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Sex sells - or does it? Responses to the construction of youth identities in print advertisements

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Chapter Four: A Social Semiotic Reading of the Advertisements (CDA)

Introduction

This chapter aims to answer the research question: 'What are the representations of youth identity found in print advertisements of two magazines?' It presents a critical discourse analysis of the four brand advertisements, which are: Guess, Soviet, Levi's and Diesel. In semiotic language, advertisements are made out of signs. I use the word 'sign' to refer to any symbol that is used to represent meaning, whether linguistic, or iconic.

My analysis of the texts was conducted with reference to discourse semiotics. Kress, Leite-Gartia and Van Leeuwen (1997: 257-289), Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), and Scollon and Scollon (2003) were the primary sources for the model of discourse semiotics or social semiotics that I used. I conducted an analysis of 'crafted and designed images' (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Kress and van Leeuwen (1999: 379) assert that, 'the articulation and understanding of social meanings in images derives from visual articulation of social meanings in face-to-face interaction'. This implies that reading images is influenced by typical everyday life interaction or communication.

For the present analysis of the advertisements, I did not use the entire system of the grammar of visual design proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), as I agree with Scollon and Scollon (2003: 86) when they contend that 'the grammar of visual design' by Kress and van Leeuwen is overly complex. I used the following concepts to analyze the images: 'narrative vectors', 'modality and color', 'gaze', 'power and camera angles', 'social distance', and 'composition'. Each of the aspects of the semiotic system is explained below.

4.1 Narrative Vectors

Narrative vectors are the 'unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements,' depicted in an image (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996:56-57). Jewitt and Oyama (2001: 141) state that narrative representations relate participants in terms of 'doings' and 'happenings' of the unfolding of actions, events, or processes of change. This is in contrast to conceptual patterns. Conceptual patterns represent participants in terms of their more generalized, stable or timeless 'essences'. They do not represent them as doing something, but as being something, or meaning something, or belonging to some category, or having certain characteristics or components. Furthermore, narrative pictures are recognized by the presence of a vector that expresses a dynamic, 'doing' or 'happening' kind of relation.

To add to the above, Jewitt and Oyama (2001) describe a vector as a line, often diagonal, that connects participants. Callow (1999) elaborates on this by positioning that these vectors can be objects or parts of objects (such as arms, legs, a pole, the side of a house) or invisible lines, such as the direction of gaze from a person's eye. Vectors help construct the actions and relationships in a text.

4.2 Modality and Color

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 160) use the term 'modality' based on its meaning in linguistics: 'Modality refers to the truth value or credibility of statements about the world.' In the case of images, Kress and van Leeuwen claim that in western aesthetics the primary or default modality is 'naturalistic representation'. Naturalistic representation is what can be seen by one's naked eye. People have variations in what they 'see'. Modality, therefore, refers to forms of factuality, which may be coded by kinds of realism. An image might use a mode of representation that is in a hyper-realist form, perhaps a surrealist form of everyday realism. Colour photography is used as one means of establishing 'realism'. This is how the world of the real, unreal, dreams and fantasies might get expressed in conjunction with other signs. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) give

the following indicators of modality: colour saturation, colour differentiation, colour modulation, contextualization, representation, depth, illumination, and brightness. Any of these can be used in the design of a visual image to produce greater or lesser degrees of modality (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 90). Scollon and Scollon (2003: 91) conclude that modality is a feature of specific sociocultural groups and their coding practices or orientations. For example, we accept a certain representation as reality or non-reality because of our context, society and culture.

4.3 Social Distance

Indications of social distance may be coded by the size of the element represented, or by its coded distance from the viewer. On the same note, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) also describe the role of camera factors in the depiction of images, such as long shot, close up, and medium shot. A long shot refers to images that are captured from a distance; close up is when the image is captured from a short distance, usually the full object closely; and medium shot is in between the two. Attitudinal relations may be coded by the viewer's lateral position in relation to an element (such as 'front on', 'to the side of', 'from the margin'). Any of these can indicate the degree of 'affection' to the image between the image and the viewers. For instance, a 'front on' image is closer to the viewer and can be said to invite the viewer to pay attention to the front 'body'.

4.4 Contact or Gaze

Gaze is described by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) where examples of eye contact with the audience or looking at a side angle can correspond to Demands and Offers. Demands and Offers are the realizations of the Mood structure of the grammar of interpersonal meaning in Systemic linguistics (e.g Halliday, 1985). An Offer is defined in Scollon and Scollon (2003) as an instance in terms of which the interactive participants or represented participants cast their eyes aside, opening the full personal front to examination by the other person socially present (i.e. audience). This contrasts with the Demand, which is the direct look into the eyes of the viewer or reader by the represented person or people.

Jewitt and Oyama (2001:143) state that the direction of the gaze of represented participants is also a special kind of vector '…It can be that we see both the person (or perhaps animal) who is looking and the object of his or her gaze (transactive reaction) or only the person looking and not what he or she is looking at (non transactive)…'. I am going to extend the use of the terms 'Offer' and 'Demand' to include not just the direction of the gaze or eye contact but to include the bodies as well. I will refer to the positioning of the body of the models. Various parts of the body can be positioned as being on offer and can demand special attention from the gaze of the audience.

4.5 Power and Camera Angles

Power relations are coded by the position of the viewer in vertical relation to the object: if the object is more powerful we look up to it (low angle shot); If we are more powerful we look down on it (high angle shot). For example, Scollon and Scollon (2003) explain that a person seen from below looks more powerful to the viewer. Images can also be classified as high angle, low angle and normal angle. If an image is a high angle shot, the camera looks down on the subject, if it is a low angle, the shot is taken from below the subject, and if it is a medium shot, the camera is at 'eye level'.

