

The Solution for Girls with No Sex Appeal: The Ironized Yeast – A Multi Modal Discourse Analysis of Vintage Advertisements

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Abstract

This paper presents a discourse analysis of three vintage advertisements for Ironized Yeast using Multi Modal Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis. Drawing on the concept of erotic capital by Hakim (2011), the study explores how these advertisements exploit women's insecurities about their body shape while offering a solution that goes beyond physical attractiveness. The analysis reveals that the advertisements promote the idea that women can leverage their erotic capital to enhance their sex appeal, thereby increasing their chances of success in the dating and marriage market. This research examines the construction and perpetuation of the seductive power associated with a curvy figure. The findings highlight the intricate interplay between discourses of attractiveness, power dynamics, and societal expectations, urging critical reflection on the influence of such representations on individuals and broader social dynamics.

Keywords: erotic capital, problem-solution pattern, advertisements, Multi Modal Discourse Analysis, beauty standards.

1. Introduction

Based on Kress and Leeuwen's (2006) Multi Modal Discourse Analysis (MMDA) and Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this paper examines three vintage advertisements for Ironized Yeast that were published in women's magazines. The analysis is guided by key concepts such as erotic capital (Hakim, 2011) and the problem-solution pattern in text images (Hoey & Winter, 1986; McCarthy & Hewings, 1988; Hoey, 2001; Mitchell, 1995). Through MMDA approach, the vintage advertisements are seen to tap into women's insecurities about their body shape and offer a solution that goes beyond mere physical attractiveness. The advertisements promise that women can leverage their erotic capital to enhance their sex appeal and achieve success in the dating and marriage market.

Ironized Yeast vintage advertisements, prevalent in the 1930s, fostered an inferiority complex among women with slender and angular body shapes, convincing them that consuming Ironized Yeast supplements was the key to achieving a fuller and more feminine figure. These advertisements not only promised a physical transformation but also claimed that by using the product, women would gain the admiration of men and find success in the dating market. The

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1930s decade was an era of economic prosperity in many Western nations, enabling the rise of consumerism and a shift in the portrayal of women. (Benjamin, 2008; Burke, 2005; Duby, & Perrot; 1993). They were no longer represented as shy and submissive but rather as vibrant and socially active individuals who sought to have fun, please men, and enhance their attractiveness (Eco, 2010). Consequently, the pursuit of sex appeal became a lucrative industry, with the cosmetic sector investing significant amounts in advertising campaigns.

- The notion that slender women do not deserve attention from men aligns with the negative associations often propagated, reinforcing the idea that individuals who deviate from hegemonic beauty standards must make extra efforts to conform.
- Both men and women engage in a continuous competition in order to have partners who possess high social and economic status.
- Women are pressured to constantly strive for (unrealistic) beauty standards in order to be perceived as valuable mates.

To conduct this analysis, I will begin with a theoretical framework in which I present the key concepts such as erotic capital (Hakim, 2011), and the problem-solution pattern in text images (Hoey & Winter, 1986; McCarthy & Hewings, 1988; Hoey, 2001; Mitchell, 1995). Fairclough' (1995) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis and Kress and Leeuwen's (2006) multi modal discourse analysis. Moreover, this study provides the methodology employed for analysis, the research question, and the procedures steps to address the research objectives. Next, the analysis will explore how gestural, visual, and spatial modes were utilized in three vintage advertisements promoting ironized yeast. The objective is to shed light on the conveyed meaning and its influence on the intended audience, specifically regarding the portrayal of women's sexual attractiveness and strategies for achieving success in the dating market. Finally, I will offer a conclusion.

2. Theoretical framework

This section offers an overview of the major concepts that provide context for the Ironized Yeats vintage advertisement analysis; it addresses concepts such as erotic capital and the problem-solution pattern in text images. These concepts provide a foundation for the subsequent discourse analysis of the advertisements. They shed light on the underlying dynamics of power, desire, and persuasion within the advertisement's visual and textual elements. Delving into these concepts, can deepen our understanding of the Ironized Yeats advertisement's intended meanings and the strategies employed to convey them effectively to the target audience.

