

“Oh, now I get it ...”: comic dupe irony in print advertising

First submission: 20 March 2012

Acceptance: 28 September 2012

Advertising texts are typically designed to engage audiences in the process of meaning construction. This article conducts a relevance theoretic analysis of a sample of print advertisements that employ a specific type of irony towards this goal, based on Partington's (2007) conceptualisation of comic dupe irony. The results suggest that comic dupe irony is manifested in a discrepancy between two narratives. Consumers are encouraged to establish relevance by processing the irony that arises from this discrepancy, thus expending more processing effort for the promise of relevant cognitive effects.

“Nou vang ek . . .”: komiese flous-ironie in druk-advertensies

Advertensies word algemeen ontwerp om gehore te betrek by die proses van betekenis-konstruksie. Hierdie artikel maak 'n relevansie teoretiese ontleding van 'n steekproef van gedrukte advertensies wat 'n spesifieke tipe ironie vir hierdie doel aanwend, gebaseer op Partington (2007) se konseptualisering van die komiese bedriegironie. Die resultate dui daarop dat komiese bedriegironie geopenbaar word in 'n teenstrydigheid tussen twee verhale. Verbruikers word dus aangemoedig om relevansie te vestig deur die ironie wat ontstaan as gevolg van hierdie verskil te verwerk. As gevolg daarvan, bestee die gehoor dus meer prosesseringsmoeite in ruil vir toepaslike kognitiewe effekte.

Dr M S Conradie, Dept of English, University of the Free State, P O Box 339, Bloemfontein 9300; E-mail: conradiems@ufs.ac.za



Acta Academica
2013 45(3): 1-29
ISSN 0587-2405
© UV/UFS
<<http://www.ufs.ac.za/ActaAcademica>>

SUN MØDIA
BLOEMFONTEIN

Advertisers compete for consumers' attention.¹ The challenge to construct messages that are both immediately salient among the myriad of alternatives and as memorable as possible in the long run is intensified by the proliferation of media literacy, globalisation and media saturation (Kuppens 2009: 119). Print advertisers attempt to achieve these interrelated aims in designing advertisements in such a way that they actively involve consumers in the process of meaning construction.² For example, advertisements may confront audiences with ostensibly oblique messages. To make sense of such messages, consumers are encouraged to marshal their cognitive resources and become engaged in riddle-solving. Successful consumers experience a sense of "ego enhancement", which is intended to foster a positive attitude towards the advertised brand (Kuppens 2009: 119). The objective of this article is to conduct an empirical analysis of print advertisements that exploit a specific form of irony as a means of engaging consumers in this process.

As a methodological framework, the investigation combines discourse analysis with Wilson & Sperber's (2004) relevance theory, with special emphasis on Partington's (2007) approach to irony. Although Partington (2007) has not yet been applied to studies of irony in advertising (newspaper journalism forms the focus of his analysis), this article posits that his conceptualisation of comic dupe irony may serve to elucidate one of the methods at advertisers' disposal for involving readers in the process of meaning construction. Towards this end, the article conducts a qualitative analysis of comic dupe irony in four print advertisements that serve as case studies. These advertisements were drawn from a more comprehensive analysis of copywriters' engagement strategies, based on a dataset of 120 advertisements.

1. Postmodern advertising

Hitchon & Jura (1997: 142) posit that postmodern commercial advertising has inaugurated a significant shift in the goals advertisers

1 Following Partington, this article uses the term narrative in a general sense to denote "an event or sequence of events which unfold from a particular perspective" (2006: 41).

2 Lim et al. 2009: 1784; Crook 2004: 730; Simpson 2001: 591; Pérez 2000: 45.

aim to achieve through their texts. Faced with the challenge of addressing jaded consumers, postmodern advertisers attempt to design texts that enhance consumers’ engagement with them (Morris 2005: 713; Kuppens 2009: 119). This trend is illustrated in diachronic studies such as Philips and McQuarrie’s (2002), which show that rhetorical strategies, such as the use of tropes in advertising, have become increasingly multilayered. That is, puns, metaphors and irony are now frequently mixed in one text. Advertisements of this nature make greater demands on the audience’s ability to interpret them, or in relevance theoretic terms, to determine the relevance of its constituent words and images.³ Commenting on this trend of using cognitively demanding texts, Crook (2004: 723) argues that postmodern advertising is less concerned with lauding specific advantages of one brand over another on the basis of rational claims, and more focused on facilitating a “gentle mental biasing”. This hypothesis is supported by neurological research in the fields of neuromarketing and neurobranding (see Schaefer & Rotte 2007). Respondents in empirical studies demonstrated greater activity in brain areas associated with pleasurable sensations when their attention was focused on brands that had already accrued positive social meanings, such as an association with luxury, regardless of its practicality (Schaefer & Rotte 2007: 144, see Schaefer et al. 2006). One way in which such positive associations may be linked with a brand is by actively engaging audiences in determining the relevance of an advertisement’s constituent parts (Crook 2004: 723). Thus, while modern advertising aimed at “touting the value of its products to the consumer” as part of the process of “manufacturing new needs and desires in consumers as a necessary counterpart to the manufacturing of the products themselves” (Morris 2005: 705), postmodern advertising exhibits a stronger focus on fostering positive associations with the advertised brand. This, in turn, helps to account, at least partially, for the proliferation of advertisements that employ cognitively demanding tropes. Ideally, consumers will become so engaged in the search for relevance that they go as far as discussing the potential meanings of an advertising text with family and friends (Morris 2005: 713; see Van Niekerk & Jenkinson 2012).

3 See Morris 2005: 705-13; Lagerwerf 2007: 1703; Crook 2004; Tuan 2010: 179.

It follows that the degree of processing effort demanded by postmodern advertising also opens an advertisement to misinterpretation. This risk is offset, at least to a degree that is acceptable to advertisers, by the nature of contemporary consumers, specifically the segment referred to as super consumers. The term reflects the observation that, in a given product category, as much as “10% of the consumers account for more than 50% of the profits” (Yoon 2009). This segment of the target audience is more likely than others to make purchases and recommend their preferred brands to others, and have become increasingly media literate, and thus more adept at processing advertising texts (Freed 2012; see Kuppens 2004: 119). In addition, they go as far as reading and producing great volumes of product reviews that reflect their shopping experiences and continue to affect the manner in which they process advertisements.

