Berger 2000). While a print ad can contain a narrative structure and picture, additional elements contained within television commercials include various kinds of shots, different editing practices, as well as spoken dialogue, background sound and music. As Berger (2000, p. 119) suggests, commercials:

“are in essence mini-video or film dramas, and each frame or image in a commercial is, in a sense, similar to a print ad with a photograph in it”.

However, the analysis of imagery and the analysis of sound in television ads becomes problematic because it is difficult to represent effectively in print form (Pearce 1999). To describe a television commercial for research purposes necessarily involves reducing a complex format to something much simpler. To borrow from Law & Whittaker (1988) a researcher must be able to juxtapose elements (in this case, of the ad) into something that generates a product that is somewhat less heterogeneous, somewhat simpler and somewhat more docile than that from which it grew. As a consequence readers, unless familiar with the ad, are not able to fully engage with the original text and must instead rely upon the description of the form and content supplied by the researcher (Pearce 1999). Such a description stands at the point
where heterogeneity from the field (in this case, the television commercial in video form) gives way to the relative homogeneity and tractability of the two-dimensional sheet of paper (Law & Whittaker 1988).

Transferring televisual advertising copy into print form for research purposes raises issues such as how to represent movement, background sound, and particularly music. Music, for example, has been described by Blake (1997, p.225) as an important carrier of meaning in television and cinema advertising, “representing the invisible and unspeakable, capable of undercutting as well as underlining the visual content of any form of audio-visual representation.” Despite this, Blake (1997) suggests that research on advertising and consumption has rarely examined the use of music (for an exception, see Scott (1990). According to Cook (1992), music is capable of creating meaning when used in conjunction with pictures and/or language. So the use of orchestral music as background to a television commercial may provide a different meaning to the use of solo music and similarly, amplified music may convey a different meaning to the use of acoustic music. An example from Goldman (1992) illustrates this creation of meaning process with the success of the Levi’s 501 advertising campaign in the 1980s, where the ‘Blues’ as music, ‘blue’ as colour ‘and ‘blues’ as emotional state converge for Levis 501 jeans: “Music forged the connective device between popular cultural forms and the product’s identity” (Goldman 1992, p.185).

The music and background sound used within television and cinema advertising creates, or at least assists in producing a certain imagery that can be considered as discourse. For example, certain music may be associated with moods/emotions, such
as ‘happy’ or ‘sad and gloomy’. Music tempo, pitch, duration of individual notes, instruments used, as well as connotations of the music itself, all contribute meaning. Similarly, the voices used in an ad, in terms of the speed of talk, whether a speaker hesitates or speaks with authority, the use of foreign accents, tone and combinations of speech, are open to analysis as discourses and should be examined in terms of what such constructions do and what version of social reality they create.

… the power of the human voice is well-known. When it is added to strong narratives, music, sound effects, and superb writing, it is easy to see why the commercial is such an incredible means of persuasion (Berger 2000, p.12-13).

The following analysis of a television ad illustrates the ways in which such discourses operate as a site for meaning creation.

The data: The I’d Like television ad for Xenical

Xenical is a pharmaceutical treatment for obesity. The product prevents the digestion of a certain percentage of the ingested daily fat that a person consumes. Xenical was one of the first prescription medications to be marketed directly to consumers via mass media in New Zealand. Previously, communication on prescription medications had been predominantly targeted at medical doctors. While initial ads for Xenical in New Zealand were first shown in 1998, the television ad being examined here was one of five ads developed for the third campaign series, and was first shown in 2000.

The ‘I’d Like’ ad becomes a useful application for discourse analysis. As a television ad, ‘I’d Like’ may well fit Berger's (2000) description of being a work of art in its own right, where the ad message is an exercise in televisual story-telling. According
to Roy Meares, one of the copywriters for the ad, ‘I’d Like’ ‘formed the nucleus of the whole campaign’ (AdMedia 2000). But importantly, because of the direct-to-consumer advertising technique used to launch and promote Xenical in New Zealand, and the nature of the ads themselves, these ads created controversy (see for example Ryan & Carryer (2000). In particular, the ads from this third campaign were said to play upon the negative emotions associated with being overweight, including feelings of shame and guilt. As an example, De Boni (2001, p.7) interpreted the theme of these ads as being about people who were ashamed of their bodies because they were overweight, suggesting that the

….campaign drew scorn from people who were convinced that shaming people into losing weight is a cruel and unusual advertising tactic.

