

Observing Discourses of Advertising: Mobitel's Interpellation of Potential Consumers

Advertising appeals to people in such a way that it affects their choices. Advertisers operate on the basis of different discourses that are both verbal and non-verbal. This article explores how contemporary discourses of advertising interpellate individuals as subjects. Furthermore, ideological work in the discourses, as Althusser has put it, are discussed on the basis of "voices" of advertisers. The theory is brought into practice in the analysis of the case studies: two of Mobitel's advertisements promoting the mobile phone. The semiotic-structuralist approach is used to discuss the denotative and connotative meanings of the advertisements and to point to the ideological nature of advertising and the discourses promising new identities and desired lifestyles.

Advertisements are one of the most important cultural artifacts affecting life today. Even if one does not read newspapers or watch television, the images posted over our surroundings are inescapable, and advertisements have an immense influence. Their existence in several media gives advertisements a sort of independent reality that links them to our own life. As they appear constantly and thus share continuity, they form a world experienced as real. Advertisements provide a structure that transforms a language of objects to that of people and vice versa. Contemporary Slovene advertising is making that transformation through discourses and representational forms discussed in this article.

We explore the advertisements of a new communication technology company in Slovenia both because of the recent invention and rapid spread of mobile phoning in this country and because of the transparent introduction of new advertising techniques. It is the intention of this article to explore—using semiotic-structuralist analysis of the advertisements—how contemporary advertising discourses are practiced. Slovene national mobile phone operator Mobitel has created a systematic and organized advertising campaign that

Authors' Note: For a more detailed analysis, see Pajnik and Lesjak-Tušek (2002).

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started in 1998 when 100,000 Slovenes used mobile phones and now—when the number exceeds 1 million (which means that one in two Slovenes owns a mobile phone)—is continuing. The assumption that advertising has a direct influence on consumption leads toward oversimplification, but it can nevertheless be argued the inventive advertising strategies and tactics of Mobitel contributed to what could be called “unselective consumerism.” The appeals to buy the product, which are sophisticatedly encoded in advertising messages, seem to support an ideology of consumption that before Slovenian historical (political and economic) transformation was not the case. Traditional social(istic) values, for example, collectivity, solidarity, and unity, have been replaced, or at least supplemented, with new values such as individuality, freedom, and possession of goods, which advertising seems to uphold.

This article explores the structure of Mobitel advertisements and the strategies it uses to gain potential consumers’ attention. By using the semiotic-structuralist approach to representation,¹ we decode meanings in the advertisements and point to the ideological appeals hidden in them. First, we discuss contemporary discourses of advertising and their ideological function, the sign-value of the product replacing its use-value, and the identities and lifestyles supposedly gained by buying the product. Then we outline the historical-cultural Slovene context within which Mobitel advertisements are situated. Finally, we identify the concrete strategies and tactics used throughout the Mobitel campaign and provide analyses of two advertisements² that support our theoretically grounded arguments.

Exploring Discourses of Advertising

Advertising as a social system has its internal logic on the basis of which it operates—it appeals to people in such a way that it affects their choices. Zinkin (1975) suggested advertising is “an imperfect way of telling the consumer about the qualities of products” (p. 20). If the consumer is not particularly interested in what the message of the ad is, then the advertiser often talks loudly and repetitively—as politicians do when talking about reform. Mobitel, the Slovene operator of analog and digital mobile technology, has constructed the logic according to which it creates ads. Its advertising agency finds some common desire, some widespread unconscious fear or anxiety, thinks of a way to relate the wish or fear to the product, and builds verbal or pictorial symbols through which customers can pass from the dream to the belief (illusion) that the phone bought will make the dream come true. Mobitel, as do many advertisers, creates the inner voice of the product that says to customers, “I am the one you need, I am the one you desire, I am all that you have been missing” (Falk 1998, 210).

In advertising discourse, ideology functions through “the interpellation of the viewers” (Althusser 1994). Interpellation is a process by which we organize ourselves into the position offered by advertising discourse in the presentation of a particular product. There is a discourse of the inner voice used in advertisements that addresses the reader as “you,” continuously telling you what it is you want and need; advertising, as an ideological practice, interpellates individuals as subjects. The category of the subject is central to ideology as it “has the function of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects” (Althusser 1994, 129). Ideology functions in such a way that it recruits subjects among individuals or transforms the individuals into subjects—by interpellation or hailing. This is how the inner voice of advertising works: it interpellates viewers/readers or potential consumers, calling them, “You there.” The rhetoric of Mobitel’s advertisements, both verbal and pictorial, is based on the inner voice. With shaping promises, assurances, and illusions, the voice promotes the good things about buying the product and also implicitly or explicitly warns the consumer what might happen if he or she does not buy the product.

Advertising discourse has a certain overconfidence with regard to its grounding. It takes this grounding as given and does not treat it as problematic. It does not confirm the existence of doubt; on the contrary, it does not accept the possibility of reexamination, and it acts as if everything is being solved satisfactorily (Gouldner 1976, 45-46). Mobitel’s advertisements, for example, include a broad range of voices and an array of strategies and tactics that assure success to the producer: Mobitel uses different voices and models of addressing different viewers, including resistant ones. Discourses thus compliment the logic of consumer society as they instill the demand for new products, new slogans, and new campaigns (Mattelart 1991).

In contemporary capitalist societies, advertising, mass media, and fashion result in a proliferation of signs and spectacles and produce an excess of what Baudrillard (1983, 1999) called “sign-value.” Commodities are not primarily characterized by use-value and exchange-value but by sign-value. So people attain or confirm status, prestige, or power according to the sign-values of products they consume. The triumph of sign-value has contributed to the development of new advertising discourses and forms of representation: advertised products are no longer present in advertisements, as in the case of Mobitel. We are facing the emergence of advertisements that are promoting a commodity not by advertising directly but instead by promoting satisfaction, happiness, a feeling of freedom, and beauty that the consumption of the commodity promises. Baudrillard (1999) claimed that “buying a brand is not only about buying a product, but about buying into life-styles and values” (p. 121; Gane 1993; Kellner 1994). Advertisements promoting sign-value are selling

the commodity indirectly, in a more sophisticated way. Mobitel advertisements are not literally pointing to the consumption of the product but instead develop a long-term strategy based on a discourse that promotes satisfaction that the product, not included in the advertisement, brings.