Thus, the use of tropes in postmodern advertising reflects these characteristics of super consumers, specifically the notion that they are more capable of processing advertisements that exhibit a greater degree of complexity in comparison with those from previous decades (see Philips & McQuarrie 2002; Morris 2005). Of particular interest to the current research, Lagerwerf (2007: 1703) notes that, in addition to tropes such as metaphors, puns and hyperbole, irony represents another strategy typically used to enhance the effort required from the audience to process an advertising text. The next section continues to discuss irony in advertising, before turning to relevance theory and discourse analysis.

2. Partington: comic dupe irony

Formulating a comprehensive definition of irony is a notoriously problematic task. The most common layman’s definition is “saying the opposite of what you mean” (Lagerwerf 2007: 1705). However, similar to its somewhat more academic counterpart “to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning” (Attardo 2000: 794), it fails to provide a satisfactory account of all its potential uses in either verbal or written exchanges. The complexity of this task is borne out by studies that have attempted to define distinct types of irony, based on the purposes for which they are typically employed in specific contexts, such as Socratic irony (in the service of

a pedagogical aim), dramatic irony (for a wide range of purposes in literary works), and irony of fate, also referred to as situational irony (to describe some aspect of the world as ironic, such as policemen being robbed or doctors falling ill) (Attardo 2000: 794-5). In the case of verbal irony, the complexity of formulating a satisfactory definition is shown up by challenges in distinguishing it from figures of speech such as understatement (Colston & O’Brien 2000: 1575) and sarcasm (Attardo 2000: 795). Advertising represents another context in which the aforementioned layman’s definition fails to account for the various ways in which it may be manifested, as well as the range of purposes for which it may be exploited. As a result, the use of irony in advertising may be approached from a number of academic disciplines. However, the objective of the present investigation is to argue for the value of applying Wilson & Sperber’s (2004) relevance theory, a pragmatic approach that has to date seen infrequent application to advertising discourse in South Africa. To reflect this focus, the remainder of this section is devoted to pragmatic studies of irony.

Lagerwerf (2007: 1705) contends that any pragmatic attempt to understand the use of irony in advertising must take cognisance of the following two factors. First, in contrast with conversations, advertisements are aimed at large audiences, which results in the second variable, namely a lack of direct, face-to-face contact. As a consequence of this factor, an advertisement’s audience cannot demand additional information from the communicator (Lagerwerf 2007: 1705). Bearing this in mind, two contemporary pragmatic approaches to irony provide a useful framework for elucidating its operation in advertising: negation and echo theory.⁴ Negation theory contends that irony is best approached as a trope (see Tuan 2010: 178) that purposely violates one or more of the Gricean maxims. Owing to an inconsistency between the literal – or “most salient” (Lagerwerf 2007: 1705) – and intended meaning of an utterance, the hearer/reader must consider alternative interpretations, in order to uncover exactly how the intended meaning negates the literal (Partington 2007: 1548; Lagerwerf 2007: 1705). Referring to this as the “non-cooperative principle”, scholars such as Eisterhold et al. (2006: 1239) provide strong support for this approach to irony, and shed light on the

4 See Partington 2007; Lagerwerf 2007; El Refaie 2005; Wilson 2006.

relationship between irony and sociolinguistic variables such as age, gender, the relationship between interlocutors, and the setting of the interaction. According to echo theory (Wilson & Sperber 1992), irony is used to echo the utterances/texts produced by a specific party for purposes such as allusions to the dereliction of a promise (Lagerwerf 2000: 1705), or to deride the values/norms/opinions of that party (El Refaie 2005: 785). In such instances, irony serves as a “subversive strategy” (El Refaie 2005: 784).⁵

Partington (2007) conducts an analysis of written forms of irony in newspaper journalism by investigating cases where it is explicitly marked by the words ‘ironic’, ‘ironically’ and ‘irony’ (see El Refaie 2005: 782). He selects as the most appropriate point of departure Barbe’s (1993: 589) study, which approaches irony as instances in which two narratives, both of which are present in the text under study, stand in opposition to each other, so that a “duality [or] incompatibility” is foregrounded. For example:

It is ironic that the majority of Quebecers favor constitutional recognition of their special and unique heritage, yet have failed and continue to fail to treat native North American Indians with any special respect due to their unique heritage (Partington 2007: 1550).

In this text, irony arises from the discrepancy between two narratives, namely “Quebecers demand recognition of their own special heritage” and “Quebecers deny recognition of the special heritage of native Americans” (Partington 2007: 1551). In news journalism, this inconsistency/discrepancy is exploited to criticise the producer of the original text (Partington 2007: 1547).

Partington (2007: 1556) continues to distinguish strong from weak forms of irony, by judging the strength of the discrepancy between the two narratives contained in the text. Weak forms of irony are conceptualised as follows (Partington 2007: 1556):

First, when one protagonist commits E and another protagonist somehow associated with her/him commits or is involved in $\neg E$ ⁶ [...]. Second, where there appears to be not a radical reversal but only a divergence between the two narratives, for instance, where A

5 See Nuolijärvi & Tiittula (2011) for a conversation analytic study of irony in televised political debates.

6 Following Partington (2007: 1556) the \neg symbol is used to indicate a reversal/negation of the meaning inferred from narrative E.

Conradie/”Oh, now I get it ...”: comic dupe irony in print advertising

wishes to do one thing whilst B wishes something different (e.g. “it is an **irony** that people who have lived totally law abiding lives and want to go on doing so are being pushed by people like Tony Banks [a government minister] into contempt for the law”) (emphasis in original).

Strong irony is also further divided into two types (Partington 2007: 1556):

If a protagonist says something containing evaluation E in one narrative and deliberately and wilfully says, believes or commits $\neg E$ in the other, we have a [...] betrayal irony. [...] If a protagonist believes E but in the second narrative someone else show[s] or events conspire to show that things are in reality $\neg E$, then we [...] have [...] comic dupe irony.

Bearing in mind the aims of the current article, strong irony seems the most relevant, as no instances of weak irony were found in the sample mentioned earlier. The above conceptualisation of comic dupe irony (as a subcategory of strong irony) proved the most useful, as the data set contained only two instances of betrayal irony, compared to 19 cases of the former.⁷ Thus, although there are many competing approaches to irony, the aim of this article is to present for critical discussion the potential of comic dupe irony.

