

## Response to advertisement: 'How to attract women without even trying'.

This advertisement published in the USA in 1996 attempts to persuade a male reader to purchase various books and cassettes that will help him in attracting women. This purpose is very clear and is achieved effectively through targeting the advert's intended reader, the stylistic features of the text, and the polymodal nature of the text.

The context of the advert is based on the idea that single heterosexual males seek to attract women, targeting the large amount of men that do not currently 'have' significant others, appealing to them by assuring them that attracting a woman 'has never been easier'. Also the advert narrows its target audience by dividing men into 'aggressive' and 'passive'. The advert states that 'aggressive [men are] simply... turn-off[s]'. This is a smart advertising strategy as, in general, men who truly consider themselves aggressive and who truly are aggressive are normally quite confident in terms of attracting women, hence their 'aggressive' nature and therefore would not need this book; passive men however are most likely passive due to a lack of confidence and insecurity compared to their 'aggressive' counterparts. The advert however plays on this lack of self-belief by claiming that it is 'passive' men who have the upper hand over aggressive men. This attracts on average more readers as based on their nature there are, most likely, more single passive men than single aggressive men. It must also be noted that the idea of passive and aggressive stems from the advert's of women in the 90s. Women are portrayed as being 'the aggressors' or 'the ones who insist on being in control'; this is in stark contrast to what we can infer to be the target audience of the advert. And since a great deal of emphasis is placed on this contrast, dramatic and colloquial adjectives such as 'ballsy' being used to describe the women of the 90s, the 'passive' man reading the advert becomes more worried about how his own 'passive' nature will stack up against 'beautiful', 'ballsy' and 'assertive women'. However at this point the advert begins to provide answers for these questions.

The purpose of the written text in the advert is to establish rapport with the reader so as to convince him of the benefits of buying the product advertised. This is attempted right from the start. The title reads 'How to attract women without even trying!' The title is all in capitals and in a larger font than the rest of the text. It establishes itself as a point of interest, large enough to read even while skimming through a magazine, and emotive enough (note the use of the exclamation mark) to draw the reader in. Then we can observe the synthetic personalization present in the text, the 'dialogue' created by the advert as it asks rhetorical questions, such as 'sounds too good to be true?', and the constant repetition of the pronoun 'you'. For example the third paragraph begins with the statement 'You see, the woman of the 90s...' The

way the sentence is structured with the interjection of 'you see' being framed by the comma at the beginning creates a very conversational tone, a tone that puts the previously mentioned 'passive man' at relative ease. Also to reassure the reader of the legitimacy of the product being sold, some of the questions answered in the book are displayed through bullet pointing. The questions are short and succinct, giving the reader only a small glimpse of what the book may hold. The anaphora of 'why' and 'how' throughout the bullet points create a sense of order and make the questions and statements appear apparently more logical and scientific, and therefore more credible. The casual tone of the advert is brought through several times; at one point the statement 'How to have "cockidence"' is used. The word 'cockidence' is obviously not a real word but rather a neologism, an amalgamation of the words 'cock' and 'confidence'; the elision of these two words combines them to great effect. This is due to the fact that one of the most primal symbols of a man's attractiveness or virility is his manhood or 'cock'. And although the expression 'size doesn't matter' is often said/used, in truth the 'cock' may still be significant for a man's confidence, especially in regard to mating, or rather in this circumstance, courtship. The advert plays on this almost subconscious insecurity to suggest that the book it is promoting can give one confidence to 'be a man'. Ironically this is not at all what is desirable according to what the advert previously referred to when discussing the passive and aggressive natures of men. However it also clearly shows that the advert is working on men's lack of confidence; that is, their insecurities. The light or jovial dialogue or banter of the advert's main body of text is summed up with the pseudo-slogan, 'Order today – attract women tomorrow!' The dash highlights the parallel structure of the phrase and emphasizes the relationship of 'today' and 'tomorrow', thereby promoting the speed at which the item will be delivered. Note the irony, however, that the books and cassettes will take '2-4 weeks for delivery'.

There are two other bodies of text in the advert. Both are also advertising a book and a cassette that also teach one how to attract women. They both have bold capitalized subheadings, both starting with 'How to', instantly allowing the reader to pick up on the core theme of the advert and relating back, to anchor with the main or central advert. Once again a rapport is established through synthetic personalization due to the repetition of 'you' and rhetorical questions such as 'Do you get tongue-tied around attractive women?'; the word 'tongue-tied' playing on the inherent insecurities of the target audience and the adjective 'attractive' promoting the idea that the product advertised will aid the reader in getting the aforementioned 'attractive girl'. Also reference is constantly made to 'Eric Weber' who, the reader is told, is a 'world famous author'. This claim adds credibility to the products as it appears that they have been produced by a knowledgeable, professional expert. Also, at the end of the advert's text, the price of the products is revealed: 'Only \$19.95', the word choice of the adverb 'only' suggesting that the reader is about to receive something of great

worth for very little money, a standard advertising procedure. However, it also strategically places the price at the end of the advert so as to ensure the reader's focus is on the contents of the advert rather than the price. This is also done through the images used in the advert.

Focussing on the two images used in the smaller adverts, they both serve to promote the product being sold. They are both stereotypically beautiful and attractive women as imagined in the society of 1996. They are both portrayed as alluring, with eye contact being established with the camera and (especially for the photo on the right) a large amount of skin being exposed. They together project the image of the woman that men reading the advert hope to attract, therefore convincing readers to purchase the product. The central image is more complex in the way that it contains both a man and a woman. The woman is once more both attractive and seductive. She sensually has her arms around the man and is making as if she will kiss his cheek. This sensuality appeals to the reader and gives the reader the sense that the book (whose title is on the image) can also give the reader this sort of experience. It must also be noted that in the image the man is not reciprocating these feelings. He simply wears a slightly bemused expression. This ties back to the title of the ad, 'How to attract women without even trying!' The lack of effort portrayed by the man is appealing to the readers. The polymodal nature of the advert serves it well in maintaining the reader's interest and in convincing the reader of the worth of the products being sold. However it is not the most important part of the advert.

The order coupon is the most essential component of the advert. Without it, no money would be made and readers must be made aware of this. It is not aligned with the two smaller adverts underneath the main one, but rather it juts out and protrudes into the main advert. This makes it, clear, distinct, and unmissable. Various sales details such as pricing, postage, and sales discount are mentioned, with the discount being bolded so as to draw attention to it. It also gives several professional details of the company and its workings. All in all, it neatly sums up the advert by offering what will hopefully be the hassle-free form from which readers can easily become customers.

Adverts set out with a purpose, and this one is no different. Through the establishing of rapport, the polymodal nature of the text, and the layout of the advert, the purpose is achieved. The text's many aspects work well in conjunction with each other, offering cassettes in case the reader is not in fact a keen reader, establishing a strong core theme and most importantly convincing the reader to buy. The underlying theme of the exploitation of insecurities or human's innate desire for companionship is central to understanding an apparently innocuous advert about attracting women (without even trying!).