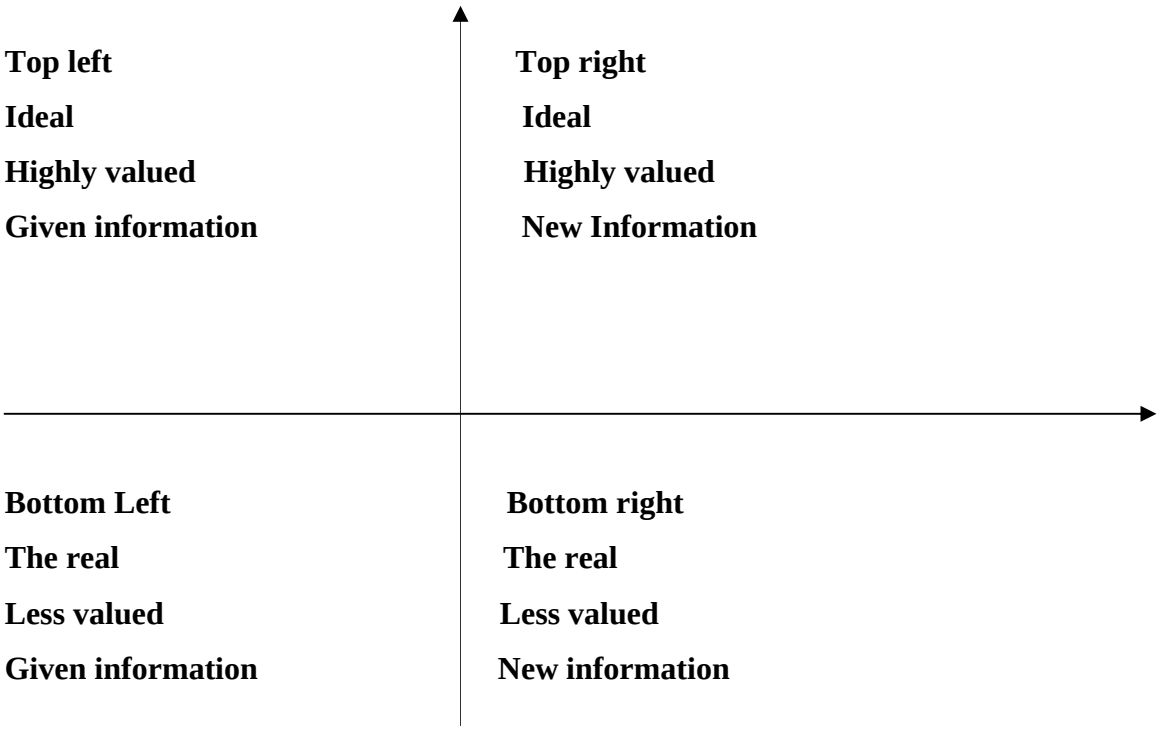
4.6 Composition

Composition affects the salience of elements and influences the viewers' reading path. Salience is defined as:

> The elements (representational participants and objects) are made to attract the viewer's attention to different degrees, as realized by such factors as placement in the foreground or background, relative size, contrasts in tonal value (or colour), differences in sharpness, etc. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996:183).

Colour, composition, camera angles, or social distance can work together or separately in giving salience to an aspect of an image or to the whole image. The choice and

positioning of elements in composition affect its visual coherence and produce information focus. Here is a diagrammatic representation of this:



Visual space in western semiotics, reproduced from Kress et al. (in Van Dijk 1997: 274)

Key features of this diagram are separation into ideal and the real. The ideal on the picture matches with what is found on the top half of the diagram, while the real is found in the bottom-half section of the diagram, below the horizontal axis. The other key distinction is marked by the vertical arrow, which separates left from right. The left section represents old information and the right section represents new information.

The given and the new in a visual image correspond to what Halliday (1985) calls the information structure of the clause, where 'the Theme' conflates with the given, the known or the point of departure for the message. The new information is technically labelled 'the Rheme'. It is what is being foregrounded in the clause. This is how the Given and New have been described by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996):

> For something to be Given means that it is presented as something the viewer already knows, as a familiar and agreed-upon point of departure for the message. For something to be New means that it is presented as something which is not yet known, or perhaps not yet agreed upon by the viewer, hence as something to which the viewer must pay special attention. (p.187)

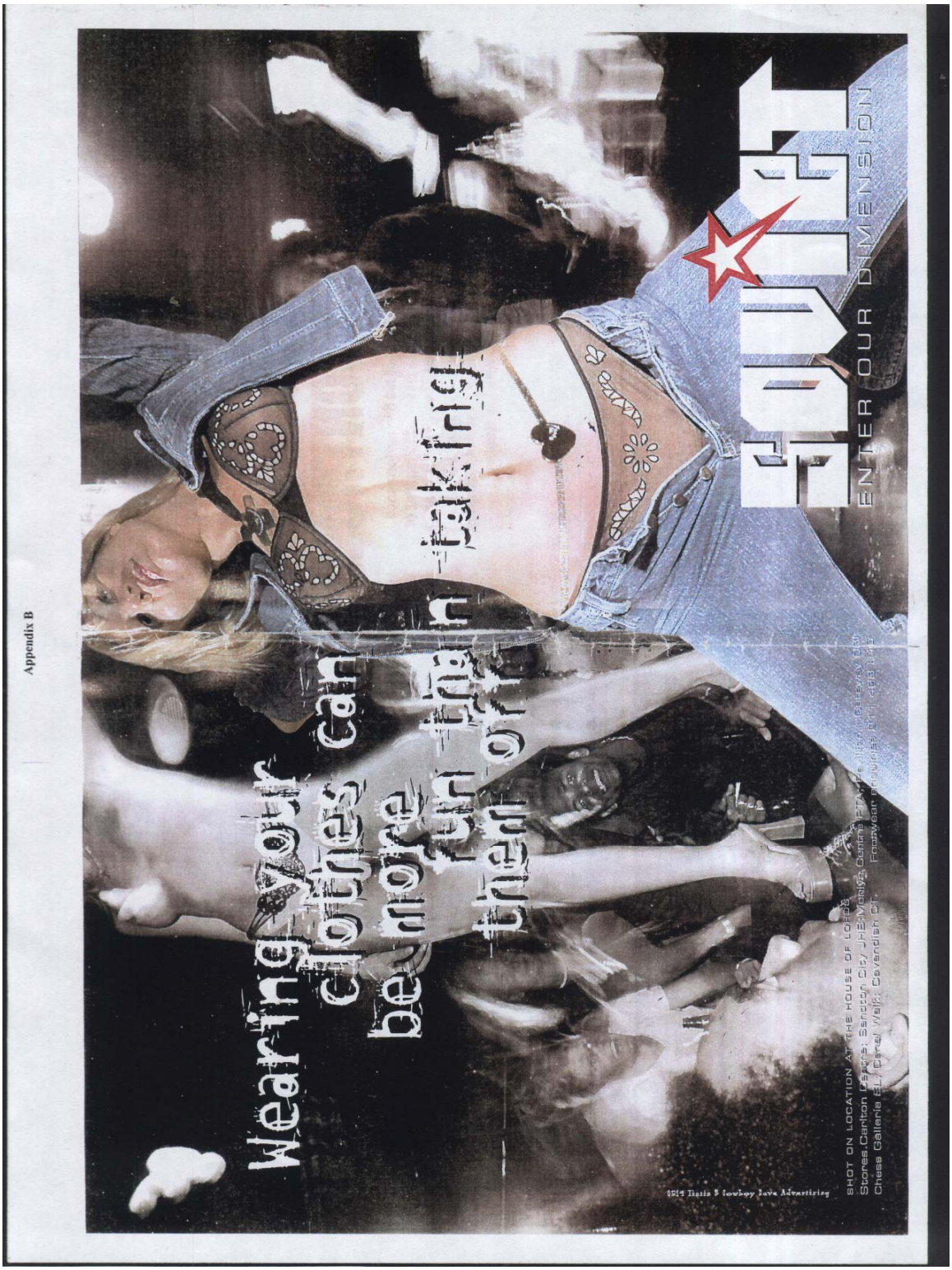
Kress et al. (1997) write that the real and ideal may be given particular meanings in certain contexts. Ideal may mean distant in time, whether 'of the past' or 'in the future'; an ideal form, 'a wish'. Real may have the specific meanings 'here and now' 'empirically so', and so on. The left tends to have meanings of what is taken as given, known, or assumed to be the case. The right space is reserved for the new or for the finishing point. On another note, information can be organized according to centre and margins (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). This occurs when the key element of an image or page is in the centre, information on the margins is likely to be seen as peripheral.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) assert that the materials that are placed in these spaces are both culturally shaped and determined by the interest of the maker of the text structure. Kress et al (1997: 285) argue that any social theory of texts should reveal more about the culture than about the structure, form, and meaning of the text. They claim that it should reveal more about the 'personal, social, cultural, political and therefore ideological organization.' The aim of my analysis is to find out more about the representation of youth identity in selected print advertisements.

