

Analyzing linguistic and rhetorical persuasion devices in advertising discourse: a study of Croatian editions of *Cosmopolitan* and *Elle* magazines

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Aim: To analyze the persuasion strategies used in the advertising discourse of Croatian editions of *Cosmopolitan* and *Elle* magazines. To achieve this, we investigated the linguistic and rhetorical strategies of persuasion in women's magazines and determined at which linguistic level they commonly appear.

Methods: We selected five issues of *Cosmopolitan* magazine and five issues of *Elle* magazine from which we extracted 133 advertisements for analysis using a combined, linguistic and rhetorical classification. Specifically, we analyzed the linguistic devices on lexical, semantic, morphological, and syntactic levels, and the rhetorical devices as a separate category, based on Aristotle's concepts of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. The initial assumption was that effective advertising would employ strategies across all linguistic levels, but the second assumption was that most of them would appear on the lexical level, given the number of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and English loans in ads that contribute to showing the products in the best possible light.

Results: We identified 258 devices, of which 235 were linguistic and 23 were rhetorical. Devices on all linguistic levels were used in the analysis. The majority of techniques were found at the lexical level (n=203), followed by the semantic (n=23), rhetorical (n=23), morphological (n=5), and syntactic (n=4) devices.

Conclusion: Employing devices across all linguistic levels is understandable given advertisers' inclination to utilize all available means to shape ads that can boost sales. Lexical level offers the broadest array of words to directly praise and glorify the product – an approach advertisers believe is the best and easiest way to persuade potential consumers. Combining different linguistic and rhetorical devices is a useful strategy for selling the product, which is always advertisers' ultimate goal.

Keywords: advertising discourse; women's magazines; *Cosmopolitan*; *Elle*; persuasion devices

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Introduction

Magazines and their distribution methods underwent significant changes at the beginning of the 19th century. Various factors contributed to the scarcity of magazines prior to that period – primarily the high printing costs, but also the underdeveloped road and postal networks which made their delivery significantly more difficult (1) (p. 41). The beginning of the 19th century and the Industrial Revolution provided solutions to these problems. Printing costs decreased, and roads and postal systems were greatly improved. Consequently, the number of printed magazines increased, as did the ability to deliver them to readers in rural communities (1) (p. 41). Since their inception, women's magazines have always played a vital role as a source of information as well as empowerment for their readership. Until then, women could only inform themselves about current world events through expensive books or daily newspapers intended for men, but now a new medium emerged, one whose content was shaped to encourage and empower women (1) (p. 41). Women's magazines dealt with fashion, family life, but also with gossip, advice, and similar topics. The first such magazine was Harper's Bazaar, which appeared in 1867 (2) (p. 1). It featured advice directed at women regarding family, children, household maintenance, and generally how to present themselves as women if they wanted to be accepted in society – later, such 'outdated' magazine content would change in line with the emergence of various social movements and currents (2) (p. 2).

The theory of women's genres emerged at the intersection of cultural studies and feminist theory, encompassing women's magazines and other popular cultural products targeting female audiences (3) (p. 11). Today, as before, women's magazines serve as an important source of information for their readers. They can also define what it means to belong to a particular social class or generation, according to Rooks, Pass, and Weekley (2) (p. 2). It seems that the adjective 'women's' places all women within a single space where they must find something in common and that appeals to everyone, even though this may not necessarily be the case in reality.

In today's digital age, many magazines have established an online presence by digitizing their content. This shift to digital platforms provides readers with the convenience of accessing content with just a few clicks, which could potentially impact print magazine sales. However, not having a website or social media presence in the current landscape would mean failing to stay relevant and adapt to modern trends. According to Mcloughlin (4), although some magazines have seen a decline in revenues in the digital age, many are resurging and new ones are emerging, indicating that print magazines continue to thrive. He also argues that advertising in print media is more effective, as readers tend to focus more on print ads compared to the numerous and often disruptive ads encountered online (4).

From the very beginning, fashion magazines were not solely focused on informing women about events in the fashion world, but also included advertising (1) (p. 42). Advertisements take up a significant portion of magazine space, alongside perennial topics such as fashion, advice columns, and celebrity gossip. Women's magazines specifically attract advertisers, who pursue collaborations with fashion, food, and beauty industries to stay financially afloat (5) (p. 74). These advertisers typically focus on a distinct group of female readers

interested in fashion, beauty, health, and lifestyle topics, offering them an opportunity to promote related products and effectively connect with their target audience by placing their ads in these publications. By aligning their messages with the interests and preferences of readers, brands can enhance their reach and engagement. Advertisements have been called ‘subliminal pills for the subconscious’ (6) (p. 202) as they often exert subconscious influence by appealing to our emotions. Advertisers use unique, innovative ways of presenting their products, including various forms of persuasion. Today, products have become a means of signaling personality traits and individualism. In advertising, the consumer’s experience is now the be-all and end-all – the product might as well take a back seat as the focus shifts to pandering to the potential consumer. Even as we mock and deride the tackiness and absurdity of advertisements, we are far from immune to their sway. This plays into the hands of advertising experts, with their belief that an ‘over-the-top’ ad is always better than a boring or forgettable one.