Ideology in advertising can be best explained in terms of Debord's (1999a; 1999b) "society of the spectacle" and Baudrillard's (1983, 1999) notion of "hyper-reality." Debord spoke of the society that is in all its forms—information, advertising, propaganda, consumption—a spectacle as a model of social life. And media in the society of the spectacle are implicated in the creation of events. "Instead of reporting on events, the media, including advertising, bring into being events—political demonstrations, sports feature, scandal, products—which would not otherwise have happened" (Baudrillard 1983, 69). These are simulated events and products—they do not refer to a prior reality. The absence of things, that they appear but do not necessarily happen, that everything is avoiding its own image and is thus never identical with what it stands for, produces the (material) illusion of the world. The "society of the spectacle," "hyper-reality," and sign-value are conceived, as Baudrillard would argue, as pure illusion, a pure dream, an imaginary construction, a bricolage. People thus need the imaginary transposition of their real conditions of existence to "represent to themselves their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 1994, 123). The impetus for this, the intentional agents actively backing it, are a small number of cynical people who "base their domination and exploitation of the people on a falsified representation of the world which they have imagined in order to enslave other minds by dominating their imaginations" (Althusser 1994, 124).

Images of the good life and eternal, successful youth achieved through the consumption of glamorous products are those that ensure advertising success. Advertisements promise a glamorous life as the reward for personal success, while underpinning and perpetuating consumption. Mobitel's ads suggest we need to follow the image to be "in." "Ads are not selling us a product...they are selling us a life-style. And they have become the engines that drive our way of life" (Himmelstein 1994, 50). The product does not stand for itself but for something else—it points to idealized representations in the form of images—images of a happy family, of being cool and in, or of success. Mobitel's ads teach that images bring satisfaction and the feeling (illusionary) of living a happiness. "Ads are loaded with images of ways to be" (Williamson 1978, 13).

Mobitel's advertisements speak to consumers about identity and appear to offer solutions—they open a path toward new and better identities.³ Advertising is thus contributing to the ongoing decline of traditional identities. Hall (1992, 274) argued that we face the emergence of new identities, which are often—in the contemporary era—discussed within the realm of "crisis of iden-

tity.” Individual identities are today produced, reproduced, and implicated in each other. Modern identities, promoted in part by advertising discourse, are being decentered; they are dislocated or fragmented. Creators of the advertising industry realized representing and selling products also means representing and selling identities. A contemporary subject is thus conceptualized and interpellated as having no fixed or permanent identity. “Identity becomes a moveable feast” (Hall 1992, 276). The advertising industry realized a new identity can be the synonym for the new I (Renner 1998, 14). “A new look can be synonymous with a new me” (Jenkins 1996, 7-8). Mobitel’s advertising discourse addresses subjects so that when presenting the product, it appeals to their new consumer identity. To achieve the construction of new identities, advertisers use a certain kind of language—which, as du Gay et al. (1997) claimed, “operates as much on fantasy and desire as it does on rational choices” (pp. 25-26). Therefore, people in advertisements are not a realistic representation but an imaginary one. As identification takes place mentally, Williamson (1978) suggested if we buy the product, we actually buy the image and at the same time contribute to the construction of identity—through consumption. Buying the product (a mobile phone) means buying identity or a way of life.

Mobitel advertisements are based on the assumption that a mobile phone fulfills different roles in people’s lives. To make people believe products exist with the purpose to act as roles in one’s life, the advertiser—through differently shaped, designed, and presented symbols—introduces meaning to the product that influences the consumer. When, for example, advertisers make an ad for selling a phone, they do not conceptualize the phone only as a piece of machinery or a method of communication but as an opportunity for friendship and pleasant company, to make the children happy, to attract girls, and so forth. Changing forms of representation through ads suggests the promotion of the symbolic (Luthar 1998, 124). Conventional ways of representation in the ads—telling a story based on promoting goodness or usefulness of the product—are being replaced by irony, iconography, references, ambiguity, and so forth, through which products are represented often without sequenced narration. “The product is being transformed into representation” (Luthar 1998). The logic of ads is focused on promising the good that will happen through buying the product and less on what it promoted decades ago—the usefulness of the product. Ads do not focus on the argumentation and evidence of why the product is good but rather on creating situations in which a consumer is satisfied and happy when using the product. For example, when using perfume, women are, ads suggest, happily involved, or as we show in our case study, users of mobile phones are “free as a bird,” happy, relaxed, and so forth.

Placing the Study of Mobitel

Thinking about the wider cultural context within which Mobitel advertisements are situated, we argue it reflects the logic of contemporary advertising discourses, that is, the interpellation of viewers through the promotion of the sign-value of the product. Whereas today, the sign-value of products promoted through advertisements is the basis through which successful advertising techniques are formulated, in the past, the promotion of products' use-value was the successful strategy. This distinction is central for understanding the differences in the use of advertising techniques throughout recent Slovene cultural history. Prior to independence in 1991, when Slovenia was one of the Yugoslav republics, one could not speak of the existence of distinguished advertising techniques. During socialism, the "social self-government" regime was the ideological reality of the countries belonging to the Eastern bloc. Slovene and Yugoslav socialism was predicated on the idea of solidarity, in the heart of which there is a belief in the so-called brotherhood and unity—everyone is in a way related to everybody else; everybody is equal. During this period, ideology was oriented toward reassuring and promoting unity and collectivity in every possible sense: as everyone was represented as equal and solidarity was a core value, the idea of unity was a logical consequence incorporated into everyday life.