In analyzing the advertisements, I have described them and also interpreted what the descriptions mean. Schroeder and Borgerson (1998) assert that description is the starting point for interpretation. They claim that basic descriptive work requires articulation of form, subject, genre, medium, colour, light, line, and so on. Schroeder and Borgerson (1998) argue that the relationship between description and interpretation is a blurry one, but that ideally, interpretations emerge from descriptive details. For the two authors 'interpretative tools include both internal and external sources of information about the object, such as context, comparisons, denotation, and connotation' (also see Dyer, 1982).

Schroeder and Borgerson (1998: 178) claim that interdisciplinary readings are critical for understanding advertising as a representational system and for explicating particular advertising campaigns. I move now to an analysis of the four texts beginning with Soviet (Text 1), then Guess (Text 2), Diesel (Text 3) and lastly Levi's (Text 4).

4.7 Text 1: Soviet



Text 1: Soviet

The image in the Soviet advert consists of the verbal text, human participants, and vague objects in the background. The Soviet advertisement is set in a strip club. For some people this setting represents a brothel that is frequented by clients of female and male prostitutes. Schroeder (1998:180) writes that usually the woman depicted in such circumstances does not have any identity other than that of a prostitute, who by definition exists to facilitate male pleasure. Hence, it is not surprising to see that there are only men watching the model in the advert. However, the advert is also intended for female viewers. The advertiser hopes that female viewers will buy the jeans because of their desire to look like the model.

If one reads from the left to the right, one sees a group of men who are on a lower platform. There are both black and white men in the image. Three of the visible male figures are watching the woman who is on the right side of the advertisement. She is dressed in blue denim trousers and a blue denim jacket. The men are laughing. This is the kind of laughter that is full of pleasure at the spectacle on the stage. They are enjoying what is likened to a strip tease. Their eyes are fixed on the half nude model on the right - hand side of the image. They are paying less attention to the other woman whose head has been severely cropped and who is wearing only panties. Cropping is an old technique of objectification. 'Objectification' is a term that is normally used to refer to the pervasive practice in advertising media of exposing the body parts of a women in order to promote consumer goods. Usually it is the nude or sexually provocative body that is used in order to sell the products. As Schroeder and Borgerson (1998) argue, if women are portrayed without a head, they are represented as being without thoughts as well. The stripper at the back is wearing shoes and panties. She is placed in the black and white portion of the picture where the audience in the image is found. This feeds a patriarchal stereotype that regards men as superior and suggests that woman exist to fulfil the lust of man and not for their valuable ideas. This is a notion that can be criticized in the democratic South Africa, which is increasingly showing the emancipation of woman in all key positions, such as politics, business and education. However, I think that South

African society tolerates these images. For instance, there is severe cropping in a bill board advertisement that I observed in Sandton. This is an advertisement for a holiday resort named Zimbali Lodge in KwaZulu-Natal. The woman has no head and no feet. She is wearing nothing on top and is exposing her breasts. She has put on some jewellery that is covering part of her breasts and she is wearing panties that are transparent. She is sitting beside an expanse of sea ocean with clouds in the background. This bill board portrays the woman as a sex object.

The Soviet image has two audiences: one audience is the group of men in the image who are revelling at the half-nude woman in the image and the other audience is the target audience of the image; the readers of the magazine. The target audience that is being set up by the advert is both the white and black young heterosexual male. Females are included as would-be buyers of the brand because of the female desire to look sexy in order to please men. One of the men in the image is clearly not watching either of the two women. Instead he is looking between the legs of the stripper at the reader and laughing at the same time. This is the kind of laughter that is 'shared enjoyment' as if to invite the reader also to join in the spectacle that is being watched by the men in the audience. It is an open invitation to the reader to watch what is going on, on the stage. There is one man who is placed on the front left in the image whose gaze is directly fixed on the underwear of the woman dressed in Soviet.

From the represented participants who are young men and women, one can say the advertisement is targeted at youth. It is also targeting a certain niche in the market who wear brands in a style that is sexually provocative. Nuttall (2004) describes how images have come to reflect stylization of the self by young people. She argues that images reflect future aspirations and imaginings of youth culture. The woman who is half nude on the right is supposedly inviting the men in the image to watch her sexual pose and bodily display. This is meant to excite the audience. She achieves this sexual appeal through several vectors that are found in the image. Firstly, her body is meant to be displayed for the man. She is exposing her brassiere, stomach and underwear and is standing with her legs wide open. Clearly, this is a sexual stance. Her head is tilted

upwards; her gaze is also directed upwards. This suggests that her head and face is not really on offer in the image. This is a different use of the word ‘offer’ than the one described by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). Instead what is on offer has to do with the body. The model’s stance places her body on offer to the reader’s gaze.

From her neck line, one can trace a vector that runs from the neck to the necklace on which hangs a cross. This cross points in between the breasts. It travels in a contour line that cuts across the belly through the silver belly belt that has a silver heart, down to the pants of the woman, until the open V of the trousers. This open V leads to the crotch of the woman. On her left and right, there are white lines that create vectors that are directed to her leg joints. These lines end in her genital region.

If one looks at her legs, they are open wide. Open legs are suggestive of an invitation to sexual penetration. There is another vector that is triangular, which is under her open legs. The angle of the triangle leads to the crotch, creating double vectors on her belly and also under her crotch (top and bottom). The Label ‘Soviet’ is written in bold letters under her crotch. Below the label, there are the words ‘Enter our Dimension’. These words stand for the brand slogan. The word ‘enter’ is under the crotch. From the word ‘enter’, one can trace a vector that starts from the cross that is part of the necklace. Therefore, the word enter is also openly inviting penetration in the genital region of the woman. ‘Our dimension’ is referring to the women’s sexual appeal at the crotch.

The brand logo is also placed in the bottom right corner of the advert. Advertisers usually like to reserve the bottom right corner for important information such as the logo and the shops where the product is found. This is usually the same position where one puts one’s hand when paging through magazines. It is the place of new information and of the real according to the framework of analysis offered by Kress et al. (1997: 274). Scollon and Scollon (2003) explain this phenomenon by suggesting that the company whose brand or product is being represented ‘naturally’ wants to be seen as real and new.