As many ads have been more than successful in achieving their intended aims over the years, advertisement spending has soared accordingly (6) (p. 202). Advertising experts behind this process willingly dedicate long hours to observing, testing, and studying human behavior, habits, and desires to produce data-driven, consumer-friendly ads that can easily sway the consumer (6) (p. 202). The advertising industry utilizes various strategies and methods to shape consumer opinions and decisions, tailoring and weaponizing language to fit its ideas and goals. By using alternations and other linguistic devices, ad creators are hoping to convince consumers that the ads are true (7) (p. 712).

Various studies in Croatia have already looked at advertisements across different media platforms. For example, Bjelobrč (8) looked at the use of metaphor, metonymy, paradox, personification, comparison, paraphrase, antithesis, and rhyme across magazines, television, and newspapers. A study of advertisements in Croatian newspapers by Gjurjan-Coha and Pavlović (9) identified the use of questions, imperatives, superlatives, repetitions, the first-person perspective, idioms and wordplays, metaphors, and paraphrases. Vranić (10) highlighted metaphor, personification, and hyperbole, while Udier (7) focused on semantically empty words, reader engagement, public engagement, appeals to authority, consumer communication strategies, parallelism, antithesis, and lexical choice in Croatian press. Lewis and Štebih Golub (11) drew attention to neologisms and nonce words (occasionalisms) in radio and television ads. Bačić (12) discussed repetition, metaphor, personification, paradox, evocative language, and paraphrase. Bait, Baldigara and Komšić (13) highlighted lexical features, such as the use of specific nouns, verbs, and adjectives, and declarative, imperative, and interrogative sentences on the syntactic level, as well as alliteration, assonance, anaphora, consonance, antimetabole, metaphor, and intertextuality. Finally, various authors (14–16) noted the frequent use of English words in advertising in Croatia. The results of international studies do not differ much from those in Croatia. Phakdeephassook (17) highlights the selection of lexis, metaphors, rhetorical questions, intertextuality, and more. Keddar and Bencheikh (18) mention rhyme, alliteration, parallelism, imperative, personification, English words, and others. Shariq (19) emphasizes rhyme, alliteration, assonance, English words, metaphor, hyperbole, personification, and others. Ghedeir-Brahim (20) mentions the use of foreign words, neologisms, adjectives, personification, hyperbole, metaphor, metonymy, comparison, and more.

This study explores the use of linguistic and rhetorical devices in effective advertising in women's magazines in Croatia. Due to their unique content and audience, these magazines may require a different, tailored approach to advertising. We therefore focused on linguistic tools utilized at different levels of language, such as parts of speech (nouns, adjectives, verbs) and their functions, as well as rhetorical devices and arguments (for example, highlighting product features). Taking into account previous research and the fact that advertising professionals aim to convince the customer of the truthfulness of the advertisement, using language as their primary tool and adapting it to their various intentions – we hypothesized that effective advertising utilizes a wide range of linguistic strategies at all level, with a particular emphasis on the lexical stratum due to the prevalence of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and English loan words in ads. This research will contribute to the study of advertisements in Croatia, especially as it relates to women's magazines, which have been less analyzed. It will provide an up-to-date analysis of the latest advertising mechanisms in Croatia. It can also contribute to the analysis of rhetorical devices, as the focus has primarily been on linguistic ones.

Methods

The study corpus comprised five issues of the *Cosmopolitan* and *Elle* magazine each, as they are undoubtedly among the most popular women's magazines in the world today. According to Grdešić (3) (p. 93), *Cosmopolitan's* emergence 'introduced Croatian women's popular culture into the world of consumption', while *Elle* is 'a true counterpart to *Cosmopolitan*'. We used the Croatian editions of the magazines in our study, so all the analyzed advertisements are in Croatian. We used the April, June, September, October, and November 2020 issues of the *Cosmopolitan* and the October and December 2019, and July, August, and December 2020 issues of *Elle*. Our intention was to focus on the most recent issues falling within a one-year timeframe at the time of writing in order to capture the latest persuasion techniques in advertising in women's magazines. Monthly issues were chosen at random, ensuring representation across all seasons to diversify the featured ads. The magazines were examined in their original format; the researchers eschewed copies and online editions to preserve the visual code and advertising experience.

Table 1. Overall analysis of persuasion techniques in *Cosmopolitan* (n = 5) and *Elle* (n = 5) magazines

Analysis 1 – linguistic		Analysis 2 – rhetorical	
Level	Device	Level	Device
Lexical	English loan words, nouns, adjectives, verbs, imperative, formal language, informal language, inclusive 'we'	Ethos	Appeal to authority (referencing famous and influential people)
Semantic	Metaphors, idioms and paraphrases, personification, paradox	Pathos	Appeal to emotion (flattery)
Morphological	Different word formations and neologisms	Logos	Appeal to logic (highlighting positive product features, rhetorical question)
Syntactic	Sentence structure		

Table 2. Excerpts from the studied magazine issues and their English translations in *Cosmopolitan* (n = 5) and *Elle* (n = 5) magazines

