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# THE USE OF INDEXICAL SIGNS, SYMBOLS AND ICONS IN PRINT ADVERTISING COMMUNICATION

## ABSTRACT

*Advertising communication is a unique genre with a distinct set of language rules that use several mechanisms to attract the attention of the target audience. This article examines the value of three visual sign types to attract the attention of the intended target audience. The value of this investigation lies in its consideration of the value of the unstable connotative meanings of the visual signs of modern advertising communication. Semiotics is touched upon as the broad theoretical background to the study. Thereafter, the discussion moves to the use of indexical signs, symbols and icons in modern print advertising in South Africa to ensure audience involvement in the construction of a plausible and implied marketing message. A typical example from South African print media (magazines) in each semiotic category (index, icon and symbol) are analysed to illustrate the role of the target audience as co-creator of the implied marketing message. The data illustrates that the meaning of these signs in print advertising may be unstable/vague even though a specific marketing message was intended. The analysis of these visual signs as impulse to support audience involvement is broadly based on Leeuwen and Jewitt's (2001) visual analytical method and focuses on the characteristics of creativity by authors Stuhlfaut and Yoo (2013) and Koslow (2015).*

**Keywords:** marketing communication; visual communication; creativity in advertising; index; icon; symbol; unstable meaning and target audience attention; implied marketing message

## INTRODUCTION

Communication in advertising constitutes a unique genre with a distinct set of characteristics. McQuarrie (2008: 110) maintains that advertisements use visual-based signs more than lexical signs. In line with this, Larsen (2008: 69) shows that images form a more prominent component in the advertising portion of magazines. Virtually, any perusal of advertisements will confirm that the space devoted to images generally dominates the space devoted to words.

According to Buchanan-Oliver and Bulmer (2006: 55), visual communication affects linguistic communication, and

advertisements use persuasive messages that consist of both visual and lexical signs. Van Enschoot *et al.*'s (2008: 35) study of the rhetoric of advertisements emphasises that, rather than expressing something directly and literally, advertisers have a more aesthetic approach, usually by means of visual communication. The audience is required to become actively involved in order to co-create meaning on a connotative level. The target market thus acts as co-creators of the implied marketing message, as can be seen in the following examples from the bigger data set that this study is based on: An American Swiss jewellery advertisement portrays different Christmas gift options, such as a cross on a necklace. The heading reads, "Be a wise man this Christmas and give her gold". A Lipton iced tea advertisement shows a visual image of only a can of Lipton iced tea, covered in skimpy women's underwear. The text states, "The forbidden fruit". The use of a cross to signify religion, or Christianity to signify the church, is well known, but the use of skimpy women's underwear to signify seduction in an advertisement for iced tea is a new sign. It has been used before in a McCain's chips advertisement with the heading: "Now there is one less thing to feel guilty about".

The meaning convention for these newer signs is thus not purely conventional and the marketing message is the result of shared meaning between the advertiser and target audience. Skimpy underwear could be a sign of seduction, or the perfect body, or health and fitness, depending on the intended meaning shared between the brand owner/advertiser and the target audience. Because of the innovative style of advertising communication, creativity is the impulse behind the creation of new signs (lexical and visual) and new connotative meanings of existing signs.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This article examines the structural expression and nature of semiotic signs in print advertising communication and the enhanced involvement required by the target audience to make sense of the (connotative) meaning of visual sign types (index, icon and symbol) in modern advertising communication in order to construct a plausible implied marketing message.

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data came primarily from Afrikaans and English magazines issued between January 2010 and December 2017. The Afrikaans data included in this article was selected from three magazines, namely *Huisgenoot*, *Sarie* and *Weg*, while the English data was drawn from the following magazines: *You*, *Fairlady*, *Go* and *Get it* (bilingual). This covers a family magazine, a magazine with female content, and a magazine focused on traveling. The examples were selected from a much bigger pool of data gathered as part of an ongoing copy-writing project at the University of the Free State. The data selected supports the elements of creativity identified by Stuhlfaut and Yoo (2013: 82-84). The data was selected arbitrarily from the bigger pool of data as typical examples of the connotative meaning of indexical signs, icons and symbols, which are used in advertisements.