The verbal text, ‘wearing your clothes can be more fun than taking them off’ seems to mock the stripping woman at the back who has gone to the extent of taking all her clothes off, with the hope that she will draw the attention of the men. Instead, the men are interested in the half-nude woman wearing Soviet. Therefore, the half nude woman is having more fun than the woman who is naked. Ironically, the one who is drawing so much attention is also half nude and not really wearing her clothes as the slogan suggests. In this instance, the verbal text is ancillary to the visual images. The images are more powerful and communicative than the verbal text. Newfield (1993) describes the relationship between images and the verbal text as anchorage, citing that images are open to multiple interpretations. This suggests that the words are meant to anchor particular types of meanings and not others.

The identity that is ‘on sale’ in the advertisement is that Soviet is appealing to heterosexual desire, specifically the pleasures of male penetrative sex. This is the youth identity that is offered by the brand. Thus youth identity is constructed by the brand as the pursuit of male sexual pleasure. This is observed in the fact that the female body is objectified. The culmination of objectification is that the feet and faces of the woman are less significant than the body where most of the vectors seem to intersect.

The gaze of the men that is directed at the sexual organs of the women, and the gaze of the woman that is looking away from the picture indicates that this advertisement is based on a stereotype that sex is meant to be enjoyed by men and not by women.

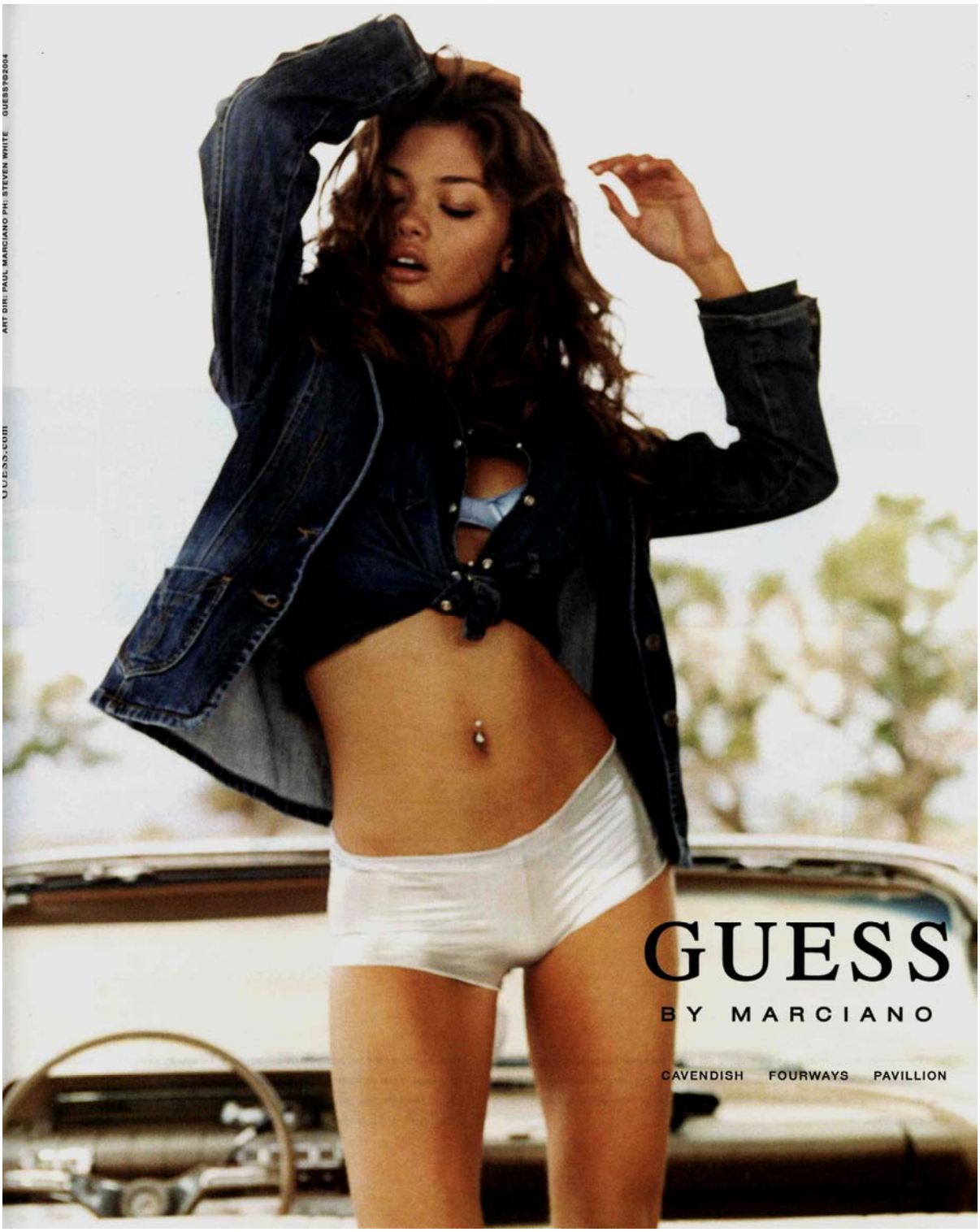
4.8 Text2: Guess?

Text 2 is an advertisement for Guess clothing. It is advertising a denim shirt and a denim jacket. Guess is a popular brand that sells cosmetics, accessories and clothes. However, this advertisement is selling the brand more than any of these three items. Guess is designed by Marciano as is written in their advertisements. The following extract shows how the brand represents itself on its web page (see Appendix D):

> Guess represents pure glamour in everyday fashion. The Marciano girl demands fashion and indulgent style at every turn. She becomes the constant center of attention. The model Paris Hilton epitomizes the stylish confidence and provocative sensuality that is associated with Marciano. (http://www.marciano.com/About.aspx)

In the encyclopedia of brands in South Africa UCT Unilever Institute (2004), Guess? is described as sexy, young and adventurous in style, spirit and attitude.

Text 2: Guess


ART DIR: PAUL MARCIANO PH: STEVEN WHITE GUESS?©2004
GUESS
BY MARCIANO
CAVENDISH FOURWAYS PAVILLION

A close analysis of Text 2 suggests that Guess represents a different sexual identity from that of Soviet. The advert has only one participant, a woman who is half nude. She is wearing white underwear, a blue denim jacket, a denim shirt and a light blue brassiere on top. The shirt has been pulled up to tie a knot that is close to the chest, giving full exposure of her stomach. She has a white belly ring that resembles the colour of her underwear. The buttons of the shirt are open to reveal her cleavage. Her arms are raised upwards to form a cyclic vector.

From the facial expression of the woman, it looks like she is enjoying an inner orgasmic sensual experience. This is because of the closed eyes and open mouth. The closed eyes suggest that she is in a pleasurable inner world. Her head is slightly tilted to the left side, whereas the lower body is facing the front direction. This makes the body appear to be on offer. The viewer is immediately drawn to the body of the woman because she seems oblivious of us.