Croatian quote	English translation	Code
Torbe oko struka i dalje su in, a njihova praktičnost i <i>stylish</i> stav ne poznaju granice.	Waists bags are still in, with practicality and stylish attitude that know no bounds.	E1
<i>Key item</i> –pelerine su must have sezone.	Key item – capes are a must-have this season.	E2
Accessories za odvažne žene.	Accessories for daring women.	E3
<i>Art de vivre</i> donosi duboko opuštanje uz note bergamota, geranija i naranče.	<i>Art de vivre</i> brings deep relaxation with notes of bergamot, geranium, and orange.	E4
Nenadmašna kombinacija kvalitete, cijene i ugleda.	Matchless combination of quality, price, and prestige.	E5
Dokazana učinkovitost već nakon 7 dana.	Proven effectiveness in just 7 days.	E6
Sveobuhvatna, hidrirajuća njega	Comprehensive, hydrating care	E7
Hidrirajući losion	Hydrating lotion	E8
Sofisticirano ulje	Sophisticated oil	E9
Elegantno i šarmantno perje	Elegant and charming feathers	E10
Izgladuje bore i sprječava njihov nastanak.	Smooths wrinkles and prevents their formation.	E11
Štiti kožu od isušivanja.	Protects the skin from drying out.	E12
Revitalizira kosu.	Revitalizes the hair.	E13
Hidrirajuće	Hydrating	E14
Sofisticirano	Sophisticated	E15
Štiti kožu od isušivanja.	Protects the skin from drying out.	E16
Opustit će sva vaša osjetila i pružiti vam jedinstvenu, romantičnu svježinu.	It will calm all your senses and provide you with a unique, romantic freshness.	E18
Opustit će	It will calm	E18
Njeguje, štiti	Nurtures, protects	E19
Isprobaj odmah!	Try it now!	E20
Vaša dnevna hidratacija.	Your [formal pronoun] daily hydration.	E21
Šminka je tvoja strast... i naša isto!	Makeup is your [informal pronoun] passion... ours too!	E22
Organsko smilje koje obožavamo	Organic immortelle that we adore.	E23
Dočekajte 2020. u biseru dubrovačke rivijere	Ring in 2020 at the pearl of the Dubrovnik Riviera	E24
	Suit up!*	E25
	More is more!*	E26
Najbolja sam ti frendica, Ja sam ona koja uvijek ostaje uz tebe.	I am your best friend, I am the one who always stands by you.	E27
Jana – duboko iznad svih.	Jana – deeply above all.	E28
Ova tubica obećava <i>instagramično</i> lice u samo petnaest sekundi!	This little tube promises an Instagrammable face in just fifteen seconds!	E29
Bottega je od ove sezone najhot brend, a njihova nova kućna <i>it bag</i> Pouch, koju nosi manekenka, najhot je torbica jeseni.	Bottega is the hottest brand this season; the house's latest <i>it bag</i> , the Pouch, worn by a model, is the hottest bag this fall.	E30
<i>Skinfluencerski</i> komplet za početnike. Želite imati ten iz snova, kao na Instagramu? Zamolili smo <i>skinfluencere</i> da nam otkriju svoja top 3 must have proizvoda.	Skinfluencer starter kit. Want to get your dream skin like on Instagram? We asked skinfluencers to reveal their top 3 must-have products.	E31
Mala crna haljina ima moć. Mala crna kožna haljina ima supermoć.	The little black dress has a power. The little black leather dress has a superpower.	E32
Bez znoja. Bez ograničenja.	Without sweat. Without limits.	E33
Najviše celebrityja preporučuje BTX Optimage, tretman koji dubinski liječi i obnavlja kosu.	Most celebrities recommend BTX Optimage, a treatment that deeply heals and revitalizes the hair.	E34
<i>Accessories</i> za odvažne.	Accessories for the bold.	E35
<i>Lifestyle</i> časopis u kojem milijuni zabavnih, neustrašivih mladih žena pronalaze inspiraciju za napredak u svim aspektima svoga života.	Lifestyle magazine where millions of fun, fearless young women find inspiration for progress in all aspects of their lives.	E36
100% čista kozmetika za njegu lica bez sastojaka s „crne liste“.	100% pure skincare without 'blacklisted' ingredients	E37
Ghetaldus optika odlučila je svojom novom kampanjom postati glavno lice grada. Pitate se kako? Sve ćete shvatiti ako pogledate u izloge Ghetaldus optike.	With its new campaign, Ghetaldus Optics has decided to become the face of the city. Wondering how? Look into the windows of Ghetaldus Optics to find out.	E38

*Two quotes were presented in English in the source magazines.

We analyzed a total of 133 advertisements, inclusive of repeated ads. This included only stand-alone ads, excluding advertorial and other ads disguised as articles, interviews, or other editorial content. We thoroughly analyzed the advertising content for each issue using combined classification (**Table 1**), identifying all persuasive devices employed to exalt various products and convince female readers to buy them. We present example excerpts in Croatian below, along with their English translation in brackets (**Table 2**).

The first, linguistic part of the analysis was based on similar analyses conducted in Croatia (7, 9, 16) which highlighted various linguistic strategies used in advertisements. Accordingly, we will present those found in our study corpus. Persuasive devices were tallied each time they appeared, even in cases of recurrent ads or devices. The search encompassed the lexical (parts of speech, English loan words), semantic (idioms and paraphrases), morphological (different word formations and neologisms), and syntactic (sentence structure) levels, with linguistic devices categorized accordingly. Rhetorical devices were classified separately and defined as any arguments made to support the rhetorical act of persuasion. By arguments, we mean ‘shaping the text to appeal to rationality’, whereas ‘the persuasive power of an argument is not dependent on its truthfulness but on the audience’s conviction of its potential truthfulness’ (21) (p. 13).