A discursive analysis of the ‘I’d Like’ ad, supported by additional material from a variety of sources, enables us to deconstruct particular elements of the ad, and examine the ways in which the ad works to address and relate to viewers. However, in order to analyse a television ad, it is first necessary to provide a description of its content. To achieve this, a photoboard (Duncan 2002) of ‘I’d Like’ is provided in Appendix 1. A photoboard can be likened to a storyboard. It provides a depiction of the ad in a shot-by-shot pictorial sequence. But importantly, the photoboard format describes the key visual scenes that correspond to the associated audio track, including the sound effects and spoken words. Unlike a typical storyboard, the visuals used in the photoboard are derived from the actual scenes taken from the television commercial. In Appendix 1, the left hand column shows the still images derived from the ‘I’d Like’ ad. Each image has been numbered for reference purposes. An approximate time sequence (in seconds) is also included, although it
should be noted that because a television ad contains ‘moving’ pictures, only those images deemed to be key are shown. The middle column provides a description of the sound track, including the words actually spoken in the ad. Finally, the right hand column provides a description of the visual images. The descriptions and sounds are matched as closely as possible to the appropriate individual images.

The photoboard of ‘I’d Like’ is highly visual, containing 47 images. In contrast, aural descriptions are much more difficult to represent, but should be seen as no less important. The photoboard is at best then a compromise, offering a particular representation of the television ad as data. Importantly, the description of the ad provided here should be seen as only one possible interpretation. While it may be possible to include videotaped ‘appendices’ that include the actual television commercial as a supplement to a static printed form, this becomes problematic for publishing to a wider audience. In the near future it is hoped that there will be opportunities to gather, share and represent consumer research in multiple sensory modalities (Belk 1998).

Before continuing with the rest of the paper, now may be a useful time for the reader to look through the representation of the ad shown in Appendix 1. Think about your own interpretation of meaning for the images, storyline and soundtrack.

**One interpretation: the ‘producers’ meaning for ‘I’d Like’**.

I’d like to do all the things most people just read about...
Know real love ... and real fear...
Walk naked in the winter snow ...when in the summer tide ...
To play like a child ...
To think ...as a martyr...
To make love to stranger ...
The above dialogue, spoken in an Eastern European accent, is central to the ‘I’d Like’ television ad. But taken in isolation, away from the musical soundtrack and visual images, much of the meaning of the ad is lost. The photoboard in Appendix 1, although requiring the reader to imagine the sounds and moving picture images, provides a means of representing the data in its intended context. The images, the music and the voice are shown in relation to one another, which in turn provides a platform for deconstructing critical elements of the television ad. At first reading, the ‘I’d Like’ ad may be puzzling for an audience and it is useful to explore the intended meaning as provided by the ad’s creators. Indeed, much of the analysis provided in this paper is producer focussed (rather than consumer focussed). As already stated, discourse analysis examines the strategic use of language, or discourses, and the way they create particular effects. As well as the data provided by the ad itself, additional data sources provide a useful commentary on the intended meaning for the ‘I’d Like’ ad. Because of the controversial nature of the ads, several journalists commented on the Xenical advertising campaign. AdMedia (2000) focused mainly on the creative elements of the ‘I’d Like’ ad while the article by White (2001) provided a descriptive profile of Roy Meares, one of the creative directors of the ad. In addition, a personal interview with Roy Meares provides another data source.

According to Roy Meares, the concept for ‘I’d Like’:

arose when he imagined how a young woman might fantasise of a life where she was lighter and fitter and active. He pictured her in her bedroom, possibly
surrounded by Mills and Boons novels and period fiction, drifting dreamily from one fantasy scene to another (AdMedia p.29).

Another quote, supports this inspiration:

“I pictured this overweight lady sitting in a room, says Meares, “and she kind of reads Mills and Boon books all day. She’s a really sweet beautiful girl but she’s incredibly overweight. And I imagine that she’d sort of sit on a bed and have quite erotic dreams because she felt that, because of her physical size, she’d been robbed of the wonderful things that she reads about. That’s how it started (White 2001, p.44).