For copywriters, the value of comic dupe irony may lie in the tension it creates between two inconsistent narratives. More specifically, it may serve to engage audiences in the process of meaning construction by supporting one interpretation of its message in the first narrative, before subverting this interpretation in the second. Audiences are thus tasked with solving the riddle that arises from two incongruent narratives. As mentioned earlier, solving this riddle may become a source of “ego enhancement” (Kuppens 2009: 119), thus fostering a positive attitude towards the advertised brand. An important implication is that irony may be less explicit – especially in countries where comparative advertising is still prohibited – since the objective is not to criticise or deride an antagonist, but to engage consumers. Its function, therefore, may not necessarily be to underscore a juxtaposition between positive expectations and negative outcomes or vice versa (Partington 2011: 1787), but simply between the assumption(s) supported in the first narrative and that which

7 See Partington (2011) for an analysis of a type referred to as phrasal irony.

becomes more relevant in the second. This may constitute a means of engaging consumers in the process of meaning construction, and represents the point of departure of the analyses presented in this article.

However, in sharp contrast with the data investigated by Partington (2007), the texts in the current sample do not signal irony with explicit markers such as the words 'ironic', 'ironically' and 'irony'. As a result, alternative criteria were needed to judge whether or not an advertisement is structured to exploit irony. During the sampling procedure, an advertisement was considered ironic when one section of its linguistic structure attempts to provide strong evidence for assumption E, while the second signals the relevance of $\neg E$ (see Wilson & Sperber 2004: 612). A number of theoretical approaches are available for elucidating the process whereby audiences notice and interpret the tension between narratives E and $\neg E$. One that has gained popularity over the past century is the coordinated management of meaning (CMM) approach (Pearce & Cronen 1980). As a theory of mass communication, its value lies in its attention to the manner in which interlocutors construct meaning. Analyses depart from a conceptualisation of communication as a process whereby interlocutors "cocreate, maintain, and alter social order [and] individual identities" (Cronen et al. 1982: 64). The process of interpreting a text is thus embedded in larger social patterns, and the context-sensitive rules and expectations which individuals access in order to derive meaning (see Orbe & Camara 2010, Jirathun 2011). One of the preferred methods of analysis in CMM is speech act theory, which points to some connections between it and pragmatics, from which Partington's (2007) work derives. To apply Partington's (2007) conceptualisation of irony to advertising, specifically the process whereby consumers retrieve assumption E from one section and infer its reversal from the second, the present analysis has adopted as its framework Wilson & Sperber's (2004) relevance theory. Although also a pragmatic approach, relevance theory has developed a distinct methodology, based on an elaboration of claims made by Grice (1975). In addition, its approach to the construction of meaning – or the search for relevance – was deemed appropriate for the aims of this study as discussed below.

3. Relevance theory

Relevance theory represents an inferential pragmatic effort to elucidate the phenomenon that interlocutors “can and do entertain deeply context-sensitive interactions with each other in a fast and routine way yet with great flexibility” (Staðheim 2010: 1414; see Wilson & Sperber 2004: 607-8). Its framework rests on the observation that the words contained in a given text/utterance do not encompass all that is communicated (Staðheim 2010: 1414). To investigate this phenomenon, relevance theory conceptualises the question as to how addressees are able to arrive at a meaningful interpretation of a text/utterance as one of selection – termed as the search for relevance (Staðheim 2010: 1414; Wilson & Sperber 2004: 607-8). From this point of departure, relevance theorists investigate the cognitive procedures that enable interlocutors to process a text/utterance by analysing both its content and context on the basis of background knowledge, in order to assign to the communicator the intention to render an interpretation more salient than alternatives (Staðheim 2010: 1419; Wilson & Sperber 2004: 607-8). Therefore, in order to reach an interpretation, addressees are involved in the process of drawing inferences on the basis of what they find relevant in terms of the content and context of a text/utterance. As an elementary example of how this process may occur in advertising, we may consider the example 1.a.

Brand X... The brandy connoisseur’s choice

Processing 1.a. enables addressees to attribute to the communicator the intention to convey some information about brand X, as this concurs with their expectations for advertising. This, in turn, allows them to infer the claim that consumers with good taste in brandy prefer brand X. This inference is made relevant by schemata for the word “connoisseur”. It also follows that those who do not prefer brand X have poor taste in brandy. The first inference is an implicated premise, while the second is an implicated conclusion – also referred to as a “contextual implication” (Wilson & Sperber 2004: 609). The relevance of these inferences is signalled by the text’s context, such as a billboard that signals its status as an advertisement. This indicates the relevance of background knowledge – or contextual assumptions

– about advertising (Wilson & Sperber 2004: 609). For example, addressees retrieve the contextual assumption that advertising texts typically produce claims about an advertised brand and/or product. Consequently, the subsequent search for relevance is geared to consider inferences that support some or other claim about brand X which, in turn, supports the implicated premise and conclusion mentioned earlier. Such inferences are always drawn by processing both the text and its context (Wilson & Sperber 2004: 609).

In terms of Wilson & Sperber's (2004: 614) communicative principle of relevance, two variables determine a text's priority in the processing queue: texts are relevant when they promise to yield more positive cognitive effects (such as *Brand X is an index of brandy drinkers' taste* from 1.a.) than competing texts in the immediate environment, and a text's relevance decreases when a disproportionate amount of cognitive energy is required to process the stimulus. A text that manages to balance cognitive effort and effect obtains "optimal relevance" (Wilson & Sperber 2004: 614). In advertising, the attempt to balance cognitive effort and effect is heightened by the observation that audiences who play an active role in deciphering an advertisement's message are more likely to remember the advertisement's message.⁸ Copywriters who attempt to exploit comic dupe irony to obtain optimal relevance may design advertisements so that one part of their linguistic structure supports the relevance of assumption E, while another supports inferences that are incompatible with E ($\neg E$), thus producing an ironic discrepancy. This has the advantage of involving consumers in the process of meaning construction. In strict relevance theoretic terms, this means that copywriters exploit consumers' search for relevance by, on the one hand, increasing the processing effort required, because consumers are expected to observe the discrepancy between E and $\neg E$, while, on the other hand, increasing the cognitive effects that can be derived from the advertisement, because of the enjoyment derived from solving the riddle. In each of the case studies analysed below, the manner in which the lexical and/or graphic features of the advertisement support one interpretation before subverting it in order to produce comic dupe irony will be specified.

8 See Lim et al. 2009: 1784; Crook 2004: 730; Simpson 2001: 591; Pérez 2000: 45.

Thereafter, the analysis will focus on the relevance of this form of irony to the advertised product.