2.1 Erotic capital

British sociologist Catherine Hakim introduced the concept of erotic capital in 2011, which serves as a valuable addition to the capitals proposed by Pierre Bourdieu (1997) which are economic, social, and cultural capitals. She argues that erotic capital is equally significant and essential for understanding sexuality, social and economic relationships between men and women. The elements of erotic capital are beauty, sexual attractiveness, social abilities, liveliness, style, sexuality, and fertility (Hakim, 2011). In sum, the integration of natural attributes and social skills conforms to erotic capital that can be developed and used to enhance one's economic and professional success (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004; Green, 2012; Hakim, 2011; Valdés-Lucas, 2019). Baumeister and Vohs (2004) highlight those women, in particular, can leverage their erotic capital to achieve upward social mobility through the dating market. Relationships can serve as a pathway to social status and wealth, making it especially crucial for women within lower social status to

nurture their erotic capital in order to gain access to higher social status. Women do not have the monopoly of erotic capital; however, they tend to possess a greater amount of sensual power compared to men, which grants them a substantial potential advantage in negotiations with men. It is. Nevertheless, it is commonly observed that advertisements for various products prominently feature beautiful and glamorous women, rather than men (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004; Crymble, 2011; Hakim, 2011; Negra, 2009). This pattern reflects the recognition of women's strong erotic capital and its potential influence on consumer's behaviors. Understanding the interaction between erotic capital, societal norms, and advertising strategies, it is possible to gain insight into the complex dynamics of gender, sexuality, and economic exchanges within the context of vintage advertisements.

2.2 The problem-solution pattern in text images

The problem-solution pattern developed in Text Linguistics (Hoey & Winter, 1986; McCarthy & Hewings, 1988; Hoey, 2001; Mitchell, 1995) has identified four main steps in the problem-solution pattern: introducing a situation, describing a problem arising from the situation, proposing a solution, and evaluating the proposed solution. The problem-solution pattern provides a structured framework that helps analyze and organize the information presented in advertisements. The use of this approach acknowledges the complex nature of meaning-making in visual communication (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Text and image work together synergistically, influencing and complementing each other to construct meaning. The integration of text and image within visual, spatial, and gestural modes, is crucial in understanding how the problem-solution pattern is constructed and the conveyed meanings in the Ironized Yeats vintage advertisement.

In the context of the Ironized Yeast vintage advertisements, the integration of text and image within visual, spatial, and gestural modes is crucial for understanding how the problem-solution pattern is constructed and the conveyed meanings. These advertisements strategically employ this pattern to establish a situation where women with narrow and angular body shapes face an implied problem of lacking desirability. The proposed solution, ironized yeast, is presented as the key to obtaining a luscious and fleshier figure, which is associated with heightened sexual attractiveness and success in the dating market.

3. Method

This section delineates the methodology employed for the analysis of the vintage advertisements. Firstly, the research questions that guided this study will be outlined. Subsequently, a comprehensive account of the critical and multimodal discourse analysis approach employed to investigate the advertisements will be explained. Lastly, a systematic procedure will be detailed, elucidating the steps undertaken to discern the specific messages communicated by the vintage advertisements and to comprehend the techniques utilized to effectively convey their intended meaning.

The analysis of the Ironized Yeast vintage advertisements was conducted through the application of CDA and MMCDA frameworks. The selection of the advertisements relied on randomization, ensuring an unbiased and representative sample of vintage advertisements related to Ironized Yeast, thus reducing the potential for selection bias and increasing the generalizability of the findings (Shaheen et al., 2019). The analysis proceeded in several steps. Firstly, a comprehensive collection of the Ironized Yeast vintage advertisements was gathered for examination. These advertisements consisted of visual images, textual elements, and various modes of communication. CDA approach in combination with the erotic capital concept and problem-solution pattern was employed to identify themes.

MMCDA framework was implemented to investigate the visual, spatial, and gestural modes present in the advertisements. This analysis focused on the visual images, layout, and bodily movements depicted in the advertisements. It aimed to explore how these multimodal elements interacted with the textual components to construct meaning and influence the audience.