The model is poised in the centre of the advertisement. This is the focal point according to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 203). Their argument is that if she is in the centre she receives more attention than any part of the image that is in the margin.

The top and bottom correspond to the ideal and real according to the visual space as divided by Scollon and Scollon (2003). In this instance, the car is the real thing and what is at the top is fuzzy and unclear. This means that what is at the top also represents a low modality because it is unclear. It represents what is surreal or a fantasy world. There is weak modality through colour; it makes an unreal background. In addition, the top part of the advertisement stands for the ideal and the bottom part stands for the real, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). Therefore, the reality is found in the genital region of the woman together with the logo, brand designer and outlets. The top part of the model's body is denied this because of her dreamy look. The colour coding further enhances the reality aspect of the bottom part of the picture. The model is depicted in what is closer to naturalistic colour presentation.

The brand label ‘Guess’ by Marciano is in the bottom right corner of the advertisement. Underneath it, suburban shopping centres like Cavendish, Fourways and Pavillion are named. These are all located in the middle to upper-class suburbs of Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban, respectively. This also suggests the three biggest cities of South Africa, where the ‘wealthy’ people do their shopping. The position of the logo, designer of the brand and the malls (or outlets where Guess? products are found) are at the compositional position of the new and the real information, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). Lastly, the model is foregrounded and therefore she is ‘salient’.

There are vectors that are horizontal and vertical in the text. One vector starts from the neck and moves between the breasts, through the belly, and down to the slight bulge at the crotch of the woman. The horizontal vector is marked by the car. This line runs across the waist of the woman. The vertical one moves across to the crotch.

The women is standing in a car. Cars can be a symbol of power and freedom for women if one thinks of classic ‘road’ movies like ‘Thelma and Louise’. Previously, women did not occupy independent professions and careers. They could not afford to have cars without the presence of the man. The woman here is aligned with the power of wealth, which is symbolized by the car. This is a lifestyle of wealth. Goatly (2000) and Farber (2002) both describe lifestyle branding in terms of which products come to represent social status. Moreover, the car is a left-hand drive, which is typical of cars that are American or imported. The presence of left-hand driven cars is a sign of globalization in fashion. In this advert the car is being used to sell the woman. This is the opposite of what normally occurs in advertisements where often women are used to sell cars.

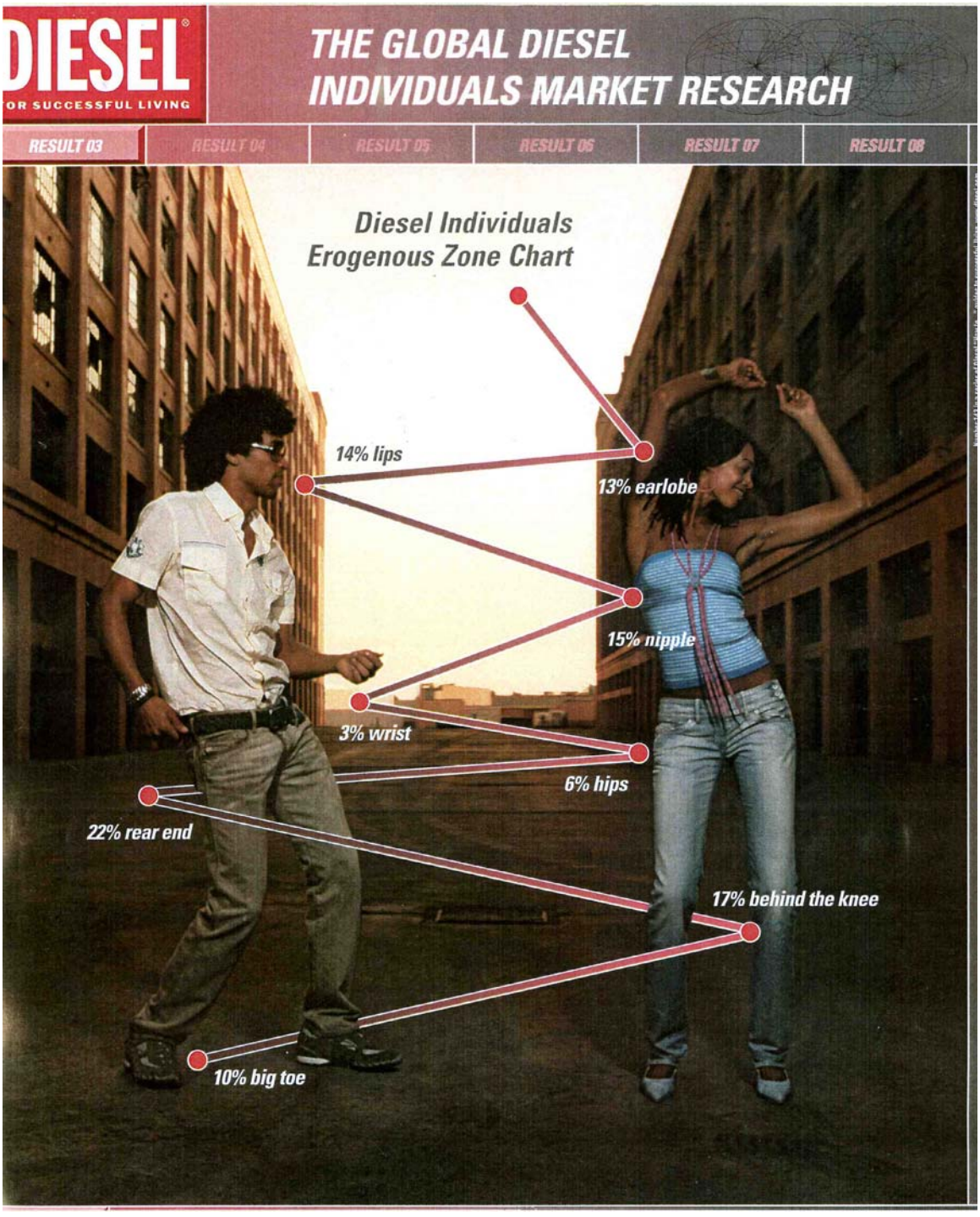
The offer to the audience is through the eyes and the body of the model. Her closed eyes cause the eyelashes to go down, signalling a reading path that is going down the body. She is completely self-absorbed. She is involved in her own pleasure. While with Soviet it’s a man’s sexual pleasure that is being used to sell clothes, in the Guess advert it is women’s sexual pleasure that is used to sell clothes.

The Guess advert is specifically targeting women more than it is appealing to men. This is because the woman represents independence. She is standing alone wearing her bikini without any man beside her. She is actually flaunting her beauty like a model who is on the stage parading her beauty.

This advertisement is intended to appeal to young middle-class white or black women. The label Guess is targeting upper middle-class or middle-class people because it is more expensive than Soviet. Young people who are not working are likely to adore the brand but they may not be able to afford it.