4. Discourse analysis

The above-mentioned trend in postmodern advertising places Wilson & Sperber’s (2004) conceptualisation of relevance (specifically the balance between processing effort and cognitive effects) in a sound position to contribute to the existing body of scholarly work on strategies that aim to enhance an audience’s engagement with the text. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this position may be further strengthened by combining relevance theory with discourse analysis. Kaplan & Grabe (2002: 194) conceptualise discourse analysis as a method for analysing the linguistic features that characterise a particular discourse. Specific emphasis is placed on the manner in which the meaning of a text or utterance is mediated between interlocutors (in this instance, between copywriters and consumers). To achieve this, analysts concentrate on those features that arise from the text’s context, the communicator’s intentions, and his/her relationship with the audience. These goals are pursued with frameworks that operate “*beyond the text*” in the “extra-linguistic world” of social context (Molina 2009: 185 – emphasis in original) and may, for example, be used to study the role that specific features play in advancing a communicator’s goals.

This focus on the influence of genre and function on the linguistic features of naturally occurring language aggregates discourse analysis with those approaches to language that constitute an alternative to structural linguistics (Kaplan & Grabe 2002: 195). Although discourse analysis partly emanates from structural linguistics, it also stems from critical theory, and so recognises the connection between language and society.

Discourse analyses of advertising may therefore investigate its key organisational features, the construction/negotiation of meaning, and the relationship between addressers and addressees that emerge from this genre. This agenda points to connections between discourse analysis and pragmatics. Wodak (2007), for example, has profitably combined pragmatics, specifically a relevance theoretic framework,

with a discourse analysis of wordplay, allusions, presuppositions and implicatures in political rhetoric.

The objective of this article is to analyse the lexical and graphic features in which comic dupe irony is manifested, before considering its bearing on the advertised product. In line with a discourse analysis approach to linguistic phenomena, specific attention is paid to the impact exerted by the text's genre on linguistic features such as irony. As mentioned earlier, this implies that irony may be approached as a strategy for involving audiences in the process of meaning construction, with the aim of enhancing recall and fostering a positive attitude towards the advertised brand.⁹ As a consequence of its implicit nature, irony demands additional cognitive effort and might reasonably be exploited for these purposes.

Another important aspect of the advertising genre is the fact that copywriters are forced to rely on simpler forms of irony, owing to the lack of direct contact which would enable both parties to request and extend additional information (Lagerwerf 2007: 1705). In addition, when considering the relationship between communicator and addressee, the matter of audience distrust must be mentioned. Analyses by researchers such as Tanaka (1994) proceed from the assumption that audiences are inherently distrustful of advertisers' messages. However, a more recent study by Tien (2009) observes that audience distrust is a complex phenomenon, influenced by such diverse factors as personal self-esteem, susceptibility to peer pressure, and knowledge about market practices. Kaiser & Song's (2009) study of consumer magazines found that audiences' attitude towards advertising is also influenced by the genre of the magazine (women's, business, political, car or adult magazines), while Wang & Sun (2010: 342) point to a connection between nationality and medium (online vs other forms). From this perspective, then, characterising audiences as inherently distrustful of advertising is perhaps too simplistic. Crook (2004: 723) suggests that, in order to produce more accurate appraisals of copywriters' methods, analysts should focus their attention on the subtle biasing effects that result from strategies such as riddle-solving.

9 See Song et al. 2011: 292; Tuan 2010: 179; Kuppens 2009: 119; Lim et al. 2009: 1784; Crook 2004: 730; Simpson 2001: 591; Pérez 2000: 45.

5. Data set

As mentioned earlier, the advertisements presented below were extracted from a larger sample for a comprehensive study of copywriters’ engagement strategies, consisting of 120 print advertisements. The four cases studies were taken from the following magazines: *For Him Magazine* (Acer), *Cosmopolitan* (Yardley and Sprite), and *Fairlady* (*Checkers*). When relevant, reference will be made to the primary discourse features of the host magazine, based on analyses by Conradie (2011).

6. Results of the analysis



So Jim, how did your **22"** perform last night?

Man it was amazing!
Definitely one of the best experiences of my life!
Natasha loved the **size** but what really got me going was the **5ms response rate** that followed...

? ..

The Acer
AL2216W LCD
comes with a 22" wide screen,
5ms image response rate,
170° wide viewing angle and more...
Expect exceptional performance
that will leave you, and everyone around you,
truly amazed.

R 2 370.00
white/black/extra

Figure 1: Acer

In this advertisement, both the lexical and graphic units incorporate discourse features from everyday conversation. The former employs speech bubbles, prosodic devices (marked by a larger font size, bold typeface and exclamation marks) as well as an informal register, including fillers such as “So Jim” to mimic mundane conversation. Deictic markers such as “last night” serve to position the interaction as subsequent to an important event the preceding night, while the graphic unit establishes the setting of the interaction in a gymnasium.

The men's conversation is depicted on the left-hand side of the page. Thus, readers with a European education are more likely to process these speech bubbles first (see Gardner & Luchtenberg 2000: 1814). If, as a result, readers have not yet observed the subtext or image of the product in the bottom right-hand corner, the conversation may be difficult to comprehend, in that the relevance of particular expressions are not immediately clear. This may be especially true of the references to "your **22**", "**size**" and "**5ms response rate**" (emphasis in original). The confusion is functional. It constitutes an attempt to entice readers to expend more cognitive effort in order to establish the relevance of these references. That is, readers are encouraged to consider contextual assumptions that will help them to interpret the references, bearing in mind the context of advertising.

An initial clue as to the most relevant interpretation of the bolded words is provided by the posture of the woman on the right-hand side. The question mark in her thought bubble signals her interest in something she has just overheard from the men's conversation. To resolve this, readers must notice that her gaze is fixed on the second speaker (the man on the far left-hand side), at a downward angle. The woman's apparent interest may now be accounted for, provided that readers are able to retrieve contextual assumptions about the gender stereotype regarding heterosexual women's preference for the physical attributes of their sexual partners. The copywriter hopes that this will provide a strong enough premise for consumers to infer that the woman has interpreted "your **22**" and "Natasha loved the **size**" and "**5ms response rate**" (emphasis in original) as references to the man's sexual performance. The probability that a reader will retrieve this gender stereotype is heightened by the fact that it was printed in *For Him Magazine (FHM)*, a men's lifestyle magazine that constructs sex as a test of heterosexual masculinity (see Conradie 2011). However, once consumers observe the product and subtext in the lower right-hand corner, the discrepancy between the actual topic of the men's conversation and what the woman believes it to be is revealed.