The second part of the analysis (rhetorical) was based on Aristotle’s division into *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, as mentioned by Poggi and D’Errico (22). *Ethos* focuses on the speaker, that is, the one who persuades, and persuasion is achieved by highlighting the speaker’s good qualities, reputation, etc. We are more likely to believe someone we know has a high reputation, who is capable, knowledgeable, informed, or who we think is not trying to deceive us, but is sincere, etc. *Pathos* targets the audience’s emotions, whereby the speaker influences the listener’s emotions and thus persuades them. Unlike *ethos*, here the focus is less on the one persuading and more on what the speaker’s words evoke in the listener, which ultimately leads the listener to believe what the speaker is saying, to act in the desired manner, etc. The emotions the speaker tries to evoke in the listener can vary. For example, they often aim to evoke empathy, a sense of belonging, feelings of respect, boosting self-confidence, identification with the speaker, etc. *Logos* targets the listener’s reason. Here, the statement contains facts, data, examples, etc., based on which the listener should conclude that they believe what is said. The listener’s task is to think logically about what they hear. The relationship between the speaker and the listener and the listener’s emotions take a back seat, while the statement itself takes precedence (22).

We believe this combined approach is suitable for this paper as it equally addresses both linguistic and rhetorical persuasion devices, especially because the focus in previous studies was mostly on linguistic devices. The linguistic approach adapts the methodology of similar research studies to identify persuasion devices within this corpus, allowing us to compare these findings and assess whether persuasion devices are consistent across different media. The rhetorical approach, in turn, is based on Aristotle’s *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, because it clearly shows how different rhetorical devices can engage emotion, logic, and authority to effectively persuade the audience.

Results

We identified 61 ads across five issues of *Cosmopolitan* magazine and 72 ads in five issues of *Elle*, totaling 133 ads analyzed for persuasive techniques. In total, 258 linguistic and rhetorical devices were detected across the 10 magazine issues. Of these, 120 (46.51%) were observed in *Cosmopolitan* and 138 (53.49%) in *Elle* (Figure 1). As there was no statistically significant difference between the two magazines, the analysis was run on the overall data. Linguistic techniques accounted for 235 (91.1%) of all devices, whereas there were 23 (8.9%) rhetorical techniques in total.

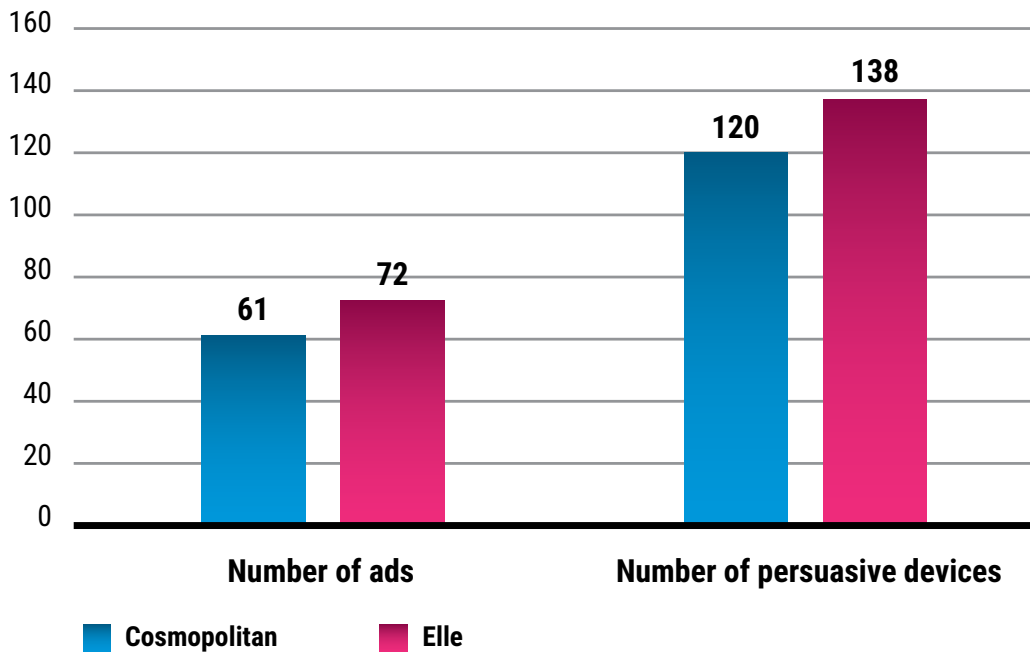


Figure 1. The number of ads and persuasive devices in *Cosmopolitan* and *Elle* magazines.