Before the 1990s, every effort in social life was oriented toward the promotion of the idea of the prevailing regime, and the advertising industry was no exception. It reflected the ideas of unity and collectivity, equality and solidarity: it promoted values and beliefs central to political hegemony. The use-value of advertised products prevailed and was largely incorporated into the advertising industry discourse and practice. The use-value logic of advertising before the 1990s supported what could be called the informative function of advertising, meaning advertisements produced in Slovenia and also those imported into Slovenia and translated into Slovene actually informed potential consumers about the advertised products. Unlike now, advertisements did not so obviously attempt to mobilize consumers and were not so directly oriented toward consumption. Following Althusser (1994), we could say advertisements did not so obviously play the role they play today—interpellation of viewers that has as its specific, well-defined, and managed goal: profit.

Comparing the informative function of advertising from the past to today's inventive practices that aggressively point toward consumption, we could say that in the past, Slovene advertising was to a certain degree naïve, while keeping in mind the larger context of Slovene society and the move toward Westernization. Values and beliefs that were incorporated into the advertisements were different; they reflected collective goals and were not individual-

istically oriented; they did not promote individuality or individual identity. On the contrary, advertisements served the ideological goal of unity and sameness. Advertisements produced in Slovenia were few, and companies that advertised products were visible, as they were few—people knew them and the products they were trying to promote. Advertisements were not distinguished as they are today; no professional advertising agency as such existed, whereas today companies that want to advertise increasingly hire them.

Many advertisements present in the market in the 1980s stereotypically reflected Slovene life. One of the stereotypes largely shared by Slovenes, used for advertising purposes extensively, is that Slovenes are very much attached to the house they live in. Many Slovenes build their own houses, and after a decade or more of constructing it, they become attached to it; advertisements informed people what they could use to improve something in or near the house. The house was also presented as a metaphor for a happy family life: family was presented as a great value and was idealized; a happy family lives in a nice home and is prepared to invest in the home to make it even nicer, cozier, and so forth. The second stereotype widely recognized among Slovenes is that they are thrifty, especially those who live in Northern Slovenia are known to be avaricious. Insurance agencies advertised their services, appealing to people that saving is a good habit, that it is known to be a Slovene virtue, and that it is worthwhile for family benefit.

Advertisements, regardless of what product they promoted, were in service of (re)producing and solidifying traditional values widespread in Slovenia: thriftiness, loyalty, safety, family, house, a stay-at-home attitude, envy, friendship, and so forth. These advertisements were not directly addressed to consumers, encouraging them to buy the advertised product. On the contrary, it seemed that their primary function was to inform people—of course they wanted to promote products to increase sales, but they did not do this so visibly. Their intention to sell was not as obvious as in today's advertising. Due to the logic of the prevailing political ideology, it was not proper to advertise in ways that could stimulate the development of differences that would divide people. Individuality as a value was not promoted, whereas today it is the power base of successful advertising. Mobitel's advertisements are instructive. On one hand, they appeal to everybody, while on the other hand, individuality is stressed. For example, looking at billboards posted all around, one gets the impression the message the advertisement is trying to communicate was designed especially for the observer. Individuality became a successful technique for Slovene advertisers at the beginning of the 1990s, when they started to address potential consumers more directly, counting on their individual decision-making identity and potential. This was also the time when new social values were introduced: individualism instead of collectivism. The pro-

cess of individualization, and the importance of the formation of individual identity, started to emerge as a main social concern that also brought change to advertising discourse and practice.

Advertisements began to contradict what was previously perceived as historically Slovene, or traditional. Advertisers started to promote the exact opposite of “typical Sloveness”: individuality, freedom, attraction, success, beauty, and so forth. To be relaxed, to not worry, to want adventure, to take risks, to be in love, to be careless, and so forth became new ideas that formed a formula for successful advertising. Mobitel succeeded because it designed a long-lasting campaign promoting all these new values at once. And Mobitel succeeded because its campaign—as a pilot project with regard to the changes in advertising—became widely recognized and accepted. That they’ve chosen continuity turned out to be a masterstroke: the repeated success of the first advertisement led to many emulations. Mobitel’s advertising was a breakthrough in Slovene advertising, due to the distinguished long-lasting campaign that still continues. If continuity was not a practice in the past, today, many advertisers consider this option and make it one of the keys to success: many companies, including Mobitel’s competitor, developed continuous campaigns following their success. Such continuity in advertising means having the money. And Mobitel, as the biggest Slovene operator of analog and digital mobile technology, has it.⁴

Contemporary Slovene advertising is also visually much more aggressive than in the past decade. Not only continuity and the promotion of new values but also the ways advertisers address potential consumers differ compared to practices used in the 1980s. If before one noticed advertisements were primarily informing potential consumers about novelties, today they are uncompromisingly encouraging buying and linking consumption to a desirable state of being: happiness, love, friendship, and so forth. The sign-value of the product is promoted, as it is no longer important to promote what can be done with the product or how it can serve needs in technical ways. On the contrary, the symbolic value counts. Products are becoming a symbol of success. For example, Mobitel is not promoting mobile phoning directly; it is not promoting how consumers can use the mobile phone. Instead, Mobitel advertisements communicate that having the phone will make you happy, relaxed, and always available and thus enable you to not miss anything while retaining privacy; if you want to have it, you just switch the phone off and still do not miss anything as the phone records everything you should be informed about.