Although the ideal reader of the image has been described above, men are also supposed to be readers of the magazines and the advertisements. A man might look at the image and be immediately transfixed on the crotch because of the vectors that are directed there rather than the brand identity of feminine sexual rapture. Her sexual appeal means that heterosexual men are included as admirers. The male reader is meant to admire the sexual appeal of the woman. This is usually the case with other adverts of Guess products. One normally sees big bill boards on the road with one white woman dressed in underwear and jewellery. I think this is the brand identity of Guess, which the advertisers portray in different media.

4.9 Text 3: Diesel



The third advertisement I will discuss is the Diesel advertisement. Diesel is an international brand that is described as innovative and radical (www.diesel.com). According to the brand profile on the website, it appeals to talented people with a lot of imagination. It is an international brand that has reportedly dealt wonders in increasing the tips for waitresses who wear Diesel products. The name 'Diesel' illustrates the fact that it appeals to many countries, as diesel oil is also to be found in many nations. Apparently, Diesel has a working-class appeal elsewhere or originally but it is a very expensive brand in South Africa (see Appendix C).

The advertisement shows two adjacent buildings, one on the left side and one on the right side of the advertisement. The buildings are brown in colour and are multistore buildings. They are typical of dilapidated buildings that can be observed in down town Johannesburg. In this case, both the left and the right are not much differentiated because they look alike. Therefore, one would say that what is given and what is new information is the same. The participants in the image are surrounded by the same objects. This represents a social semiotic choice, which could mean that city life looks the same in the sense that one is hemmed in by multistore buildings from left and right, not unlike something that causes a feeling of claustrophobia.

The compositional choice of the advertisement, which also adds meaning to the information structure of left and right, is the fact that the two participants are placed in the centre of the image. Kress et al. (1997) state that this is an indication of a focal element. The advertiser wishes to make the two people the main focus. What is occupying the centre is clearly more important than what is at the periphery of the image. In addition, the setting comprises a long street with buildings that are hardly visible in the far background. The columns on the buildings create vertical lines. They run to the furthest point in the background where there are some buildings that are not clearly visible. There is an emptiness that is surrounded by the buildings, except for the two people, a man and a woman, who are dominating the front portion of the image.

The converging vectors created by the buildings make the focus on the people salient. They could be anywhere between 16 years and 25 years of age. Having both sexes is significant in terms of sex representations. Images that represent both sexes are said to adhere to gender equity. The man is standing on the left, whereas the female is standing on the right. This position is culturally significant because it makes the man occupy the given or the known, whereas the woman is occupying the position of what is new. Therefore, if she is in the new category, she receives more attention than the man.

The two characters are frozen in a dance move. It seems as if when the picture was taken the two were dancing to some music. There is no sign of where the music was coming from. The woman has turned her head sideways. She has an open smile. It looks as though her eyes are shut. She is twisting her body. This creates a wave-like vector from the arms, to the upper body and the lower body. Her head seems to be enjoying the dancing with her arms lifted high. Both the Guess and Diesel advertisements depict the same sort of circular lifting of the arms, a symbolic gesture of sexual pleasure that is mixed with a sense of power and freedom.

There are other vectors that are created by the entire bodies of the man and the woman through the body gestures in display. There is a wavelike line that is created by the bodies. He is directed towards her (his upper body, knees and left foot), as if he is walking, or running or moving towards her, whereas she is moving away from him. She is ‘doing her own thing’ and is pretending to be ignoring him because her eyes are closed and her head is turned to the right, while he is on her left side. This is like someone who is playing hard to get.

The man on the left is gazing at the woman. His gaze is typical of a man admiring the beauty of a woman. There are vectors that have been created in the advertisement through the red lines that are connecting the ‘erogenous zones’ of the man and the woman. For example, one line connects the mouth of the man with the earlobe of the woman, and another line connects the left hand of the man with the nipple of the woman. These vectors communicate a ‘body language’, which resembles ‘foreplay’ that is

happening between the man and the woman, as if they are in bed caressing each other. Since the man's gaze is directed at the woman and his whole body seems to be focusing on the woman, we can say that the man is chasing after the woman in order to please her sexually, whilst she is enjoying his advances, and is completely absorbed in her own pleasure. She also evinces a sexual pleasure that is akin to the woman in the Guess advertisement. However, the difference is that the sexual pleasure that she has is now attributed to the presence and the actions of the man. Moreover, the vectors show that there is 'chemistry' between the man and the woman. This advertisement combines the use of gestures with the verbal text (e.g. erogenous zones) to get the message across.

In addition, clothes are important in the picture. For instance, the woman is wearing a red necklace, which leads the eye down to her lower belly, a region of sexual appeal. The necklace also continues a vector that starts from the neckline. This line moves across the zip of her denims and through her crotch. This also portrays her sexual availability.

The target of the advertisement is both young males and females because the image depicts a man and a woman. The audience is also likely to be from urban areas because the setting suggests city life. Diesel is also an expensive label, which is likely to be afforded only by middle- and upper-class young people.

This advertisement combines the use of gestures with the verbal text to communicate its message. The advertisement includes the verbal text 'Diesel for successful living' at the top-left corner. The meaning of the phrase 'successful living' suggests that success is measured by what a man or woman wears. Furthermore, success is equated to the sexual display found in the depiction of the man and woman.

The main heading that dominates is 'The global diesel individuals market research'. This is a descriptive noun phrase. It can be seen as a parody of market research in that it mocks the idea of consumer or market research by focusing on made-up results for 'erogenous zones' and sexual pleasure. Slightly underneath the heading there is a display of results. The results start at 'result 03' and moves to 'result 08'. There are percentages that are

mapped onto different parts of the bodies of the man and the woman. We are made to read that these percentages stand for 'Diesel Individuals Erogenous Zone Chart'. Around the body of the man, these are 14 % lips, 3 % wrist, 22 % rear end, and 10 % big toe. Around the body of the woman, these are 13 % earlobe, 15 % nipple, 6 % hips, and 17 % behind the knee.

Furthermore, the results of the global diesel individuals market research emulates scientific research. The advertisement jokingly implies that the findings are valid, reliable and verifiable, all of which are important characteristics of scientific research.

The verbal text is very important in this advertisement because if it was not available, the sexually denotative message would not have been strong. The images rely heavily on the verbal text, whereas in the Soviet, Guess and Levi's texts the images are more distinctive and they carry the central identity that is on offer with less reliance on the verbal text. The verbal text supports the images. For instance, in the Diesel advertisement, the word 'erogenous' enables the advertisement to focus on sexual parts or spots of sexual pleasure that are laid out for the man and the woman. Without the word 'erogenous' this message is not clear.

In terms of social distance, we are given a medium-shot picture, which is shot 'front on'. This is not a direct gaze between the reader of the advertisement and the represented participant, instead it is an offer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The viewer is at a close distance to the image. The brand advertiser would like the represented participants to be viewed closely. The man and the woman are the objects of our gaze.