Finally, an extract from a personal interview with Roy Meares:

… you’re drawn into something, initially, a story or a fantasy or something, and then right at the end you go “Oh shit - it was Xenical”, you know, I tried to put my head – that’s for myself – in the head of a woman who loved to read and was sort of into Mills and Boon and that sort of thing, and she would, as we all do, she would fantasise about the lives she reads in these cheap paperbacks…and yeah, so there’s this Mills and Boon thing, which allowed me then to sort of get off into all sorts of the world of wonderful trains in India and the dialog – the dream sequence, ‘I wish I could do this’, I think was a lot more risqué, the original one, I actually pushed it to the limits, and I’ve got to be honest, I knew it was gonna be controversial, and I knew it would polarise people, and I knew all of that…

Common to all three quotes is Meares’ reference to Mills and Boon. The Mills and Boon fantasy theme is central and works as an intentional and strategic framework for the ad. As suggested by Daymon & Holloway (2002), a critical emphasis within
discourse analysis research is the cultural and political context in which discourse occurs and the way that language is used and organised in order to construct different versions of events and activities. The use of the Mills and Boon framework enables the creators of ‘I’d Like’ to construct a certain argument, and the use of discourse analysis highlights some of the ways in which this argument might work. Mills and Boon (Silhouette and Harlequin are publishers of a similar genre) has become a generic term for a mass popular fiction for women, and as suggested by Philips (1990, p.150):

The romance novel is unique in popular culture, as a narrative form that is produced and marketed exclusively for a female audience. These narratives consistently address material conditions and contradictions in women’s lives …

As such, the romance novel can be interpreted as a discourse for female desire (Philips 1990), and this same discourse underlies the ‘I’d Like’ television ad, where the target market is predominantly female. Philips (1990) describes Mills and Boon as a fiction in which marriage was invariably offered as the solution for female anxiety, and perhaps this is an added implication for the woman who sits alone on her bed reading romance novels, unable to realise her dreams because of her weight. As Meares alludes to in the above quote “she’d sort of sit on a bed and have quite erotic dreams because she felt that, because of her physical size, she’d been robbed of the wonderful things that she reads about.” Why would she be having erotic dreams? Why should she feel robbed of the wonderful things she reads about? One interpretation could be that because she is overweight, she may think she is unattractive, is therefore incapable of having a relationship, and cannot physically experience many of the things she would like to be able to.
McNamara (2000) suggests that attitudes towards women’s consumption of popular fiction have invariably been negative, but she also suggests that the act of reading for women can be seen as both an everyday activity, and as part of their ‘escape’ from routine, sometimes as a ‘snatched pleasure’ (McNamara 2000). Meares refers to Mills and Boon as ‘cheap paperbacks’, as if there is a stigma attached to the reliance on living life vicariously through romance novels. The woman depicted in ‘I’d Like’ is meant to see the dream sequence as an escape from her everyday life, and as Meares suggests, this reflects “how a young woman might fantasise of a life where she was lighter and fitter and active.” From a creative perspective (the producers focus), the overweight woman sitting on her bed has been dreaming/fantasising about all the things that she might do if only she were thinner. Williamson (1978) suggests that advertising can provide short-lived vicarious experiences by presenting an idealised vision of everyday life, temporarily lifting the viewer out of his or her mundane existence. But it soon becomes clear that the adventures this woman speaks of turn out to be merely fantasies, vicariously derived from the Mills & Boon novels she reads. In reality, the overweight woman cannot even tie her own shoelaces let alone experience the dreams she fantasises about. The advertising message, ‘Lose weight …Gain life’ becomes a powerful message that implies that by losing weight (using Xenical), the audience (women) will be able to ‘live’ a more fulfilling life. An overweight body is therefore positioned as a restriction. In contrast, a thinner body implies a preferred, more ‘normal’, more satisfying and more exciting lifestyle.

The visual references to the romance novel are evident within the photoboard shown in Appendix 1, and an analysis of the images at this stage is helpful. The very first
image #1, shows a young woman sitting on the front of a train holding an open book. Image #2 coincides with the voice of the narrator: “I’d like to do all the things most people just read about …”. Images #3 and 4 also show a book, but this time the pages are turning quickly. Images #5 and 6 convey the idea of loose pages blowing in the wind. The final images of the book are shown in images # 44 and 45, where we first see the narrator as an overweight woman sitting on her bed, an open book at her side.

Alperstein (2003) proposes that advertisers use structural tricks within ads to entice consumers to engage with the ad. Kover (1995) suggests that copywriters use ‘hooks’ that may subvert and surprise an audience into watching an ad. A critical and strategic element within the ‘I’d Like’ ad is the surprise ending. Meares wanted ‘the subject (obesity) and product (Xenical) … withheld until the very end, like a surprise ending or a punchline.’ (Matthews 2000).

…we see a slim, beautiful, European-accented woman, naked in the snow, a lamb among wolves, making love to strangers. It runs like an MTV English Patient until the viewer is whiplashed out of its dreamworld with a close-up on the face of an obese woman, who says, “But first, I would just like to tie my own shoes.” (Matthews 2000, p.22).