Common Characteristics of Mobitel Advertisements

Before moving toward a concrete analysis of Mobitel’s advertisements, let us identify several common characteristics of the ads presented in the cam-

paign. Specifically, these advertisements promote a product not shown in most of the ads, thus reflecting their sign-value. The campaign is seen as successful, since Mobitel's advertising agency has managed to create recognizable ads in which the mobile phone is represented without being used. The company explains, "Mobitel's ads can be identified with Mobitel's faces. Communication is best presented through the images of people, although they do not speak at all" (Information from Mobitel 2000, 8). By excluding an image of the product, it is possible to give a product extra value. "In its absence a product can be demonstrated to be indispensable or of even greater value" (Dyer 1999, 170).

The advertisements consist of photographs that, although bluish in tone, are black-and-white in character, thus connoting a documentary nature. The technique itself points out contrasts in the photograph and connotes certain ways of reading: facial expressions, nonverbal communication, and other activities are highlighted. The technique focuses the viewer's attention: colors disperse attention while black-and-white technique attracts the viewer more specifically. Although black-and-white photographs, in general, represent an old-fashioned style, they connote fashion in the advertisements. Some photographs have sharp, straight edges, while others are ragged. The latter look like they have been torn out of a magazine or taken out of a frame.

Photographs appear as realistic reproductions of life. According to Bourdieu (1999), photography is considered "a perfectly realistic and objective recording of the visible world" (p. 162). It is thus not surprising that Mobitel's photographs appear to be the most objective recordings of the world and can be seen as precise and faithful reproductions of reality. In objective appearance that connotes actual reality, photographs actually stimulate the reader to conform to an advertiser's rules, as Mobitel's photographic constructions obey laws of representation in advertising (Bourdieu 1999, 162-164). If photography is, on one hand, interpreted as a reflection of reality, it is also a constructed reality. Burgin (1999, 41) said that photography is an instrument of ideology and its essence is manipulation. "Photography would not exist without manipulation." "Manipulation" refers to the production of photography: cameras, film, lighting, objects, and people. "Like the state, the camera is never neutral" (Tagg 1999, 246). The representations it produces are coded and governed by the power of the communication apparatus that is advertising. Photography guarantees the authority of the images it constructs and registers them as real, important, and so forth. Mobitel is thus producing seemingly natural images whose truth is guaranteed.

Some of the photographs connote activities that can be related to a story; others are decontextualized. Some were published as sets of shots, creating the story step by step; others were taken in a context that appears as the background for the central image. A few photographs look like Polaroid snapshots that connote spur of the moment recording. Still others have an amateurish

look or rather look like proof prints that would require further processing to produce the final version.

In the relation between a photograph and the words, the photograph calls for an interpretation, and the words or text usually supply it. The photograph, irrefutable as evidence but weak in meaning, is given a meaning through the words. Texts that are printed in red, black, and white give meaning to the photographs; some texts are superimposed and always printed in red, a color that signifies the importance of the message. Mobitel stresses the importance of color in the ads: “we did not give up the red color, as it denotes people living a very intensive life” (Information from Mobitel 2000). The meaning connoted by these texts is metaphoric and addresses the reader indirectly. These messages attract the reader to continue to read what is printed below the images. These texts are subordinated and usually explain details of the offer and its advantages.

Jefkins (1994) suggested that as people do not necessarily want to read advertisements, the message must not waste words and must convey its meaning quickly. Short words and sentences help to clarify the message and make it easy and quick to read and absorb (p. 203). In Mobitel advertisements, “free” is the most commonly used buzzword—common enough to be a cliché. In advertising, “free” usually stands for “you do not have to pay for it,” while in Mobitel’s campaign it stands for freedom, mobility, choices, and so on. Exciting and emotive words, for example, “very wise,” “celebrating spring,” “very contagious,” “inexpensive amusement,” and so forth, are used. Repetition as a rhetorical figure is commonly used: through headlines, pictures, texts, signatures, slogans, and logos. The adjective “very” appears throughout the campaign. Repetition as a form also appears in the layout, style, and typography. Headlines can be interpreted as the central texts of the advertisements wherever they appear. Many kinds of headlines can be differentiated: interrogative, for example, “Where are you?”; emotional, such as, “Nothing missed, nothing lost”; identification, for instance, “Very wise, very mobi”; and topical, for example, “Celebrating spring.”

Furthermore, the slogan “free as a bird,” which accompanies most of the advertisements, can be interpreted as the common characteristic of these ads. It became a symbol that stands for freedom of choice; neither time nor space limits phoning now, suggesting that before mobile phones were introduced, people were hindered in their social and cultural life. The name Mobitel became synonymous with mobile phones because it was constantly repeated and transparent in the media.

Central figures in the advertisements—men and women, young and old, students, celebrities, families—are presented as happy, relaxed users of mobile phones. Mobitel tries to personalize and interpellate every consumer so that he or she becomes part of a common tendency, yet in each ad, the presented per-

son has a name, which stresses personality and individuality. The common characteristic of the names is that the majority of them are typical Slovene names, such as Vesna, Urška, and so forth.

Mobitel presents its advertised products as an indispensable dimension of contemporary life. By constantly stressing the quality of telephone services and concerns for individual satisfaction, including satisfaction of created needs, Mobitel succeeded in persuading readers to buy the new communication technology. In gaining as many buyers as possible, the prepaid phone, known as the mobi, seemed to play a crucial role. Mobi is also the most advertised type among Mobitel's phone services, and in a majority of the ads analyzed, the term "mobi" appears. The word was introduced as a neologism, which transmits many meanings and, in a rhetorical sense, is a metonymy, because "mobi" stands for Mobitel. On the other hand, it also has a polysemic nature: its original meaning refers to a specific type of a mobile phone, but this original meaning has been far exceeded.

In different variations, but in similar contexts, the term "mobi" appears in advertisements denoting some sort of condition, which consumers of mobile phones have managed to achieve. The term "mobi," as we understand it, stands for a verb or an adjective that in principle, refers to being up to date in style. In its variations, it describes a fashion trend attached to free mobility, which can be ideally achieved only through the possession of a mobile phone; it refers to a current trend, followed by a rising number of consumers. Mobi thus becomes a real social pressure, and participation in this social trend via consumption is a wise, logical, and realistic decision on the part of the consumer.