We encountered devices across all levels of linguistic structure, including lexis, semantics, morphology, and syntax. Most techniques were found at the lexical level, followed by semantic, morphological, and syntactic techniques. The most prevalent rhetorical device was appealing to logic (Table 3). Looking at the exact number of examples found by levels for both magazines, we clearly see show that lexical persuasion devices prevail (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

Table 3. Linguistic and rhetorical persuasion techniques in *Cosmopolitan* (n = 5) and *Elle* (n = 5) magazines

Linguistic level by device		Identified devices, n (%)
Linguistic (n = 235)	Lexis	203 (86.4)
	Semantics	23 (9.8)
	Morphology	5 (2.1)
	Syntax	4 (1.7)
Rhetorical (n = 23)	Appeal to logic	16 (69.6)
	Appeal to authority	5 (21.7)
	Appeal to emotion	2 (8.8)

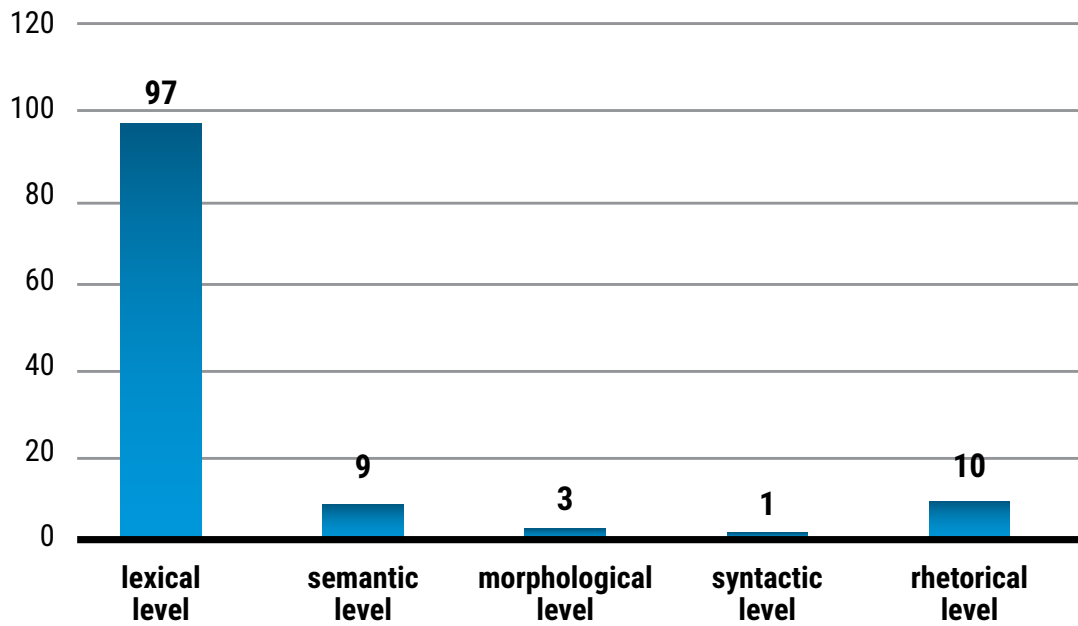


Figure 2. Persuasive devices from *Cosmopolitan* by category.

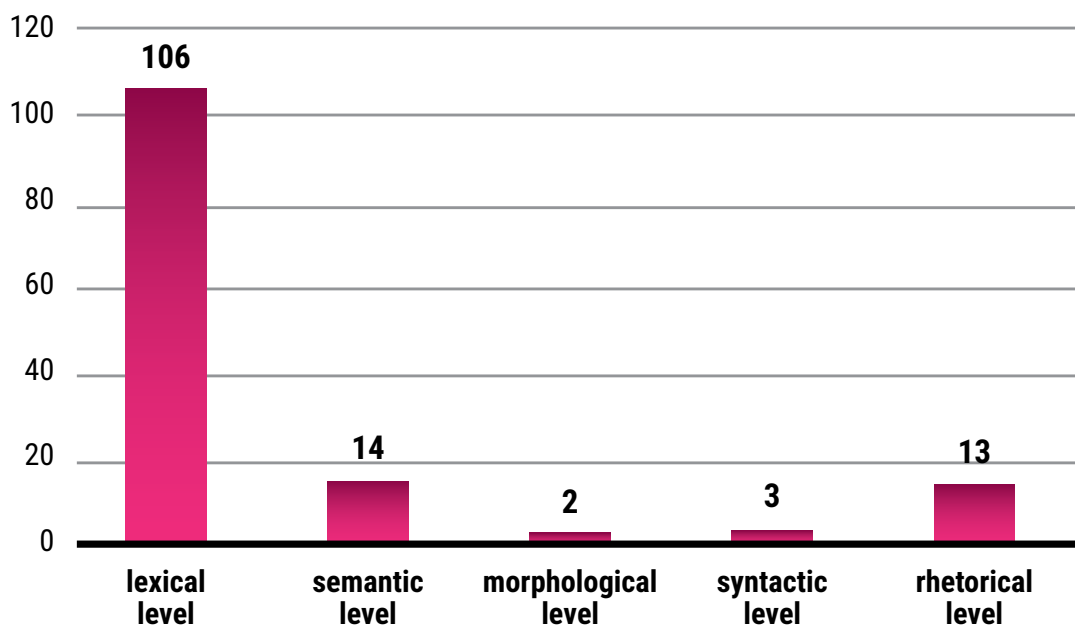


Figure 3. Persuasive devices from *Elle* by category.

English loans (anglicisms) stood out at the lexical level, as can be seen from excerpts 1–3 (Table 4).