This discrepancy between the woman's initial interpretation of the men's conversation and the real topic, as revealed by the product claims in the subtext, constitutes a case of comic dupe irony. The audience is meant to make inference 1.a. (E) after processing the men's conversation, followed by 1.b. and 1.c. from both the woman's

thought bubble and the angle of her gaze, before drawing conclusion 1.d. (¬E) from the subtext, followed by 1.e:

- 1.a. The men are discussing the second speaker's sexual encounter from the previous night.
- 1.b. The woman has overheard the men's conversation.
- 1.c. The woman shows sexual interest in the second speaker as a result of assumptions drawn about his physical characteristics.
- 1.d. The men are discussing the second speaker's new Acer AL2216W LCD monitor.
- 1.e. The woman has misinterpreted the referents of size, 22" and 5ms response rate.

This analysis suggests that the advertisement employs irony in a gambit to render specific attributes of the advertised product salient. The message pivots on the possibility of misinterpreting the bolded words as references to sex, in a specific social context (overhearing a personal conversation) that renders the misapprehension possible. The resultant comic dupe may be functional on more than one level. On the one hand, it is useful for the purpose of involving readers in the process of meaning construction by requiring them to establish the relevance of expressions which at first seem to suggest one interpretation, until further evidence supports the relevance of a different meaning. On the other hand, the dupe is also useful for the degree to which it can enhance the memorability of the advertisement's message, as the ability to retell the joke is contingent on remembering specific product claims.

However, attempting to involve readers in this manner is not devoid of risk. By adopting a strategy that depends on piquing readers' interest in an initially oblique message, copywriters run the risk of failing their communicative goal. Consumers may, for example, fail to uncover the intended meaning of the ambiguity in the men's conversation, as well as the question mark in the woman's thought bubble. In the latter's case, for example, some readers may simply conclude that she is confused about the bolded words, instead of tying her misconception to the sexual. Knowledge of a specific sexual stereotype is, therefore, necessary in order to uncover the advertisement's intended meaning.

Thus, copywriters must have legitimate grounds on which to believe that members of the target audience are familiar with this stereotype and that the advertisement has been structured in a manner that effectively signals its relevance.



Figure 2: Yardley

In contrast with the previous case, the current advertisement does not produce irony by constructing a discrepancy between the assumptions drawn by different parties in a social interaction. Instead, the headline employs an expression that conventionally indicates failure and/or disappointment, as in the following hypothetical examples: *I paid to enter the competition, but have nothing to show for it* and *I won an award, but have nothing to show for it, because they didn't even give me a certificate*. The denotation of the expression, therefore, has negative overtones. As such, the complete headline *Product of the year and nothing to show for it* appears to convey the message that, although Yardley Skin had been voted best product of the year, the company failed to secure any significant advantage from this award.

To access its intended meaning in the advertising context, readers must draw inferences from background knowledge about both the objectives of advertising in a broad sense and the specific information about the nature of the advertised product. The text’s communicative genre reduces the relevance of a negative interpretation, as this stands in conflict with background knowledge concerning the goals of advertising (see Van Niekerk & Jenkinson 2012: 61). The audience is thus encouraged to draw inferences that will establish relevance by adjusting the expression’s meaning until it is aligned with their expectations of a positive message. This expectation, therefore, provides a premise for the conclusion that the communicator intends to subvert the expression’s negative denotation for a positive interpretation.

In order to adjust the expression from a negative denotation to a positive interpretation, readers must access pre-existing knowledge of the product’s function. Those who are unfamiliar with the product may have recourse to the subtext, “Clinically proven to help reduce scars, stretch marks, wrinkles and blemishes within 28 days”. Readers now have evidence for interpreting “nothing to show” as a reference to the disappearance of scars and other skin blemishes. The expression, therefore, finds relevance as an index of the product’s efficiency (see Yus 2003: 1327). Further evidence is provided by the image of the female model sporting a flawless skin. If Gardner & Luchtenberg’s (2000: 1814) prediction that readers with a European education will automatically process a message from left to right and top to bottom holds true, readers are likely to process this image first. This may speed the inferencing process discussed earlier by urging readers to consider the expression’s relevance in terms of both the image and the function of the product. Thus, the text employs comic dupe irony to confront readers with a headline that appears to flout advertising conventions by making a negative statement. The resultant tension with readers’ expectations for the genre enhances the promise of optimal relevance, so that they are motivated to draw the contextual implications required to observe and interpret the function of the comic dupe.

From a discourse analytic perspective, making a negative statement about an advertised product represents one of the “discursive limits” of advertising (Jäger & Maier 2009: 47). That is, each discourse demarcates “a range of statements that are sayable and [also] inhibits a range of

other statements [...] which are not” (Jäger & Maier 2009: 47). As such, the current advertisement extends the discursive limits of advertising by means of a rhetorical strategy (comic dupe irony), manifested in a headline that appears to contravene consumers’ expectations (Jäger & Maier 2009: 47).

As mentioned earlier, recognising the comic dupe is contingent on knowledge of the product’s purpose and, if necessary, a close reading of the subtext. Therefore, irony’s utility for engaging readers in the process of meaning construction is exploited to fix consumers’ attention on the advertisement’s primary product claim.



Figure 3: Sprite

This advertisement spans two pages, but is printed on both sides of a single sheet so that processing the entire text requires consumers to turn the page, thus preserving an element of surprise. Readers’ attention is fixed on the first narrative, represented by the first page, before they are exposed to the second, which makes the discrepancy between them salient and provides evidence for the relevance of a comic dupe.

On the first page, the graphic unit supports the inference that the young woman is being issued with a traffic violation by the officer on the right-hand side. The second page reveals a name and South African cellphone number on the card extended to her. These linguistic features of the advertisement’s design support the conclusion that readers are intended to infer 2.a. (E) from the first page, before reaching 2.b. (\neg E) from the second.

- 2.a. A traffic violation is being issued to the young woman.
- 2.b. A traffic violation is not being issued to the young woman. Instead, the man is providing the young woman with his name and telephone number.
- 2.c. The man hopes that the young woman will contact him in order to arrange a date.
- 2.d. The man finds the young woman attractive.