In terms of the modality of the picture, there is an element of reality in terms of the dingy city life, if one assumes that the image comes from Johannesburg Central Business District or a similar setting. The colour coding is realistic, and not imagined, but the factuality of the interaction between the participants may be described as being questionable, such that one would not realistically find two people dancing in a deserted street. Probably, the setting suggests that the advertisement is targeting city dwellers.

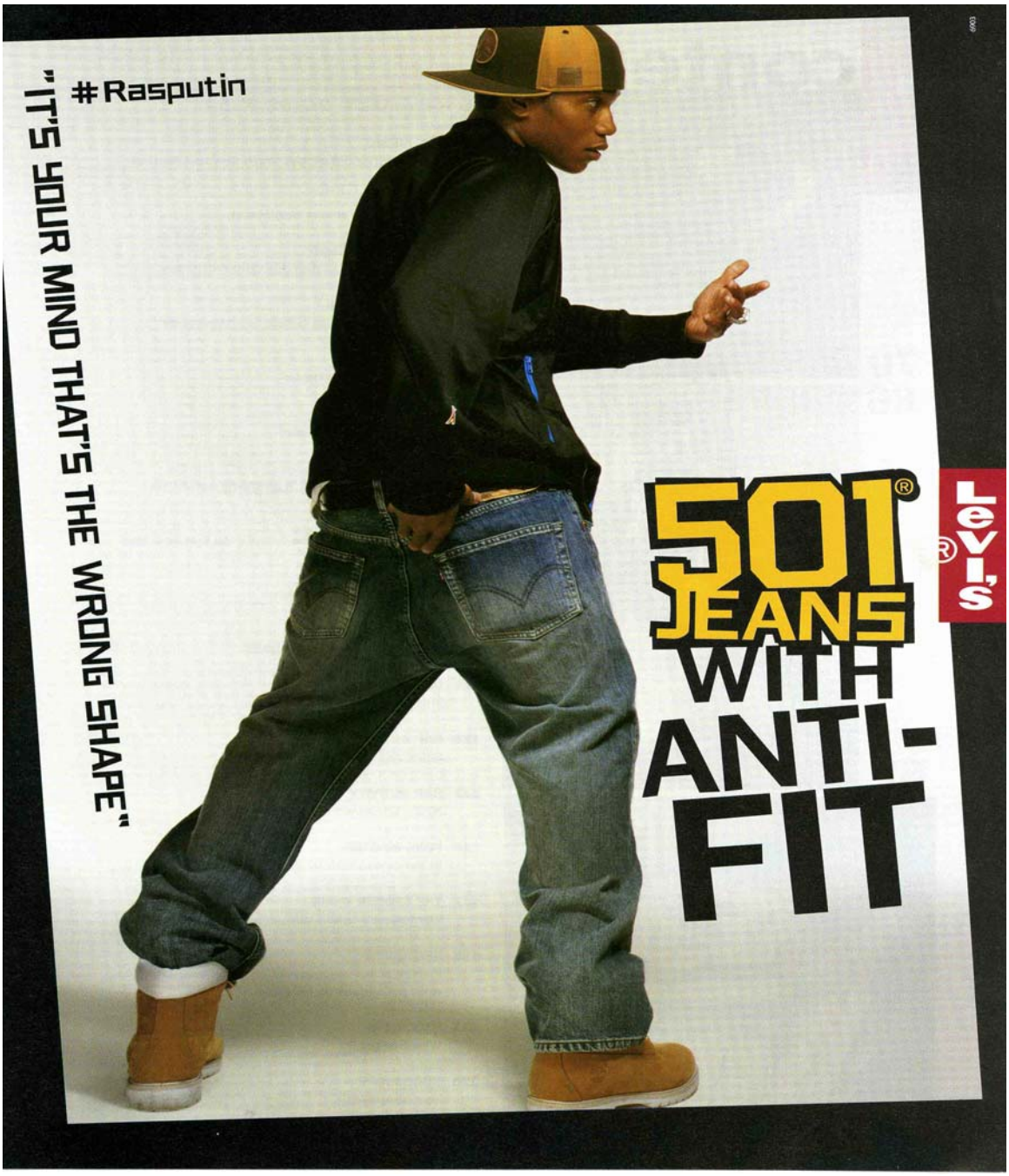
To conclude the analysis of Text 3, the product is portrayed as outfits for men and women. Since they are dressed in Diesel fashion brands, we are made to infer that this is why they possess these 'erogenous zones'. The heterosexual depiction of a man and a woman is suggestive of a chase, where the man is the hunter and the woman the recipient of his attention and thus the object of his gaze. For the message to come across, youth popular culture has been used. The indicators of youth popular culture are the setting and the actions of the represented participants. There is a woman who is on offer to the man. The predominant brand identity or youth representation is that Diesel is a funky and sexy heterosexual brand, which is worn by middle-class urban people.

4.10 Text 4: Levi's

Text 4 is an advertisement for Levi's jeans, a popular brand among young people. In UCT Unilever Institute, (2003) the Levi's brand profile is described thus: the appeal of the brand is ageless, although it was invented in 1873. The South African brand director, Nicky Burton, points out that:

> the brands' core values are encompassed in the words 'original', 'iconic', and 'crafted'. In South Africa, the brand has been associated with local musicians like Godessa, Kobus and Karen Zoid. Levis's branding strategy is through music, clothes and media(UCT Unilever Institute, 2003; 240).

Text 4: Levi's


#Rasputin
"IT'S YOUR MIND THAT'S THE WRONG SHAPE"
501® JEANS WITH ANTI-FIT
LEVI'S®

Text 4: Levi's

In Text 4, the represented participant is a young black man whose cap is worn backwards. The cap is black and rust in colour. His hand is touching his buttocks as if to indicate that the jeans are about to fall off from his waist. It is as if the model was posing for a camera. He faced backwards and allowed the photographer to capture his rear. This advertisement depicts an unusual way of posing for the camera, that of capturing the back.

The young man is wearing a gold ring on his left hand, which bespeaks opulence and also the Hip Hop culture of wearing heavy jewellery. He is wearing a black shirt, which is long sleeved. The black shirt has a red tab on it which stands for a Levi's label (Red Tab). His jeans seem to have lost colour. They can be estimated to be black faded jeans. The issue of colour among jeans is complicated because where previously fading was associated with wearing out of a piece of clothing because of age, within current fashion trends, some brand new products are purchased with a faded colour.

The guy is also wearing brown boots. On one side of one of his legs he has covered the boot with the jeans leg. On the other, the jeans leg has been deliberately pulled up to reveal the boot. This is also indicative of a style of dressing that is associated with Hip Hop. According to Y magazine (2003, February/March Issue), Hip Hop started as the language of young urban America. It has since taken over the world's music market, incorporating everything from jazz to rock. One of its most significant influences can be seen in the extension of the music into fashion. It is said that the distinct style of Hip Hop clothing cannot easily be distinguished as one single thing. For some, Hip Hop is associated with sports-wear and labels. For others the perception is that Hip Hop is symbolized by diamonds and 'bling'. Bling is a slang word that refers to the flashy jewellery that is associated with Hip Hop fans.