Table 4. Persuasive device at the lexical level in *Cosmopolitan* (n = 5) and *Elle* (n = 5) magazines

Device group	Identified devices, n (%)
English loan words	60 (29.6)
Nouns	27 (13.3)
Adjectives	62 (30.5)
Verbs	25 (12.3)
Imperative	14 (6.9)
Formal language	2 (1)
Informal language	6 (3)
Inclusive 'we'	7 (3.4)
Total	203 (100)

Of the 60 anglicisms identified in this study, 47 were not adapted in any way to the rules of the target language (non-adapted borrowings). We also identified nouns (E4–6), adjectives (E7–10), and verbs (E11–13).

Broadly speaking, superlatives are adjectives that make claims about a product being 'best in class'. However, in the analyzed sample, we did not find a significant number of superlatives in the analyzed magazines. Out of 62 adjectives in effective advertising, only 12 were superlatives. Preference was given to adjectives that describe the product's utility (E14) and invoke an aspirational self-image for consumers who make the purchase (E15). Verbs (n = 25) primarily referred to helping women (E16), with only two describing pleasure and enjoyment (E17). Likewise, only two verbs were in the first future tense (simple future) (E18), while the rest were in the present tense (E19). Other identified devices included imperatives (E20), formal and informal language (E21 and E22), and inclusive 'we' (E23).

We observed a major difference between the frequency of lexical-level techniques and other devices. Semantic devices ranked as the second most prominent category. These included metaphors (E24), idioms and paraphrases (E25 and E26), personification (E27), and paradoxes (E28) (Table 5).

Table 5. Persuasive device at the semantic level in *Cosmopolitan* (n = 5) and *Elle* (n = 5) magazines

Device group	Identified devices, n (%)
Metaphor	12 (52.2)
Idioms and paraphrases	9 (39.2)
Personification	1 (4.3)
Paradox	1 (4.3)
Total	23 (100)

Morphological techniques comprised neologisms and blend words (n = 5) (E28–30). Syntactic techniques included repetition (n = 4) (E32 and E33). Rhetorical devices (Table 2) included appeals to authority, or referencing famous and influential people and their opinions about products to shape consumer perception (E34), appeals to emotion, flattery, or suggestive compliments designed to evoke pride and get women to buy products (E35

and E36), appeals to logic – rhetorical questions with a single, obvious answer that ostensibly confirms the truthfulness of the ad (E37), and highlighting positive product features, such as claims about production methods, origins, testing, performance, and others (E38).

Discussion

The devices identified here align with those found in previous research cited above, even when the focus was on different media. It may, therefore, be concluded that the use of persuasive devices in advertising discourse is consistent across different media platforms.

In the modern world, the advertising industry reigns supreme, predicating consumers' sense of fulfillment in product ownership. Kišiček and Stanković (23) (p. 56) state that 'Designing a product, developing it, and producing it means nothing if you do not know how to sell it.' Even if the product does not actually have the characteristics needed to be effective, or if it is not what the average consumer would want and spend money on, the advertiser must ensure that, despite this, it is presented in the best possible light and ultimately purchased. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that we found that persuasive strategies permeated all levels of language.

Lexical level

The initial assumption of the research was confirmed, as persuasion devices were most commonly identified at the lexical level, likely due to that domain's 'high permeability'. Not surprisingly, this concerned mostly nouns, verbs, and adjectives as these categories readily lend themselves to product promotion—products are glorified as 'perfect', 'like magic', 'delightful', etc. This aligns with the notion put forth by Udier (7) (p. 720) that nouns, verbs, and adjectives contribute to sensationalism in advertising. The language analyzed here closely mirrored examples cited in existing literature. The identified nouns fell into three thematic clusters: pleasure, prestige, and product performance. Nouns were weaponized as promises of post-purchase pleasure, improved mood and social perception, and the product's effectiveness for maintaining youth or health, targeting women. Adjectives were used to make direct claims about the product's performance and quality by focusing on its intended purpose or to circumvent direct claims about the product's effectiveness by hinting that its positive attributes will transfer to women by association. Virtually all verbs connoted actions aimed at benefiting women, with fewer instances describing pleasure and enjoyment. Advertisers seemed to presume that women were more likely to respond to ads that promised to help them improve or fix an area of concern, maintain, postpone, or prolong, rather than 'merely' provide relief. Additionally, advertisers seemed to prefer the present tense, likely to convey the product's immediate effect – the product will start delivering its purported benefits ('pampering', 'hydrating', 'calming', etc.) as soon as women decide to purchase it. Conversely, the future tense may imply that effects are distant and, thus, out of reach – only (some unspecified amount of) time will tell if the product works or not. The present tense seems to affirm that the product works, and quickly. Aside from the parts of speech highlighted above, the lexical analysis also showed a frequent use of English loans (anglicisms), which help cultivate the impression that the advertised