The function of the first page, therefore, is to render specific assumptions salient to the reader. The attempt is manifested in graphic cues which signal the relevance of traffic violations, such as the woman’s position in a stationary vehicle, the male model’s uniform, and the act of extending a card to her. As the card’s content is invisible to readers, the previous two cues serve as the strongest evidence for the implicated conclusion that it represents a penalty for a traffic violation. The second page overthrows this inference by making another interpretation more relevant. The content of the card indicates the man’s attempt to secure an intimate social interaction, or *date* in colloquial terms, with his interlocutor. The inferences in 2.c. (implicated premises) and 2.d. (implicated conclusion) are now rendered relevant by the explicated information in 2.b. – based on contextual assumptions about romantic interaction in Western culture. The function of the ironic discrepancy between the two pages is to generate humour by means of the comic dupe that proves the first set of expectations to be false.

Having recognised the comic dupe, readers are still faced with the task of uncovering its function in terms of the advertised product. Of course, if the advertisement fails to convince readers of its optimal relevance, they may simply enjoy the irony and neglect the search for a marketing message altogether. This threat is increased by the fact

that the advertised product assumes an inconspicuous position at the bottom of the page. Therefore, it seems possible that the copywriter's strategy relies on readers' background knowledge of advertising. That is, the pleasure they extracted from uncovering the irony is intended to pique their curiosity about the identity of the text's producer.¹⁰ This tactic can only be valid if copywriters have legitimate reasons for assuming that readers are aware of advertising's commercial objectives, which imply that the purpose of entertainment must always be to support the commercial aims of the advertisement. In addition, it also seems conceivable that the copywriter has attempted to address this risk by constructing the advertisement around a topic that may be of special interest to the target market. Based on the assumption that physical attractiveness is of significant value to its audience, the copywriter assumes that they will have sufficient motivation to discover a product that is positively related to this goal.

If consumers are motivated to expend more processing effort, the irony serves to hone their attention on the following gender stereotype: heterosexual men cannot resist the urge to give romantic attention to a slender and attractive young woman. Although some readers may consider the stereotype that women are likely to exploit sex appeal in order to avoid the negative consequences of their actions relevant, the advertisement contains insufficient support for the inference that the female model had committed a felony in the first place.

Having retrieved the above-mentioned stereotype from memory, consumers are required to observe the headline printed at the bottom of the page, namely "life's sweeter with zero sugar. zero limits". In this way, the advertisement exploits comic dupe irony in order to emphasise the product's nutritional characteristics, by following the irony with a claim that the advertised product will not endanger consumers' desired weight and, by extension, the likelihood of receiving romantic attention from heterosexual men. To verify this proposition, we may have recourse to another advertisement for the same product, which portrays a slender young woman

10 The possibility that this inconspicuous placement of the product represents an attempt to balance processing effort and cognitive effect, in the sense that readers are provided with a novel source of enjoyment in order to motivate the expenditure of the additional effort required to identify the advertiser, will be investigated in more detail in a separate article, based on a dataset of 120 ads.

Conradie/”Oh, now I get it ...”: comic dupe irony in print advertising

apparently stranded with a dysfunctional car next to a deserted road (E). The second image, also printed on the back of the first, depicts the situation from an angle that shows four men attempting to repair the vehicle ($\neg E$). In both advertisements, the common denominator is a discrepancy between assumptions drawn from the first and second page, which serves to focus attention on romantic suits from heterosexual men. Therefore, it seems plausible that the advertisement’s strategy proceeds from the assumption that the target audience consider the importance of an attractive figure as a given.



Figure 4: Checkers

In this advertisement, the headline is derived either from a generic idiom, or from an intertextual reference to the song *The best things in life are free* by artists Luther Vandross and Janet Jackson. However, the text contains no evidence to suggest that one source is more relevant than the other. Instead, it is structured so that failure to recognise the

headline as intertextual at all does not impede the operation of comic dupe irony. Regardless of consumers' inferences about the headline's origin, background knowledge about advertising suggests that the most relevant interpretation of the headline is the promotion of a special offer that involves a free giveaway. This same background knowledge makes it unlikely that readers' inferencing process will seriously entertain the prospect of receiving the advertised goods completely free of charge. Nevertheless, experience with promotions such as *buy one get one free* offers should support the inference that, as an incentive to support a special offer, something will be offered free of charge. This inference constitutes assumption E, in Partington's (2007) approach to irony.

The first three lines of the subtext subvert this initial interpretation by providing a list of the advertised product's most sales worthy nutritional traits. Based on this information, readers are required to recognise the need to reinterpret the headline. Instead of promoting a special offer, the headline functions to initiate the claim that the best things in life are those that enhance, or least do not endanger, one's physical health (assumption $\neg E$). This interpretation is further supported by the rest of the subtext, which underlines the quality of the advertised product.

Thus, as was the case in preceding advertisements, irony serves to highlight the most significant features of the advertised product. In comparison, however, the current case is less likely to be retold as a joke to other potential clients. More importantly, it also runs the risk of incurring a negative reaction from consumers who may be disappointed when their initial interpretation is revealed as erroneous. Copywriters must, therefore, have legitimate reasons for believing that members of their target audience are sufficiently interested in physical health, so that the lack of an additional financial incentive will not negate the benefits of the ego enhancement that results from uncovering the advertisement's intended meaning. This notion underscores the importance of gathering sufficient informant-response data for future studies of the impact of various manifestations of comic dupe irony on consumers' attitude towards the advertised brand.

6. Discussion

As mentioned at the outset of this article, the exigencies of corporate communication with an increasingly media literate audience means that copywriters are continually challenged to design advertisements that not only offer optimal relevance among a myriad of alternatives, but are also as memorable as possible. Previous research on the subject suggests that, in order to meet these interrelated goals, contemporary advertising texts are designed to be more demanding than those of previous decades, in terms of the cognitive effort required to interpret them.¹¹ A relevance theoretic approach to this phenomenon implies analysis of the means with which such texts pursue optimal relevance by enhancing processing effort for the promise of greater cognitive effects. Work by Lagerwerf (2007: 1703) indicates that irony represents one of these methods. Thus, to further pragmatic research on advertising discourse, the present study has investigated a specific form of irony, the comic dupe, from a relevance theoretic perspective.