The verbal text that is facing downwards in the advertisement is a creative way of writing from top to bottom. It states that 'Its your mind that's the wrong shape'. This sentence seems to challenge people who think that the new 'Anti Fit' jeans advertised in text 4 are unacceptable in shape. Where traditionally every pair of trousers is meant to fit the waist,

this one is meant to be loose and to fall off from the buttocks such that many who buy into this fashion usually expose their underwear. The logos '501 Jeans' and 'Levi's' next to the ® letter appear on the right side of the guy. This is at the usual place of new information. However, Levi's 501 jeans are not new, they 'transcend' the generations. What is unique about the brand is its veracity with different generations. Levi's is unlike other fashion brands or product life cycles. It has been there for a longer time than most products. The logo '501 Jeans' is followed by 'with Anti-Fit'. This anchors the visual image, where we see jeans that are not tightly fitting the model. It means that these jeans are not intended to fit the person who is wearing them.

Furthermore, in terms of composition, the model occupies the central position of the advertisement, whereas the verbal text is found along the margins. This shows that image is given more prominence than the verbal text, as it occupies the new, real position. The viewer of the advertisement can only see the side cheek of the model. His eyes are directed to the right. He is there for the public to observe. This corresponds to an offer as described by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996).

The position of the model's left hand is similar to someone who performs his youth identity through Hip Hop music. The whole body posture, such as legs apart, gesturing with the hand and the fingers while talking is commonly found among Hip Hop fans and artists. The left hand is pointing to the right (or ahead of him or the future direction) and his eyes are facing the same direction, then next to his waist line there is a vector that corresponds to the 501 Jeans label. The label 501 is placed at a horizontal line with the waist of the guy. This label and brand logo is written from top to bottom together with Levi's. There is one vector that starts at the top and moves to the bottom, which is made by the verbal text, on the left. 'It's your mind that's the wrong shape', the quotation marks suggest that it is a speech directed at anyone who dislikes the shape of the jeans. This downward vector emphasizes that the jeans hang lower down, they are not exactly at the top of the waist as one expects of jeans. Vertical vectors are important in this image because of the shape of the jeans/ trousers. Therefore, the whole verbal text emulates this, or 'the downward direction'.

The young man who is pictured in the advertisement occupies a larger portion of the advert. He looks young and he fits the description of youth. This is the only advertisement among the four that has a man alone. Interestingly, the man is fully clothed. The man is associated with Hip Hop culture from youth culture rather than sex as is associated with the other advertisements depicting women.

The advertisement is targeted at the young man who loves rap or Hip Hop music. This type of jeans is not usually worn by women. I imagine that it would look odd for a woman to be seen wearing Anti Fit Levi's jeans. The majority of men who wear such jeans are black; however, this style of dressing is also found among some young white men. This advertisement raised interesting responses from the females who are supposed to be excluded by the advert. I will discuss these responses in the next chapter.

4.11 Conclusion

Through my analysis, I have observed several similarities and differences across the four advertisements. Through the analysis, I have aimed to examine how youth identity is represented.

Texts 1, 2, and 3 (Soviet, Guess, Diesel) represent the female gender as sexual objects. All three women are viewed front –on with their eyes closed or cast sideways. This is an invitation to the viewer in the image or to the reader of the advertisement to look at their bodies and notice the sexual appeal of the models. Through these advertisements women are objectified in many ways, each suggesting and reinforcing the perspective that women are objects to be viewed 'voyeuristically, fantasized about, and possessed' (Schroeder & Borgerson 1998: 168). Schroeder and Borgerson (1998:168) also contend that:

> When we look at images with sexual content, our satisfaction comes from seeing, not doing. We gain visual gratification. Our pleasure is symbolic, not physical. In

> this way, sexually oriented advertising provides a site for consuming representations of sex and gender relationships (pg 168).

The most dominant representation of youth that one gets from reading these three advertisements is that youth are obsessed with sex and sexuality. If the notion that sex sells is true, it appears that this is what the advertisers are using. However, there are different versions of sexuality that are communicated by the brands. While Soviet is sending a strong invitation to male heterosexual penetrative sex, Guess reflects a woman's appreciation of her inner sexual and bodily freedom and power. Lastly, Diesel portrays a man who is chasing after a woman because both the man and the woman want to consummate their union but the woman is seemingly playing hard to get. While the focus is on sexual identities, these differ according to the three texts. Soviet is the most overtly sexual while Guess and Diesel are more subtle in their portrayals.

In the Diesel advertisement (Text 3) we see a blending of dance and sexuality. The image portrays a seductive dance. The young man and young woman are seen to be invading the city space with a heterosexual identity. The advertisement suggests that city life is about having fun and pleasure for young people, and that sexuality is the main concern for them. The two young people dominate the deserted arena in Text 3. This suggests that Diesel makes young people stand out. The dancing that is observed in the Diesel advertisement can be linked to the Levi's advertisement, which portrays a 'Hip Hop artist' or fan.

The Diesel advertisement communicates individuality to the target audience. This is exemplified by the reference to supposed global market research in the Diesel advertisement. Although, the Diesel advertisement claims to represent research findings that are worldwide, it also caters for individuality in the brand. This is seen in the fact that the headline of the advertisement bears the word 'individuals'. Advertisements often seek to make the consumer feel like he or she is the only one (Goatly, 2000). Probably, that is why advertisements of such fashion brands usually depict only one person. If two people

are depicted the are usually a male and a female. I think this promotes the individuality that consumers seek to gain from any brand.

Youth are also represented as engaging in pleasurable activities, across all four texts. The advertisements portray young people involved in events outside of the home, having a good time. For example, this is seen in the scene of a night club that is used in the Soviet advertisement. The purpose of the night club is to view the nude body of a woman. The appeal of sex is an age old strategy of advertisements. Previously, people would watch nude women in night clubs, but currently young people can dress in Soviet and still enjoy a better experience of fun than one who is nude in a club. The same can be said for the Levi's advertisement. This is a creative advertisement that takes a very old brand of jeans and reinvents it to fit 'the new', to fit the Hip Hop generation. Levi's is being adjusted to suit what is current fashion instead of clinging to the old designs. These two advertisements, therefore, stand for youth and change.

Brand labels are usually associated with people who desire to have a high social status. They assert their identities in the way they dress, as in the famous adage, 'you are what you wear'. Furthermore, brands give one a perceived status. They demonstrate aspirations for class membership. As a result, people go to the extent of purchasing products that they cannot afford and accumulate debt. People who buy certain brands and live in certain suburbs are associated with wealth. For example, the Guess model is beautiful, sexy, and she has a 'nice' car. These are the aspirations of many young people.

This chapter has presented my analysis of the identities on offer in the four advertisements. In the next chapter, I present the interpretations and perceptions of the advertisements by Grade 11 learners at Fairview High School and Excel High School.