This paper aims to discover how different modes in Ironized Yeats advertisements were used to persuade slim women to gain weight in order to obtain a curvy figure in order to success in the dating market. Therefore, the research question is the following:

• How were visual, spatial, and gestural modes were use in the Ironized Yeast vintage advertisements to persuade the audience to consume those supplements?

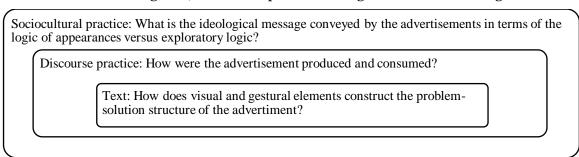
In the following section, I will describe the two approaches of discourse analysis I conducted for this research: Fairclough's (1995) model of three-dimensional framework and Kress and Leeuwen (2006) multimodal discourse analysis.

3.1 Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework for CDA

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is rooted in a critical theory of language, which views language usage as a social practice that is intricately connected to specific historical contexts. These social practices play a role in reproducing or challenging existing social relations and serving various interests. Analyzing discourse in relation to power dynamics involves asking questions about positioning, interests served, interests negated, and the consequences of such positioning.

Fairclough (1995) presents a model for CDA that involves three interrelated dimensions of discourse analysis. The first dimension pertains to the object of analysis, which can include verbal, visual, or multimodal texts. The second dimension focuses on the processes through which these objects are produced and received by human subjects, encompassing writing, speaking, designing, reading, listening, and viewing. The third dimension involves the sociohistorical conditions that govern these processes.

Fairclough suggests that each of these dimensions necessitates a different form of analysis: text analysis for description, processing analysis for interpretation, and social analysis for explanation. The present study focuses on the discussion of both the discourse practice and the sociocultural practice in which the advertisements were embedded. In relation to the discourse practice the focus is on the processes of production and consumption as well as on possible traces of intertextuality present in the posters. And in relation, to sociocultural practices, the focus is on the concept of logic of appearances and explanatory logic (Fairclough, 1989, 1995, 2013) and the historical context. In Figure 1, I show the questions along with the model that guided this research.



Note: adapted from Fairclough, N. (1995). Media discourse. This approach provides multiple levels for analysis.

Figure 1. Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework and the questions for this study

3.2 Multimodal discourse analysis

Kress and Leeuwen's (1996) Multi Modal Discourse Analysis (MMDA) approach offers a comprehensive framework for understanding discourse as a social practice that employs various modes of communication to construct meaning. In this approach, discourse is seen as a complex interplay between language, visual images, sound, and other semiotic resources within a specific context.

One key aspect of the multimodal discourse analysis approach is the recognition of ideology in communication. According to Kress and Leeuwen (2002), different modes of communication, including language and visual representation, are not neutral but rather shaped by cultural, historical, and social factors. They argue that these modes of communication convey and reinforce specific ideologies, reflecting power relations and social norms.

The MMDA approach distinguishes between various modes of communication, each contributing unique elements to the overall meaning-making process. The linguistic mode encompasses written and spoken language and conveys both literal and figurative meanings. The visual mode involves still and moving images, conveying information, emotions, and aesthetic qualities. The audio mode includes sounds and music, evoking emotions, atmosphere, and meaning. The spatial mode focuses on the arrangement and layout of elements, conveying organization, hierarchy, and emphasis. The gestural mode encompasses bodily movements, such as facial expressions and gestures, conveying emotions, emphasis, and meaning (Kress, 2003; Kress & Leeuwen, 1996, 2002). Analyzing the Ironized Yeast vintage advertisements using the MMDA approach, it is possible to uncover the intricate ways in which different modes of communication interact and contribute to the construction of meaning. This analysis allows to examine how language, visual images, sound, spatial arrangement, and gestural cues work together to shape the messages conveyed in these advertisements, shedding light on the broader social and cultural implications of their discourse.