The ads, published in magazines and newspapers and as cards and promotional materials, almost always contain an explanation of Mobitel's achievements, presented as new advantages to be gained. The motivation for buying the phone is never directly involved (the ad never directly addresses the reader by instructing, "Buy the phone") but is hidden in asserting the company's achievements, especially technological improvements (new functions and models); lower prices; and the increasing number of Slovenes using it. Over time, the ads strongly stressed that Mobitel is Slovenia's leading operator of mobile communication services, that it constantly introduces technological improvements, and in every possible dimension, cares about every conceivable need of its customers. These improvements and benefits are connected with wider social and cultural benefits linked to the possession of a mobile phone.

Analyzing Advertisements

In the following analysis, two Mobitel advertisements are analyzed through a semiotic-structuralist approach. The two advertisements were chosen because

of their specific messages and context. The first, "One Is Not Enough," was published as billboards and postcards and in Slovene magazines at the end of 1999 and could be considered inventive in terms of the advertising strategy it uses—it consists of two linked sequences, which is a strategy followed by many advertisers afterward. Besides, the new Slovene national political ideology is contained in the advertisement "One Is Not Enough." The role of Slovenia as an independent nation whose citizens should be proud and take measures to strengthen the nation is underscored. The second advertisement, "It's Keeping Me Company," was introduced in February 2001 and is more specific because the holiday to which it refers, St. Valentine's Day, was imported to Slovenia from Western countries and has been celebrated only in the past few years (not prior to 1991, when Slovenia was still part of Yugoslavia). However, the meaning of a new holiday is not the focus of the analysis; instead, the role of an independent, modern, desired woman and the notions of love and expectation are considered.

It is important to stress that Mobitel's advertising agency's strategy has been the creation of advertisements for different social groups, which Brown (1995) would define as fragmentation. The advertisements are fragmented or segmented according to the social group to which they refer, although, in many cases, slogans, texts, images, and so forth are similar, and the advertisements become widely recognized. To put it differently, Mobitel promotes the same product as suitable for every consumer and seeks some common/different characteristics, desires, and lifestyles to attract the attention of the particular consumer it addresses, yet it seeks to hail each potential consumer as an individual.

"One Is Not Enough"

The "One Is Not Enough" advertisement has the structure of a story, built in two sequences: in the first sequence, a woman is pregnant, and in the second sequence, she holds a newborn child in her arms. The ad follows a natural logic because it represents a real experience: a woman gives birth to a child. This idea of how to promote a product is definitely original: although the birth is a logical result of pregnancy, it is not a self-evident advertising strategy to present both of the sequences. When the ad was first published, a second sequence was not expected by the reader, although he or she could have thought about the birth of the child.

The ad is full of symbolic meanings that can be interpreted in several ways (see Figure 1). Observing the first photo on a denotative level, the reader sees the elegant woman, named Urša. On the connotative level, the name can be understood as an advertising technique with the purpose of personifying and stressing the importance of the individual. Observing the signifiers and signi-

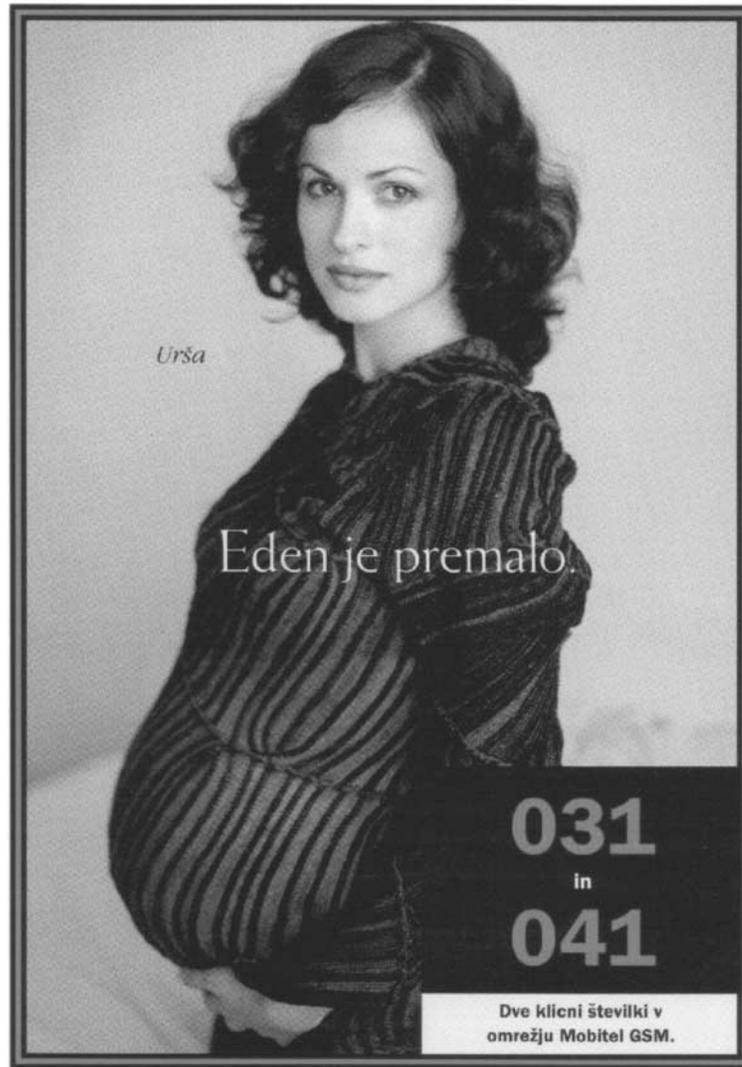


Figure 1. "ONE IS NOT ENOUGH" AD: PART 1

fied further, Urša, by clasping her hands under the belly, stresses the importance of impending motherhood. She looks pleased and satisfied. She is addressing the reader directly: she turns her head to the front and looks directly into the eyes of the reader. It can be interpreted that she is telling her personal story. She is full of expectations, happy and excited about her new life. In a way, she presents herself as an ideal woman: young and beautiful, a woman

with whom every woman would want to identify. Taking that into account, the discourse of the image, offering the desired identities, can be noticed.