The analyses presented above suggest that, in their efforts to engage readers, copywriters may confront consumers with the task of deciphering a discrepancy between two assumptions (represented above by E and \neg E) that are made relevant by processing an advertisement in terms of its content and context. Using Partington's (2007) conceptualisation of comic dupe irony as a framework reveals that, in order to resolve the tension between E and \neg E, consumers are encouraged to notice specific attributes of the advertised product. The case studies presented above were selected to illustrate the patterns with which this attempt to make product attributes vital to the comic dupe was pursued in the sample. As illustrated by the advertisement for Acer, the tension between assumptions E and \neg E may arise from two parties, both of which are represented within the text. In this instance, assumption E is not necessarily made by the audience, but attributed to one of the parties represented in the text. In the Acer text, consumers are required to infer that the woman has assigned interpretation E to the references in the man on the left-hand side's speech bubble. Subsequently, other parts of the text, which should ideally not yet have been processed, support the relevance of assumption \neg E, thus

11 See Lim et al 2009: 1784; Crook 2004: 730; Simpson 2001: 591; Pérez 2000: 45; Morris 2005; Philips & McQuarrie 2002.

allowing the audience to uncover the comic dupe. In most instances, however, represented above by the advertisements for Yardley, Sprite and Checkers, the audience is not constructed as witnesses to another party's misapprehension. Instead, the text is designed to make the audience the *victim* of the comic dupe.

The common denominator in all the cases analysed in this article is that, in order to uncover the comic dupe, audiences are required to notice a specific attribute of the advertised product. If the audience considers the dupe appropriate to be retold as a joke, recall of this attribute is an essential part of the humour, with the result that the advertisement continues "to live within the conversations and thoughts of the target market [...] without any extra cost being incurred" (Van Niekerk & Jenkinson 2012: 62). However, as is clear from the discussion thus far, another common factor is that these advertisements are open to misinterpretation. In each case, consumers are expected to observe that the relevance of assumption E is being raised; the relevance of assumption E is being challenged in some way, and the degree to which a particular product attribute points to the relevance of $\neg E$. There is no absolute guarantee that the target audience will always be able to perform these tasks in a manner that fosters a positive attitude towards the advertised brand. However, the risk incurred by this strategy is an increasingly ubiquitous aspect of postmodern advertising. It reflects both advertisers' confidence in consumers' processing skill (Morris 2005: 713; see Philips & McQuarrie 2002) and the goals of contemporary advertising (Crook 2004: 723).

In addition, the degree to which the case studies rely on culture-specific knowledge, including idiomatic expressions (see Yardley and Checkers) and gender stereotypes (see Acer and Sprite), points to the importance of consumer research (Skinner et al. 2001: 62). If advertisers do not have legitimate reasons for believing that such culture-specific knowledge will feature in the target market's search for relevance, they can hardly expect audiences to draw the expected inferences. For practitioners of pragmatics, this points to the value of conducting audience-reception studies in order to assess whether or not an appropriate sample of respondents do, in fact, draw the inferences suggested by the above analyses of the Acer, Sprite, Yardley and Checkers advertisements. Moreover, such research may also

endeavour to assess whether audiences deem such advertisements appropriate to be retold as jokes, focusing specifically on the factors that influence this likelihood and the degree to which product attributes feature in the retold version of the comic dupe.

7. Recommendations for future research

As mentioned earlier, the results indicate the importance of gathering sufficient audience-reception data to assess the validity of the analyses presented above. In this regard, the emerging field of experimental pragmatics will prove useful. As a framework, analysts may consider the cogent methodology employed by Noveck (2001) to test the implicatures that respondents draw from a given text.

Researchers may also investigate the impact of comic dupe irony on consumers' attitude towards the advertised brand, especially with regards to the memorability of claims. Clearly, such studies should not only compare ironic with non-ironic advertisements, but also investigate the efficiency of different manifestations of comic dupes. Such analyses may also broaden the scope of the current article to include other types of irony identified by Partington (2007: 1556), such as betrayal irony. To pursue these goals, practitioners of relevance theory may consider collaborations with scholars in the field of neuromarketing and neurobranding (see Schaefer & Rotte 2007; Schaefer et al. 2006).

In the field of critical discourse analysis, researchers may consider the stereotypes which consumers are sometimes required to access in order to process irony. Specifically, in the case of betrayal irony, it is possible that the ironic discrepancy may be located between a proposition in the advertisement and the overarching ideology of its host magazine. To illustrate, one of the cases of betrayal irony in the current sample contains the proposition that KFC's Kentucky Dinner is more desirable than sex with an attractive supermodel. As the advertisement was published in *For Him Magazine (FHM)*, the ironic discrepancy is located between the advertisement's selling proposition and the overarching ideology of the magazine, which constructs sex as an essential aspect of heterosexual masculinity (Conradie 2011).

Bibliography

- ATTARDO S
2000. Irony as relevant inappropriateness. *Journal of Pragmatics* 32: 793-826.
- BARBE K
1993. "Isn't it ironic that ...?": explicit irony markers. *Journal of Pragmatics* 20: 578-90.
- COLE J & J MORGAN (EDS)
1975. *Speech acts (Syntax and semantics* 3). New York: Academic Press.
- COLSTON H & J O'BRIEN
2000. Contrast and pragmatics in figurative language: anything understatement can do, irony can do better. *Journal of Pragmatics* 32: 1557-83.
- CONRADIE MS
2011. Masculine sexuality: a critical discourse analysis of *FHM*. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 29(2): 167-85.
- CRONEN VE, PEARCE WB & LM HARRIS
1982. The coordinated management of meaning: a theory of communication. Dance (ed) 1982: 61-89.
- CROOK J
2004. On covert communication in advertising. *Journal of Pragmatics* 36: 715-38.
- DANCE FEX (ed)
1982. *Human communication theory: comparative essays*. New York: Harper & Row.
- EISTERHOLD J, S ATTARDO & D BOXER
2006. Reactions to irony in discourse: evidence for the least disruption principle. *Journal of Pragmatics* 38: 1239-56.
- EL REFAIE E
2005. 'Our purebred ethnic compatriots': irony in newspaper journalism. *Journal of Pragmatics* 37: 781-97.
- FAIRCLOUGH N
1993. Critical discourse analysis and the marketization of public discourse: the universities. *Discourse & Society* 4(2): 133-68.
1992. Intertextuality in critical discourse analysis. *Linguistics and Education* 4: 269-93.
- FREED L
2012. *Keeping pace with the super consumer: the Foresee e-retail satisfaction index (Spring top 100 edition)*. Foresee. http://www.foreseeresults.com/research-white-papers/_downloads/top-100-eretailer-2012-foresee.pdf.
- GARDNER R & S LUCHTENBERG
2000. Reference, image, text in German and Australian advertising posters. *Journal of Pragmatics* 32: 1807-21.
- GRICE HP
1975. Logic and conversation. Cole & Morgan (eds) 1975: 41-58.
- HITCHON JC & JO JURA
1997. Allegorically speaking: intertextuality of the postmodern culture and its impact on print