4. Data analysis and discussion

In this section, MMCDA and a CDA were conducted to analyze the visual, spatial, and gestural elements present in three vintage advertisements of Ironized Yeasts. The aim of the analysis was to identify and discuss the persuasive strategies employed in these advertisements to encourage the audience to purchase the supplements with the promise of achieving success in the dating market. The advertisements are present below:



Note: Good news for girls who have no sex appeal. (2015, September 7). Twitter. https://pbs.twimg.com/media/COVzgdAXAAA9h29?format=png&name=small

Figure 2. Advertisement one: Good news for girls who have no sex appeal



Note: Men wouldn't look at me when I was skinny. (2016, February). https://envisioningtheamericandream.com/ https://envisioningtheamericandream.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/diet-gain-weight.jpg

Figure 3. Advertisement two: Men wouldn't look at me when I was skinny



Note: I was ashamed of my figure. (2016, May). Buzzfeed. https://img.buzzfeed.com/buzzfeed-static/static/2016-05/10/18/enhanced/webdro6/original-grid-image-7754-1462919273-5.jpg?crop=472:708:0,3

Figure 4. Advertisement three: I was ashamed of my figure

Two themes were identified: the sexual appeal and physical appearance, and gender representation. Those themes shed light on the topics discussed within the theoretical framework. The findings prompt critical reflection on the impact of such representations may had on individuals and broader social dynamics. The exploration of these themes within the theoretical framework not only enriches our understanding of the specific advertisements but also contributes to a broader understanding of the complexities surrounding sexual appeal, physical appearance, and gender economic relationship.

4.1 The sexual appeal and physical appearance: The seductive power of curvy figure

The first theme that emerged during the analysis was the representation of sex appeal and physical appearance. This analysis aims to reveal the semiotic elements and gender dynamics within the advertisements, with a specific focus on the representation of sex appeal, body figure, and societal perceptions of beauty and attractiveness. By closely examining the portrayal of a voluptuous figure in the posters, the study seeks to provide insights into the ways in which societal roles and expectations were constructed and how they intersected with the conveyed notions of beauty, attractiveness, and body image.

4.1.1 Enhancing curvy models: Discovering the gestural mode

In the Figure 6, which is an excerpt of the advertisement one, a professional model is prominently featured, adopting a pose with her hands confidently resting on her hip. This deliberate positioning draws attention to the curvature of her body, effectively accentuating her voluptuous figure. The strategic placement of the camera, situated below eye level, contributes to the establishment of a seductive gaze within the viewer. This model' gesture perpetuates the prevailing notion that a fleshy and soft body possesses inherent allure and desirability.



Note: adapted from Advertisement One: Good News for Girls Who Have No Sex Appeal (2015). Model presented in a seductive pose accentuating her voluptuousness.

Figure 6. Photograph of model one: Embracing the beauty of voluptuous figure

In the Figure 7, another model in a similar position than the previous one, poses her hands on her hips. This pattern serves as a gestural mode that strategically emphasizes her curvy silhouette and directs the viewer's attention to this particular body part. Moreover, the joyful model's smile contributes significantly to the advertisement's overall impact, further accentuating the playful attitude of the women. Comparable to the previous analyzed picture, the camera angle

chosen for the photograph, positioned below eye level, adds an additional layer to the portrayal of the model. This specific perspective creates a sense of power dynamics and intimacy, as the viewer is visually positioned as looking up to the model. A gaze from a lower vantage point, the advertisement invokes a seductive and captivating effect, further enhancing the allure of the curvaceous figure presented.



Note: Adapted from: *Men Wouldn't Look at Me When I Was Skinny*, (2016). The strategic combination of the model's gestures, poses, and camera angle in the pictures effectively manipulated visual cues to shape societal perceptions of beauty and attractiveness. By accentuating the curvy figure and evoking a seductive gaze.

Figure 7. Photograph of model two: Shaping visual desirability

The seductive gaze established through the camera angle aligns with the cultural construction of sex appeal, perpetuating the idea that a voluptuous body is not only attractive but also evokes desire and admiration.