Analyzing the linguistic structure of the ad, the text can be interpreted. The sentence, written in the middle of the photo and covering the upper part of her body, is Urša's message to the reader: "one is not enough." At this point, the reader gets closer to the advertised message, although the meaning is still vague. "One is not enough" is both Urša's communication and Mobitel's information about a new dialing code. The numbers 031 and 041, written at the bottom of the picture, are emphasized by red coloring and explained further with the following sentence: "two dialing codes in the Mobitel's network." The ad promotes the mobile phone indirectly, by pointing to the expansion of the dialing network, which can be interpreted as the consequence of the massive use of mobile phones. Although the text "One is not enough" can also be interpreted in terms of the introduction of a new code, the direct connection is interrupted by the role of the (grammatical) subject in the sentence "Two dialing codes in the Mobitel's network." Because of the specifics in Slovene grammar, this characteristic is lost in the English but is crucial in Slovene. According to Slovene grammar, the subject is defined within gender: in the first sentence ("One is not enough"), the gender is masculine, while in the second ("Two dialing codes in Mobitel's network"), the gender is feminine. Therefore, the sentence "One is not enough" can be interpreted as being separated from the dialing innovation (which the advertisement is announcing) and is only attached to the woman's message to the reader. The latter is of more importance, because it contains the ideological meaning of the advertisement.

What seems to be relevant for the connotation of the whole ad is the message "One is not enough" and the metaphor or a symbol of a newborn child, which signifies the wider Slovene national problem of decreasing birth rates. "One is not enough" connotes the need for bigger families and the aim to increase the size of the Slovene population—*one* could be a metonymy for one child, and the meaning can be metaphorically transferred to Slovene families as a sort of appeal to have more children. As Barthes (1970) would claim, it is denoted that the country should have more inhabitants, and the myth of Slovenia as a small country is reinforced—in this sense, Urša represents a young woman who should be a good example to other women. It is signified that the nation could expand, strengthen its identity, and gain recognition.

At this point, the woman's story and the question of how many children are in her family becomes irrelevant, but the readers' life stories and their families are emphasized. Mobitel, with the introduction of the second dialing code on one hand, underscores that the number of mobile phone users is increasing and the firm is therefore offering the new dialing code. On the other hand, the new dialing code is also offered to the possible future users of mobile phones—newborn children.



Figure 2. “ONE IS NOT ENOUGH” AD: PART 2

Shifting to the second photo, it can be inferred that the photo particularly works on the emotional level: it signifies love, motherhood, happiness, safety, trust, and so forth (see Figure 2). The way Urša is holding her baby—the child’s head is on her shoulder, her right arm is embracing the baby’s back, and her left hand is gently holding the child’s little leg—proves the mother is taking care of the child. The stereotype of mothers as always being loving, tender people, who raise their children well, is reinforced. The role of the mother is therefore highly positive.

Furthermore, the text on the photo informs the reader about the child’s name and about the exact date and time of birth: “Urša and Jakob Franc, born 19 December 1999 at 3:15.” Now, the mother’s name is supplemented with the child’s name, Jakob Franc. Both names are traditional Slovene names, even more old fashioned than the name Urša. Franc could also be the last name of both Urša and Jakob, although in the strategy of Mobitel’s advertising, generally only the first names are used, never the last. If connoting that the name of the child is Jakob Franc, it could also be interpreted that the national tradition is in a way broken: naming the child with two names is not very common in Slovenia but gives the impression of being somehow unordinary, different; like the example of the product. Besides, the two names can also be connected to the two dialing codes 031 and 041. Also, the traditional names are probably not chosen by coincidence, because they could signify the tradition that is (will

remain) a characteristic of Mobitel as a firm, which succeeds in enforcing norms in the field of telecommunication and which values tradition. Mobitel as a state-owned company has been introducing new technology in the state-regulated market conditions, which have been recently changing as the processes of liberalization and privatization of the telecommunication market are still going on. However, Mobitel, protected by the state, managed to enforce the norms in the field—the arriving competitor, the privately owned company Si.mobil could gain only the limited market share after Mobitel had ensured itself the majority of mobile phone users. Mobitel also in the advertising presents itself as a firm that managed to introduce mobile phoning to Slovenia and will keep that as a tradition. On the other hand, old traditional values, such as the importance of family, motherhood, love, community, and so forth, are also emphasized.

Finally, the date of Jakob Franc's birth is also important: 19 December 1999 at 3:15. The exact time of birth is added as though relevant, but for the analysis, the month of the birth seems crucial. The end of the year is approaching as are a time of celebration, the transition to the new year, buying presents, thinking about the future, and the possibilities for new beginnings. December is the time when people gather to celebrate and when they are relaxed and happy. The year 1999 is even more specific. It represents the end of the twentieth century and introduces the year 2000 and the forthcoming new millennium. Expectations at that time were emphasized even more, and the prospects for the future were of great importance. Urša with a child signifies that prospects for the future are optimistic and the ideology of a careless future is connoted. The ad represents not just an individual story—the family happiness when the child is born—but creates the ideological world in which everyone has the same possibility of reaching that desired lifestyle.

“It's Keeping Me Company”

This ad was published on St. Valentine's Day to promote a new subscriber's package, called Vesna (see Figure 3). The name Vesna can refer to the name of the mobile phone's package, the woman in the photo, and/or, as the reader can find out from the text below, the friend. On the denotative level, the reader can see the middle-aged woman playing with her dog, which can be understood as a metaphor for friendship and loyalty, similar to a phone that offers the possibility of being in the company of friends.