As suggested by this quote, the ad for ‘I’d Like’ relies upon a combination of artistic camera work and an emotive background soundtrack (the reference to an MTV production). It is important therefore that a discursive analysis of television advertising should take account of both the visual and aural arguments at work in the construction of the advertising message. “I’d Like” can be described as a visual and aural pastiche.
In large part, the ‘arty’ feel of the images used in the ad, can be attributed to the ad’s director, Melanie Bridge, who is an experienced still photographer. AdMedia (2000) reported that the 1969 film by Russian Sergei Paradjanov, “The Colour of Pomegranates” was Bridge’s inspiration for ‘I’d Like’. Paradjanov did not use any camera movement in his film, and similarly, Bridge shot most of the ‘I’d Like’ ad without any camera movement. The lack of camera movement is important because its use constructs a certain pattern that when disrupted, creates contrast. In keeping with the idea that advertisers make use of structural tricks:

An exception is the commercial’s penultimate shot, where the camera goes close-up on a pair of vivid blue eyes, then pulls back to show not fantasy girl but, rather, “reality girl”, the obese woman who is narrating the commercial. The camera move – combined with a sudden change in the soundtrack – brings the fantasy sequence to an end, like snapping someone out of a trance. (AdMedia, p.31)

As the above quote suggests, the movement of the camera, coinciding with the change in sound, creates the necessary contrast that differentiates the world of dream/fantasy and the world of reality within the ad. The woman that we see in the fantasy and the obese woman that we see near the end of ‘I’d Like’ are connected by their reflections in a mirror. Here the mirror works to enable the seamless transition between the fantasy woman and the woman in reality. By blinking her eyes, she switches from the dream (thin woman) to the woman who is obese. But the optical metaphor implied by the mirror also encourages us to look at our selves. In her book titled Many mirrors: Body image and social relations, Nicole Sault (1994, p.1) asks the question ‘What if
we had no mirrors, photographs, or videos to show us how we look? How would we see ourselves?’ Sault proposes that even though we have material objects that reflect our selves, we also all act as social mirrors for each other, and we rely upon the reactions of others to learn about how we look and who we are. The creators of the ‘I’d Like’ ad are in effect encouraging their audience, those people who are obese and overweight, to look into the mirror and judge themselves.

Just as important as the visual images, the soundtrack for ‘I’d Like’ is also an integral part of the ad. AdMedia (p. 33) describes the soundtrack for the ad as being ‘the aural equivalent of the visual patchwork.’ The aural references can be usefully linked to the images shown within the photoboard in Appendix 1. The very first image #1, of the woman sitting on the front of the train surrounded by Asian/Indian males, is linked with an opening boom, as of a drum beat, followed by ethereal Indian/Arabic music as of a flute that continues throughout most of the ad. The sound of bagpipes and military marching drums are heard alongside visuals of the nurse in an army trench, holding a wounded soldier, images # 9-11. Carnival organ music accompanies images # 18 and 19, as we see the young woman at the beach. Orchestral music that becomes more intense accompanies images # 29 – 31 of the woman in the bedroom scene. But the soundtrack that has made up so much of the background, weaving into the exotic nature of the images it accompanies, abruptly comes to an end at image #39. This is a crucial part of the ad (the ‘hook’), the point that differentiates fantasy with reality, where the narrator’s voice is accentuated because it is the only sound we hear: “But first … I would just like to tie my own shoes”. The silence continues through images # 40-45, until at image #46, the ethereal flute music is heard once more.
Importantly, the contrast between fantasy and reality that is so carefully constructed within ‘I’d Like’ also works to distinguish between the accented voice of the overweight woman narrator, and the voice of the woman who speaks authoritatively about Xenical:

“The average New Zealander is increasing in body weight by a gram a day. Xenical® is now scientifically proven to be twice as effective as diet alone. Call 0800 49 36 42 or talk to your doctor or pharmacist. Because Xenical® works.

The contrast between the two voices is again intentional. For most of the ad, the European accented voice is associated with an exotic fantasy world, reinforcing the discourse of adventure and desire already established via the Mills and Boon framework. However, the authoritative voice that concludes the ad is associated with a scientific, perhaps even harsh reality. The contrast is important because it positions Xenical as being a scientifically proven treatment for obesity. One implication is: in order to live a more fulfilling life (to do more than just dream), a person should not be overweight. To order to have a more fulfilling life, a person must first lose weight. Xenical is the scientific solution that can accomplish this. The contrast between fantasy and reality, already described in terms of background sound, is just as importantly developed visually within the ‘I’d Like’ ad.