Conradie/"Oh, now I get it ...": comic dupe irony in print advertising

- and television advertising.
Communication Studies 48(2): 142-58.
- HORN LR & G WARD (eds)
2004. *The handbook of pragmatics*.
Oxford: Blackwell.
- JÄGER S & F MAIER
2009. Theoretical and
methodological aspects of
Foucauldian critical discourse
analysis and dispositive analysis.
Wodak & Meyer (eds) 2009: 34-45.
- JEONG S
2008. Visual metaphor in
advertising: is the persuasive
effect attributable to visual
argumentation or metaphorical
rhetoric? *Journal of Marketing
Communications* 14(1): 59-73.
- JIRATHUN H
2011. Rhetorical exigence and
coordinated management of
meaning: alternative approach for
compliance gaining studies. *Procedia
Social and Behavioural Sciences* 12:
49-59.
- KAISER U & M SONG
2009. Do media consumers
really dislike advertising? An
empirical assessment of the role of
advertising in print media markets.
*International Journal of Industrial
Organization* 27. 292-301.
- KAPLAN RB & W GRABE
2002. A modern history of written
discourse analysis. *Journal of Second
Language Writing* 11: 191-223.
- KIM M
2007. Discourse features and
marketing strategies in American
magazine advertising. *Texas
Linguistic Forum* 51: 95-102.
- KRISTEVA J
1986. *The Kristeva reader*. Oxford:
Blackwell.
- KUPPENS AH
2009. English in advertising:
generic intertextuality in a
globalizing media environment.
Applied Linguistics 31(1): 115-35.
- LACHMANN R
1990. *Gedächtnis und Literatur:
Intertextualität in der russischen
Moderne*. Frankfurt am Main:
Suhrkamp.
- LAGERWERF L
2007. Irony and sarcasm in
advertisements: effects of relevant
inappropriateness. *Journal of
Pragmatics* 39: 1702-21.
- LIM EAC, SH ANG, YH LEE &
SM LEONG
2009. Processing idioms in
advertising discourse: effects
of familiarity, literality, and
compositionality on consumer ad
response. *Journal of Pragmatics* 41:
1778-93.
- MOLINA PS
2009. Critical analysis of discourse
and of the media: challenges and
shortcomings. *Critical Discourse
Studies* 6(3): 185-98.

- MOMANI K, AM BADARNEH & F MIGDADI
2010. Intertextual borrowings in ideologically competing discourses: the case of the Middle East. *Journal of Intercultural Communication* 22. Abstracts *Journal of Intercultural Communication*. <http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr22/badarneh.htm>.
- MORRIS M
2005. Interpretability and social power, or, why postmodern advertising works. *Media, Culture & Society* 27(5): 697-718.
- NOVECK I A
2001. When children are more logical than adults: experimental investigations of scalar implicatures. *Cognition* 78: 165-88.
- NUOLIJÄRVI P & L TIITTULA
2011. Irony in political television debates. *Journal of Pragmatics* 2011: 572-87.
- ORBE PM & SK CAMARA
2010. Defining discrimination across cultural groups: exploring the [un-]coordinated management of meaning. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 34: 283-93.
- PARTINGTON A
2006. *The linguistics of laughter*. London: Routledge.
2007. Irony and reversal of evaluation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 39: 1547-69.
2011. Phrasal irony: its form, function and exploitation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 43: 1786-800.
- PEARCE WB & V CRONEN
1980. *Communication, action, and meaning: the creation of social realities*. New York: Praeger.
- PÉREZ FJD
2000. Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory and its applicability to advertising discourse: evidence from British press advertisements. *ATLANTIS* 22(2): 37-50.
- PHILIPS JB & FE MCQUARRIE
2002. The development, change and transformation of rhetorical style in magazine advertisements 1954-1999. *Journal of Advertising* 31(4): 1-13.
- SCHAEFER M & M ROTTE
2007. Favorite brands as cultural objects modulate reward circuit. *Neuroreport* 18(2): 141-5.
- SCHAEFER M, H BERENS, HJ HEINZE & M ROTTE
2006. Neural correlates of culturally familiar brands of car manufacturers. *Neuroimage* 31(2): 861-5.
- SIMPSON P
2001. 'Reason' and 'tickle' as pragmatic constructs in the discourse of advertising. *Journal of Pragmatics* 33: 589-607.

Conradie/”Oh, now I get it ...”: comic dupe irony in print advertising

- SKINNER C, L VON ESSEN & G MERSHAM
2001. *Handbook public relations*. 6th ed. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- SONG P, H XU,
A TECHATASSANASOONTORN &
C ZHANG
2011. The influence of product integration on online advertising effectiveness. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications* 10: 288-303.
- STAßHEIM J
2010. Relevance theories of communication: Alfred Schultz in dialogue with Sperber and Wilson. *Journal of Pragmatics* 42: 1412-41.
- TANAKA K
1994. *Advertising language. A pragmatic approach to advertisements in Britain and Japan*. London: Routledge.
- TIEN C
2009. A research agenda for consumers’ scepticism toward advertising claims (CSA). Unpublished presentation at The Australia-New Zealand Market Academy Conference, Melbourne, 30 November – 2 December 2009. <<http://www.duplication.net.au/ANZMAC09/papers/ANZMAC2009-225.pdf>>
- TUAN TL
2010. Rhetorical structures in the language of Vietnamese advertisements. *Asian Social Science* 6(11): 175-83.
- VAN NIEKERK A & A JENKINSON
2012. The use of controversy as an approach in South African advertising. *Language Matters* 43(1): 60-79.
- WANG Y & S SUN
2010. Assessing beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral responses toward online advertising in three countries. *International Business Review* 19: 333-44.
- WILSON D
2006. The pragmatics of verbal irony: echo or pretence? *Lingua* 116: 1722-43.
- WILSON D & D SPERBER
1992. On verbal irony. *Lingua* 87: 53-76.
2004. *Relevance Theory*. Horn & Ward (eds) 2004: 607-632.
- WODAK R
2007. Pragmatics and critical discourse analysis. A cross-disciplinary inquiry. *Pragmatics & Cognition* 15(1): 203-25.
- WODAK R & M MEYER (EDS)
2009. *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. London: Sage.
- YOON E
2009. Tap into your super-consumers. *Harvard Business Review*. <http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2009/11/surprising_insights_from_super.html>