In sum, the strategic combination of the model's gestures, poses and the camera angle in the pictures, effectively manipulates visual cues to influence societal perceptions of beauty and attractiveness. Accentuating the curvy figure and evoking a seductive gaze, the advertisement perpetuates the notion that a voluptuous figure not only captivates but also embodies desirability.

4.1.2 Exploring visual elements: bold typography and negative associations targeting skinny girls

In the Figure 8, it is evident that bold typography has been employed to target skinny girls. The deliberate use of bold letters captures attention and implicitly suggests that being excessively thin is a matter of shame. By utilizing bold typography, societal beauty standards and their antithesis are juxtaposed. The association of desirability with thinness is negated. The application of this typographical technique serves to construct a problem description, wherein negative associations are utilized to evoke feelings of inadequacy and insecurity pertaining to body image. Through strategic emphasis on specific words or phrases using bold typography,

advertisers effectively direct attention to the message while reinforcing a perceived urgency surrounding the identified problem.



Note: Adapted from: Advertisement three: I Was Ashamed of My Figure (2016). The advertisement elaborated on women's negative perception of their figure impacted their self-esteem or confidence. It implied a problem that needed to be addressed or resolved, likely by introducing a solution product, Ironized Yeast.

Figure 8. Bold types one: Suggesting skinny women to reshape their figures

The proposed solution in these advertisements are the Ironized Yeats supplements that promising to help women achieve the idealized hourglass figure. The integration of text and image within the visual, spatial, and gestural modes plays a pivotal role in constructing the problem-solution pattern. Images of attractive luscious models, combined with bold typography and negative language, work together synergistically to suggest that the solution lies in conforming to the depicted body shape ideal.

In the Figure 9, another combination of a bold font type is presented "*Men wouldn't look at me when I was skinny*". The statement conveys the notion that slender women did not deserve attention from men. This aligns with the negative associations often propagated, reinforcing the idea that individuals who deviate from the hegemonic beauty standards must employ additional effort to adapt themselves.



Note: Adapted from: *Men Wouldn't Look at Me When I Was Skinny*, (2016). The statement in the advertisement implied that having a thin figure resulted in a perceived lack of value in the dating market.

Figure 9. Bold types two: Suggesting how body shape affects attractiveness

The use of bold typography and negative associations in such advertisements contributes to the portrayal of thinness as undesirable or unattractive. Drawing attention to the message through bold letters and emphasizing the perceived problem of being skinny, these advertisements may reinforce societal beauty standards that associate desirability with a different body type.

4.2 Gender representation: market value determined by desirability

Attractiveness and desirability are influential factors in shaping an individual's value within the dating market (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004; Hakim, 2011). Both men and women engage in a continuous competition in order to have partners who possess high social and economic

status. In this context, the possession of considerable erotic capital can significantly enhance an individual's prospects of success in the dating market.

The possession of substantial erotic capital offers a distinct advantage upon women, enabling them to distinguish themselves and attract the interest of potential mates with a high social and economic value. This concept is evident in certain vintage advertisements, where strategic utilization of micro-comics seeks to convey the notion that women can enhance their personal empowerment through the consumption of the Ironized Yeats, increasing their dating opportunities.

4.2.1 Spatial mode: Depicting Women's success in the competitive dating market

Another significant semiotic element presented in the Figure 10 was a comic, that is positioned in the center, indicating its primary focus. The placement of an element in the center of a visual composition can carry various meanings such as emphasis or importance. The strategic placement of micro-comics served as an effective technique to captivate the audience's attention and engage them with the illustrations. These concise graphic novels succinctly conveyed the advantages and benefits associated with consuming the supplements. The micro-comics effectively summarized the benefits and the positive outcomes of Ironized Yeats. following the classic problem-solution pattern. In the initial sketch, a woman with an angular figure is depicted in a manner that highlights her perceived awkwardness. Furthermore, two men are shown gossiping about her figure, explicitly noting her lack of attractiveness. The negative representation of a slim shape reveals how various multimodal elements were utilized to instill insecurity in women. Emphasizing that angular body shape is problematic, the advertisements implied that women who do not address this "issue" will fail to achieve success in the dating market.