item must be worthwhile because of its purported international appeal. Bilingualism in advertising is not coincidental – foreign words interfere with automatic information processing, prolonging the viewer’s attention and focus on the ad (24). Different authors hold divergent views regarding the influx of anglicisms into advertising discourse. For instance, Opačić (15) (p. 24) sees them as buzzwords and a threat to the identity of the Croatian language. The use of anglicisms may stem from the belief that Croatian lacks the appropriate vocabulary to replace the English word (14) (p. 174). Conversely, Vukelić (16) (p. 125) posits that they may add a degree of allure and persuasiveness, ultimately making the ad more memorable. For Vuletić (25) (p. 32), foreign words and phrases engender a sense of mystery, a primary attribute of advertising discourse. This, he argues, piques the audience’s interest, making them more receptive to the message as foreign words acquire a ‘magical power of persuasion and action’. These non-adapted English loanwords are not italicized and only occasionally appear in quotes. Although advertisers love to use English loans because they stand out from the Croatian text and are easy to spot, the indiscriminate use of non-adapted borrowings is a cause for concern. As language is in a constant state of flux, evolving rapidly, there should be no resistance to linguistic borrowing. However, the excessive use of non-adapted anglicisms shows not only a lack of care for nurturing the Croatian language but also a blatant disregard for it. At the lexical level, advertising uses both formal and informal language to address consumers. Formal language tends to lend an air of politeness, courtesy, and respect for the customer, ultimately aiming to gain favor with potential buyers (7) (p. 718). In other words, this approach strives to pander to the recipient. Informal address, on the other hand, aims to create a sense of intimacy with the reader (Katnić-Bakaršić, in (7) (p. 718). The choice between formal and informal language may also depend on the target consumer audience. We predicted that magazines aimed at younger women would opt for informal language to establish a close relationship with their readership in a bid to convince young girls that they are being spoken to by a friendly source they can trust. Conversely, we expected ‘more serious’ women’s magazines catering to adult women to favor a formal style of address, assuming that their readership might prefer to be indulged and addressed with the polite second-person pronoun ‘you’ (Vi). However, examples from our corpus told a different story. We found only two instances of formal address as opposed to six instances of informal language. The preference for informal language indicates that a central tenet and objective of advertising has to do with establishing a close, intimate, and friendly ‘relationship’ between the ad and the reader.

Semantic level

At the semantic level, ads mostly use metaphors. They are generally the go-to trope in advertising discourse (12), adding appeal by fueling the imagination and stimulating thought. Idioms in advertising language compel consumers to crack the coded meaning and message of the ad in a bid for attention and engagement. They can be reshaped to create new meanings tailored to the ad. With its abundance of idioms (phrasemes), Croatian easily lends itself to crafting catchy, attention-grabbing paraphrases designed to make the reader invested in deciphering the meaning of the ad and how it relates to what is being advertised. However, coming up with clever paraphrases that are meaningful, easy to understand, memorable, and closely tied to the advertised product can be challenging,

which is likely the reason for the dearth of phrasemes in our sample. Based on our study, using a well-established yet effective metaphor appears to be easier (e.g., ‘pearl of the Dubrovnik Riviera’ (*biser dubrovačke rivijere*) is a paraphrase of the often-used ‘pearl of the Mediterranean’ (*biser Mediterana*)). Other semantic-level devices included personification and paradox. We identified one example of personification in a verbose poem advertising lipstick as a woman’s best friend. Advertising discourse utilizes personification to paint a unique, vivid picture of the product, fostering a connection between the ad and the consumer by making the product appear life-like and relatable. In the cited example, this is amplified by the verse format, reinforcing the credibility of the advertising message that ‘a well-crafted message rings true’ (25) (p. 31). An ad for a brand of bottled water used a paradoxical statement: ‘Jana – deeply above all’ (*Jana – duboko iznad svih*). The blatantly paradoxical nature of the ad aims to intrigue the reader, prompting contemplation about its meaning and inspiration. We discovered only one example of a paradox, as they are challenging to devise and link to a product. In summary, lexical devices seemed to be more common in ads than semantic strategies.

Morphological level

On the morphological level, we observed that the advertising discourse eagerly embraces neologisms, as they are attention-grabbing and can make ads feel creative and stand out. In the literature, there is frequent mention of nonce words (occasionalisms), defined by Lewis and Štebih Golub (11) (p. 136) as ‘new words coined for specific purposes (such as advertising a particular product) and confirmed only in a single context (of a specific ad)’. They are well-suited for shaping effective advertisements. The distinction between neologisms and nonce words is often vague. As most things today seem to revolve around social media, new words are emerging to describe phenomena associated with prominent social networks (e.g., ‘Instagrammable’ (*instagramično*) was formed by adding a suffix to ‘Instagram’). Another social media-driven neologism was skinfluencer (a blend of ‘skin’ and ‘influencer’), denoting an influential figure well-versed in skincare who women should presumably trust their recommendations. Such blends or portmanteaus are formed by combining or blending two words (26) (p. 67). These devices are desirable in advertising discourse because they are engaging, and because they are not only creative but also require a cognitive effort to decipher. Consumers can feel a sense of fulfillment after successfully decoding such phrases (26) (p. 75).

Syntactic level

The only device we were able to identify on the level of syntax was repetition. Repetition can also occur at the phonological or lexical levels, with syntactic repetition being the most common (12). Syntactic repetition adds rhythm to the message, emphasizing its main elements and hinting at a connection between the syntactic ‘tuning’ and the desirability of the advertised product or service (12). Examples include parallelism, such as ‘The little black dress has a power. The little black leather dress has a superpower.’ (*Mala crna haljina ima moć. Mala crna kožna haljina ima supermoć.*) and anaphora, as seen in ‘Turn freaking (out) into King. Turn it into dessert!’ (*Okreni freaking na King. Okreni na desert!*).