From the text, written as a woman's message to a reader, can be inferred that a mobile phone offers a sort of relaxed, easy life. She is addressing the reader:

I always take some time for myself in the afternoon. I brew myself some coffee, stretch my legs in front of the television, flick through a magazine or a

MARTIN ŠTAMBERG

Agencija: M. Štamberg (2004) - Ljubljana, SLO. © 2004

Dela mi družbo.

Vesna

Novi naročniški paket.

Ribi 19. II.-20. III.

UROČAJTE PRIJATELJE IN ZAČNITE
TEDEJN VREČO. SVETEN POPOLDANSKI
KLEPET BO ŠE BREVIL VAŠO
SAMOZAVESTNO NEG-TEJUNA
PRIJATNO SOBČANJE...

Popoldne si vedno vzamem nekaj časa zase. **Skuham si kavo, se zleknem pred televizijo, prelistam revijo ali časopis ..., še najraje pa poklepetam. Sproščeno. Družabno. Neobvezno. Z Vesno.**

Polag prijetnega popoldanskega klepeta po njih ceneh prinaša Vesna še vrsto drugih ugodnosti:

1. WAP mobilni Siemens C35i za 19.900 SIT*, če za naročniški paket Vesna sklenete naročniško razmerje za vsaj 18 mesecev.
2. Po naročilu brezplačno prejemanje tedenskega horoskopa prek SMS-a.
3. Vesnino pesem na brezplačnem CD-ju ali dodaten pokrovček za baterijo, na katerem je vaš najljubši verz, moto, motv, osebni podpis, ...
4. Možnost sklenitve do 4 družinskih bonusov.

Priključna taksa	2.350 SIT
Mesečna naročnina	2.980 SIT

Pogovori v Mobilnih omrežjih v paketu Vesna			
7.00 - 16.00	16.00 - 22.00	22.00 - 24.00 in 5.00 - 7.00 sob., ned. in prazniki ves dan	00.00 - 5.00
35 SIT / min.	18 SIT / min.	14 SIT / min.	5 SIT / min.

Podrobnejše informacije dobite v vseh Mobilnih centrih, brezplačno na telefonski številki 031 / 041 700 700 (Mobilni naročniki), 080 70 70 (ostali) in na naših spletnih straneh.

*Mobilni Siemens C35i, kupljen v naši sklopi, ki bo trajala do odpovede zanj, vključno s SIM kartico omrežja Mobilni GSM (33) in (041).



Siemens C35i
za 19.900 SIT*



SVOBODEN KOT PTICA
WWW.MOBITEL.SI

Figure 3 "IT'S KEEPING ME COMPANY" AD

newspaper . . . but I prefer chatting. Relaxed. Sociable. With the absence of compulsion. With Vesna.

The ad is crafting an ideological message by presenting the woman's afternoon as naturally relaxed: the woman has no obligations, she does not need to take care of her family or cook, or put in general terms, do anything at all in the

household. The ideology seems to interpellate middle-aged women, who—by buying the mobile phone, the new package Vesna—could easily reach the same enjoyable life. However, all obligations become irrelevant, not needed. Perhaps the character of the woman as being chatty is presented a bit stereotypically, but it is signified that women are free, that they can socialize and do practically nothing but chat over the phone, drink coffee, and watch TV. Besides, leisure does not get boring, because the important moment of excitement is included in the advertisement message.

As the reader can notice in the bottom of the photo, there is a red frame with a message written inside. Red signifies *stop, look at the important message*, which is actually a horoscope. To stress the horoscope, fish are drawn in white below the message. In this case—according to the time when the ad was published (14 February)—it is the forecast for the astrological sign Pisces, represented by fish. The horoscope reads, “Listen to your friends and start your week cheerfully. The afternoon’s talk on Wednesday will contribute to your self-esteem. A pleasant meeting at the end of the week.” As the reader finds out in the rest of the textual part of the advertisement, the horoscope can be transmitted weekly as a short message sent free to the reader’s mobile phone.

The horoscope, used in the ad, is connected to St. Valentine’s Day. As Mobitel explained in its newsletter (Information from Mobitel 2001, 10) in which it presents its innovations, the horoscope in this advertisement on St. Valentine’s Day “predicts a stranger for the woman.” Here, an exciting life seems promised. The horoscope is predicting only positive events: it is implied that friends have advised the reader to be cheerful; it then points to communication over the mobile phone, which is supposed to make the reader feel good. At this point, it gets psychological as it suggests the reader’s self-esteem will grow by chatting over the mobile phone. Finally, the horoscope predicts a pleasant meeting at the end of the week, which could be connected to romance, meeting a beloved person. The horoscope signifies an unpredictable but exciting future. Women are represented as being interested in such a future. They are excited about receiving the horoscopes offered weekly by Mobitel. Mobitel is presenting itself as being a shaper of the future: on one hand, it offers a product that represents the means to make women’s life relaxed, unproblematic, happy; on the other hand, when it sells the product, it also creates positive future events supposed to affect a woman’s life.

The woman in the photo represents the desired sociable life, which could be gained by phoning. Actually, a phone is personified. The reader can interpret that a phone is identified with a person: the name Vesna is the name of a new mobile phone package and is also a friend with whom the presented woman can talk to. The need, which is ideologically promised to be fulfilled, is the need for friendship, warmth, sociability, loyalty, and trust. The name of the phone is interestingly chosen: Vesna is a common Slovene name, but as the

date of publishing the advertisement was St. Valentine's Day, the name can be connected to a Slovene film of the same title. The movie is special: it is a love story, it is among the rare Slovene movies, and it is known to be one of the most beautiful. This is why the name, in the national context, can signify love and romance. At this point, the advertising story is completed: the stranger at the end of the week predicted by a horoscope will fulfill the romantic dream. Although the romance is not of most relevance to the advertisement, it is presented as a possible experience. The stranger signifies expectation, a sort of tempting secrecy about the future, which makes life exciting. The same ideal life is promised to the women who buy the mobile phone Vesna. These women could become independent, free, as in the photo. The woman follows her wishes, individually decides what she wants from her life and how she fulfills her desires. She values freedom and her own will, takes no responsibility, and makes no commitments.