Note: adapted from Advertisement One: Good News for Girls Who Have No Sex Appeal (2015). The graphic novel suggested that possessing certain physical features, such as an attractive figure, may enhance a woman's ability to attract potential partners and navigate the dating market.

Figure 10. Comic one: You're the queen of the beach

In the final panel of the comic, after consuming the Ironized Yeats supplements, the woman now possesses sufficient erotic capital in terms of attractiveness and desirability. The "solution" was reshaping her body with took the supplements. She is depicted alongside a male companion, symbolizing her newfound appeal, and indicating that she has achieved a higher status.

In the Figure 11 the advertisement strategically positions the comic draw attention and emphasize the significance of the narrative. The almost central placement effectively captures viewers' focus and highlights the importance of the story within the overall advertisement. This spatial arrangement serves to underscore the narrative's emphasis on body weight and its impact on enhancing feminine shape. The deliberate placement accentuates the significance of the narrative's focus, highlighting the connection between body weight and the attainment of a desired feminine silhouette.



Note: Adapted from: *Advertisement three: I Was Ashamed of My Figure* (2016). The concept of erotic capital acknowledges the impact of physical appearance within the dating market, and this idea was employed in the promotion of Ironized Yeast through advertising.

Figure 11. Comic two: You're the most gorgeous girl on the beach since you've gained weight

In the last panel of the comic, the female protagonist is depicted surrounded by men, symbolizing her success in the competitive dating market. This visual representation suggests that her increased desirability was attributed to weight gain and resulted in heightened attention and attraction from potential partners. a pivotal dialogue within the comic features a boy expressing

the statement that "you're the most gorgeous girl on the beach since you have gained weight." This reinforces the idea that weight gain has directly contributed to the protagonist's new charm. The comic format effectively conveys the message that Ironized Yeats significantly increase women individual's value.

The comic also examines the underlying dynamics between men and women, as the semiotic elements employed reinforce gender roles. It portrays men as consumers of women's attributes and perpetuates the objectification of their bodies. Consequently, women are pressured to constantly strive for (unrealistic) beauty standards in order to be perceived as valuable mates.

The problem-solution pattern presented in the comics prompts us to question the underlying implications of these advertisements. While they appeared to offer a solution, it is important to recognize the potential harm they might have caused. The reliance on negative associations and the perpetuation a one hegemonic body shape as the beauty standard contribute to unrealistic body ideals and can have detrimental effects on individual self-esteem and well-being.

5. Conclusion

This analysis provides a comprehensive examination of the sexual appeal and physical appearance associated with a curvy figure through the lenses of multimodal discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, and the theory of erotic capital. By deconstructing visual and textual elements, we have shed light on the ways in which the seductive power of a curvy figure is constructed and perpetuated in media and society. Our findings highlight the complex interplay between discourses of attractiveness, power dynamics, and societal expectations, urging critical reflection on the impact of these representations on individuals and broader social dynamics. This analysis serves as a starting point for further research and encourages a more nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding sexual appeal and physical appearance in contemporary society.

This article's originality lies in its interdisciplinary approach, combining multimodal discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, and the theory of erotic capital to investigate the construction and perpetuation of the seductive power associated with body shape. It contributes to both DA and applied linguistics research by offering fresh insights into the complex correlations between discourses of attractiveness, power dynamics, and gender economic relationship.

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Supplementary material

Advertisement one: Good news for girls who have no sex appeal



Note: Good news for girls who have no sex appeal. (2015, September 7). Twitter. https://pbs.twimg.com/media/COVzgdAXAAA9h29?format=png&name=small

Advertisement Two: Men wouldn't look at me when I was skinny



Note: Men wouldn't look at me when I was skinny. (2016, February).

https://envisioningtheamericandream.com/

https://envisioningtheamericandream.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/diet-gain-weight.jpg



Advertisement three: I was ashamed of my figure

Note: I was ashamed of my figure. (2016, May). Buzzfeed. https://img.buzzfeed.com/buzzfeed-static/static/2016-05/10/18/enhanced/webdro6/original-grid-image-7754-1462919273-5.jpg?crop=472:708;0,3