In order to create the air of fantasy for ‘I’d Like’, Melanie Bridge drew inspiration from fairytale books that gave ideas for the colours, textures, and wardrobe used. The images seen are of an exotic nature, as suggested by the woman sitting on the front of the steam train, the nurse and the soldier, the knife with the bloodstain, the woman walking naked carrying a flower, facing a firing squad, standing alone but surrounded
by wolves, and so on. The fairytale inspiration is important because it links in with the fantasy theme that is implied by the Mills and Boon framework. The collage of images combines a range of possible scenes; scenes that one might imagine could be sourced from a selection of romance novels. Many of the images are artfully crafted, for example the nurse and soldiers standing on the backs of horses (image #7 and 8), but highly improbable in real life. There is a sense of historical romance within the images, in keeping with the genre of period fiction. These images are all strategically used in the ad to draw the audience into this fantasy world. But importantly, the change that occurs between images #39 and 40, marks the visual equivalent of the soundtrack contrast. This is the point where the ad switches from fantasy world to the world of reality. The overweight woman that sits on her bed is now shown in a contemporary setting. Surrounding her are modern furnishings (image #44), in contrast to the exotic settings experienced in the fantasy world. The final frames of the ad show an even greater degree of contrast (images #46 – 47). Reality is shown here as a black background and an 0800 number along with some medical information. The visual contrast is as important as the aural contrast, but taken together, both visual and aural discourses work together to position Xenical as a medical and scientific solution for obesity and the overweight.

**Conclusion**

Discourse analysis is a social practice whereby people use discourses in order to do things (Gill 1996). This paper argues that the discourse analysis of an ad enables us to look at the ways in which its producers purposefully create particular effects for strategic reasons. The Mills and Boon framework that underlies the ‘I’d Like’ television ad positions the overweight or obese (female) viewer as desiring
(fantasising) about having a more fulfilling life. But because of her weight, her fantasies remain fairytale like and unobtainable. This imagined fantasy world is starkly contrasted with bodily reality. Because in reality, it is the simple everyday, taken-for-granted things, such as being able to tie her own shoes that should really matter. ‘I’d Like’ suggests to the viewer that there are degrees of ‘fantasy’. For those who are of ‘normal’ weight, then exotic fantasies may be just that, dreams and imaginings. But for the obese and extremely overweight, a dream or desire may be much more fundamental and simple, such as accomplishing a normal, everyday task. For the woman who is obese, to be able to lose weight means that she will be capable of doing much more in life. The ‘lose weight, gain life’ advertising statement therefore has at least two connotations. The first connotation suggests that by losing weight a person will consequently be more physically (and mentally) capable of doing the things in life that many of us would consider as ‘normal’. Obesity and being extremely overweight are therefore positioned as non-normal conditions, a marginalizing positioning that has implications for those people classified within this category, especially for women. The second connotation suggests that by losing weight, a person will be less susceptible to obesity-related risk factors, therefore privileging a medical discourse.

Jaworski & Coupland (1999) talk of discourses as being the sets of social practices which ‘make meaning’, and that many of the texts produced in this process can be treated as multi-modal because they make use of more than one semiotic system. The discursive analysis of ‘I’d Like’ provided in this paper then, attempts to demonstrate this process of combining, by examining the spoken language used, the visual images portrayed, and the background soundtrack heard within the ad.
The richness of the layering process involved in the production of ‘I’d Like’ is exposed by the multiple sources of information that combine and contribute to the analysis provided here. The visual and aural elements cannot be treated in isolation, just as the spoken words cannot be analysed in isolation. As Hayes (2000, p.217) suggests:

visual images can’t be taken as sufficient material in their own right: they need to be set in their historical and social contexts. So the researcher needs to do a lot of reading and information seeking, in order to identify the social representations on which the visual representations are based. Those social representations will give a framework for the analysis, and allow the researcher to treat the images as a kind of ‘visual rhetoric’.

It is important to emphasise that the analysis discussed in this paper has been producer-focussed, and relies heavily upon the producer’s interpretation of the ad itself. But this is of course only one possible interpretation, and as for reader-response approaches, discourse analysis would be open to other interpretations, especially consumer-focussed approaches, where multiple meanings are negotiated. To this end, a consumer-focussed paper is currently being prepared.

In addition to the discursive analysis of the ‘I’d Like’ ad, this paper proposes the use of photoboards to represent television ads in print format. Photoboards provide a means of combining into a two-dimensional summary, the visual images, the spoken words and the sound effects used in a television ad. While it may be difficult to reproduce all of the ads effects in a photoboard format, it nevertheless provides an
audience with a data set and synopsis that summarises many of the ads executional elements.
References


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