In the advertisement, Mobitel also offers a family bonus if four Vesna phone packages are bought; family values are in this case irrelevant. The package is offered to four family members as well to point out the discount if more phones are bought and more people become Mobitel network members. All of them are "free as birds" as signified by the added slogan. In this case, women can choose freely how to make decisions about their lives. The discourse used in the ad promises new identities and a desirable lifestyle. The ideology working in the ad is breaking the stereotypical woman's role of dependency, taking care of the household and family—instead, it offers alternative positions and identities without questioning the material and social conditions of how to achieve them.

Conclusions

The expansion of advertising in Slovenia on one hand and the changed manner of representation in the advertisements on the other should be considered along with cultural and social changes in this country. The impact of capitalist trends of the West on Slovenia after its historical transformation, and Slovenia's affinity toward the West, resulted in several social changes, the introduction of new advertising strategies being just one. The development of new communication and information technologies rapidly progressed in Slovenia after the political and economic transformation. Particularly, the introduction of mobile phones enabled Slovenia to strengthen its previously underdeveloped telecommunication sector, and to gain profit, which became relevant in the new economic order. Despite the introduction of private ownership, the state sophisticatedly regulated the telecommunication market, and along with the field of fixed telecommunication, it tended to control the emerging mobile communication. The monopolistic position of Mobitel, which was founded by the state

firm Telekom in the breaking year 1991, has been kept until recently when the process of liberalization of the market was officially declared by the legislative changes. Noncompetitive conditions in the market enabled Mobitel to become one of the most successful Slovene enterprisers, and the firm faced the competition only in 1999, when another company (Si.mobil) was finally enabled to provide mobile telecommunication services in Slovenia. Logically, Mobitel took advantage of the political and economic factors that were the basis for its successful growth, which was additionally stimulated by the systematic advertising. Besides the supportive political and economic environment provided to Mobitel, mobile phones as a new technology became attractive per se also for the consumers, who massively accepted the innovation. Thus, advertising started to occupy the role of the key interactor between the firm and the consumers.

At this specific time, which we believe for Slovenia has been a turning point in terms of the development of advertising and new communication technologies, our intention was to point to the logic of contemporary advertising promoting the technological innovation. The ideological discourse Mobitel uses in the advertisements and the ways meanings are denoted in the messages have been our main concerns, although one could argue the advertisements analyzed connote more or other meanings than we have identified. On one hand, the analysis of meanings in the advertisements should be considered subjective, and depends on the observer's theoretical approach. On the other hand, one interpretation can always be followed by other, what could be called a "circle of meaning" (Derrida 1981, 42)—the meanings are constantly produced and reproduced, depending on the cultural contexts and the specific time and place.

Observing Mobitel's advertising, it can be argued that not just the consumption of the advertised product as such, but the promotion of lifestyles, which a mobile phone is supposed to be offering, is the predominant basis on which meanings in the advertisements are constructed. New communication technologies, such as mobile phones, seem to be a good opportunity for Mobitel's advertising agency to create inventive advertisements, stressing particularly individuality, freedom of choice, fulfilled desires, and so forth, that is, values that the Slovene advertising industry did not widely mobilize before. Besides the individual, national, collective identity has gained new dimensions—if the individual is represented as free and autonomous, then Slovenia is represented as a cohesive nation gaining international approval and increasing awareness of the need to expand. The advertisements mobilize the ideology of political power by the processes of denotation—the collective values, such as equality and solidarity, are being replaced by individual values, stressing the uniqueness of the Slovene nation, the importance of (newborn) individuals, the awareness of the achievements of the state, and so forth.

More than on a national, collective basis, which is emphasized in the minority of the ads, Mobitel ads work on the individual level, signifying the individual's better chances to succeed in life if a mobile phone is used. It can be argued that such advertising discourse and practice, and forms of representation, interpellate Slovene subjects in an individualizing, Westernizing society. Individuals in the advertisements are personified even if they are represented as members of a particular social group (e.g., students, sportsmen), and the individuality is represented to be a crucial new value. Although individuals are represented as being consumers who follow the trends, they, on the other hand, actually become a part of the atomized mass of mobile phone users. Therefore, Mobitel creates the illusion of people getting connected, gaining friendship, love, and social approval, while the phone as a technology can stand as a substitution for personal communication and as such has the potential to separate individuals.

Notes

1. *Representation* refers to the use of language and images and can be understood as a process by which people use language to produce meaning. Hall (1997) argued representation "means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people" (p. 15).

2. Otherwise, we observed the Mobitel advertising campaign in the period 1998 to 2001, and we analyzed the advertising messages, choosing sixteen advertisements created for different social groups (students, women, couples, sportsmen, friends). These advertisements were published in Slovene newspapers and magazines, on billboards and television, or as postcards.

3. Jenkins (1996) argued that social identity is our understanding "of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us)" (p. 5).

4. Mobitel's revenue in 1999 was 37,336 billion sit (U.S.\$1 is approximately 250 sit), thus exceeding revenues in 1998 by 64 percent. Mobitel's investments in 1999 amounted to 24,815 billion sit; they increased by 161 percent compared to 1998. Mobitel's net profit in 1999 was 3,203 billion sit. The numerous benefits and novelties Mobitel offers as well as the emergence of competition dictated higher investments in advertising and sales promotion. As Mobitel claimed, its "advertising campaigns significantly improved and made an impact on Slovene advertising" (Mobitel 1999).

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