In the latter case of the anaphora, 'freaking' was used in English because it rhymes with 'King,' a brand of ice cream, adding rhythm to the ad so that the chosen word can stand out.

Rhetorical category

The most prevalent rhetorical device was appeal to logic, which falls under *logos*. This advertising strategy is self-explanatory as spotlighting the positive features of a product makes consumers more likely to buy it. All kinds of attributes can be used to glorify products, including semantically empty words (7) (p. 716). A common strategy is using percentages, such as in the example 'New products contain at least 90% natural ingredients that nurture and provide a natural look to the skin' (*Novi proizvodi sadrže najmanje 90% prirodnih sastojaka koji njeguju kožu i daju joj prirodan izgled*). As there is some aversion to claims about one hundred percent effective or natural products because they sound unconvincing, advertising experts tend to avoid them (14), (p.117). However, our sample did not support this claim – four out of five of our examples that displayed percentages did use '100%', whereas only one opted for '90%'.

Another rhetorical device (appeal to logic) used is the rhetorical question. If we see a question in an ad, we are likely to stop and try to answer it. In other words, it will grab our attention. It merely reinforces the advertising message, asking consumers to confirm its truthfulness for themselves. This establishes direct communication with the reader. Appeals to authority, which fall under *ethos*, were also observed. It is well known that celebrities exert significant influence on people, who strive to mimic their lifestyles and trust their choices. Unsurprisingly, advertisers often use celebrity names to improve product sales. Potential consumers are led to believe that if the rich and the famous, who can presumably afford 'everything', choose a particular product, then it must work. 'The model from the advertisement is accepted by a large number of consumers, and they become its imitators; their judgment is excluded, their opinion does not differ from the actor's from the advertisement because it would mean falling out of the social group' (27) (p. 218). Ads do not have to refer to a single luminary; they can appeal to a group of celebrities, too. Appeals to emotion, which fall under *pathos*, were also used. Flattery was used more rarely, with only two examples, where it was utilised to hint to women what they might become by buying the advertised product. Earlier ads focused on persuading consumers of the quality of the advertised product; today, they are geared towards assuring consumers that by purchasing the product, they can increase their uniqueness and individuality or show that they belong to a specific community (12). According to Stolac (28) (p. 82), flattery has an appellative function, at least in advertising – the goal is to show a positive attitude towards the audience, appeal to their feelings, and direct their behavior towards purchasing the product. The small number of instances of flattery is surprising, but we may assume that advertising professionals believe that this method can easily become unconvincing, or that excessive flattery might be off-putting to women.

While the majority of persuasive techniques were observed at the lexical level, ads often featured several strategies across linguistic levels as well as rhetorical devices. According to Stolac and Vlastelić (14) (p. 120), the most effective persuasion strategy involves blending different approaches, a tactic seemingly adopted by women's magazines. Additionally,

the visual code and visual elements play a significant role in persuasion. Visual rhetoric seamlessly complements written discourse, creating a multimedia experience that resonates with consumers.

Study limitations

This study was conducted on a limited corpus comprising 10 issues of *Cosmopolitan* and *Elle* magazines. Although our findings may provide insight into advertising strategies that are designed to persuade female readership of the excellence of the advertised products, a larger study with a more comprehensive corpus would certainly provide a more nuanced understanding of this topic. Due to the relatively small corpus, we identified a relatively small number of examples for certain subsets of devices. For instance, the comparison between formal and informal modes of consumer address yielded only two instances of the former and six of the latter. Given the small total number of any form of address, this difference is not significant enough to support the claim that informal address is more prevalent in the advertising discourse of women's magazines. Consequently, these findings warrant reconsideration or validation using a larger, more diverse corpus. Although the current corpus provides valuable insights within its scope – the chosen sample, while modest, offers a solid foundation for preliminary findings – future research can build upon this work to further validate and expand these results.

Conclusions

We found that persuasive techniques were employed across all linguistic levels of advertising discourse in women's magazines. This is understandable, given advertisers' inclination to utilize all available means to shape ads that can do the job they were designed for – entice potential consumers to make purchases. Not surprisingly, these techniques mostly appeared at the lexical level, as it offers the broadest array of words to directly praise and glorify the product – thereby confirming our hypothesis. Other techniques were utilized to make ads more interesting, creative, and clever, designed to appeal to women in light of various factors such as contemporary societal influences, the impact of social media, and human nature – in other words, more engaging. However, only lexically driven techniques have a direct relationship with the product and can be used to make claims about 'the most perfect care' or 'the ultimate fashion statement', notwithstanding the occasionally ludicrous or exaggerated tone. Our research, in line with previous studies, indicates that the linguistic and rhetorical persuasion devices found operate effectively across different media, underscoring their importance in creating impactful advertisements. Although lexical devices were identified as prevalent and relatively straightforward to utilize, an advertisement can benefit from blending persuasion techniques across various linguistic and rhetorical levels. Achieving the right balance by skillfully employing these techniques while maintaining credibility and avoiding overuse or inauthenticity, is essential for maximizing the impact of the advertisement. Additionally, to craft effective ads, copywriters should align them with current societal trends as it ensures relevance and resonance with the target audience. Advertising experts will always pursue more effective persuasive

strategies, which can also be seen as a form of coercion (14) (p. 120), raising questions about the ethics of ads and contemporary advertising methods, and therefore leaving room for further research.

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