A qualitative approach was used for this study in order to identify unstable meanings of creative signs in advertising communication and still arrive at an intended plausible

marketing message. The analyses were based largely on Leeuwen and Jewitt's (2001) visual analytical method.

First, the advertisements from the bigger (original) data set were placed into one of three categories based on the literature study, namely indexical signs, icons and symbols. During the second phase of analysis, the different denotative meaning options for the classified signs were listed. Table 1 serves only as an example of phase two of the analysis. In the third phase of the qualitative analysis, the implied (and intended) meaning of the signs was identified based on the expected positive message about the brand. Communicating something positive about the brand or about the target audience (supporters of the brand) is to be expected within the genre qualities of advertising (Myers 1994). The implied marketing message in the analysis was formulated by taking into account the expected and plausible connotative meaning of the signs (even out of the context of the advertisement).

## THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

This article entails a qualitative analysis of the connotative meaning imbedded in visual signs in advertising in order to enhance target audience involvement. Thus, the target audience has to be involved in constructing the implied marketing message.

Semiology is a diverse system of signs and includes much more than only icons, indexical signs and symbols, which is the focus of this study. Barthes (1972: 29) stresses the fact that the concept (sign, icon, index) presented is less reality than a certain knowledge of reality, and in this case the reality of the advertised brand, "... it is a formless, unstable, nebulous condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function". The function of the above-mentioned sign types to sell and activate specific associations to convey the implied marketing message was the focus of the analysis.

Advertising has always been known for its use of visual signs employing words and pictures. The negotiated meaning of these lexical and visual signs represent worldviews and belief structures and influence the way the intended target audience relates to their world (Herbst 2005: 13). Semetsky (2007: 179) maintains that signs are polysemic in character. For example, the word "church" is polysemic: the "church" came out late (referring to a long service); the "church" shows great growth (referring to an increase in membership); the "church" has been enlarged by an extra hall (referring to the building) (Myers 1994: 66).

Ferdinand de Saussure (1966), the father of semiotics, distinguishes between the concept and the sound-image of a word. He focuses on the lexical sign, which is the smallest unit of meaning. The lexical sign is a dual unit of form and concept that are coupled in the brain. Thus, the linguistic sign is arbitrary and conventional. This means that there is no innate relationship between the linguistic sign and the matter to which it refers. For example, there is no relationship between the word "cat" and the four-legged animal that the word denotes. The basic linguistic sign is transferred from one speech community to the next. Hence, the linguistic sign has to be learned and captured in the memory: this makes it conventional (Saussure 1966: 44-45).

The two elements are linked and one element (the concept) evokes the other (the acoustic image). Accordingly, a word and its meaning are separated (*ibid.*). The signified refers to the meaning dictated by cultural convention. This means that the signified is a cognitive concept (*ibid.*).

In his research on visual literacy, Moriarty (1994: 11) avers that this tripartition provides a broader field for visual analysis. Peirce's tripartition consists of sign systems that go beyond language (*ibid.*). The current investigation and data confirms Peirce's tripartition (indexical signs, icons and symbols) within sign systems.

As people use signs to communicate, semiotics may be used as a metalanguage to describe human intention. It has already been mentioned that semiotics consists of more than the science of linguistics: semiotics includes innate (justified) and contrived (unjustified) signs, such as culturally specific artefacts. One sign may have several different meanings, according to different cultures (Semetsky 2007: 180). The use of a gesture is an example of signs that differ according to the culture. The thumbs-up sign in most American and European cultures means that things are going according to plan or refers to approval. However, the same sign translates into rude and offensive messages in Islamic and Asian countries. In Australia, it means "okay", but if you move it up and down it is considered a grave insult (Padmavat 2013: 7).

In the age of the consumer, marketers prescribe and describe social culture in the way they communicate. The signs used in advertising communication have more than one meaning and the marketing message (implied marketing message) is the result of the "conversation" with the intended audience. The meaning ascribed to these signs is thus not fixed but negotiated between the brand owners and the intended target audience. The audience has to be actively involved to arrive at a plausible or implied marketing message.

In this article the term "sign" is thus used to refer to icons, indices and symbols. Symbols are arbitrary and man-made (Linguistics 2000):

All have a signal aspect, some physical pattern (e.g. a sound or visible shape) and a meaning (some semantic content that is implied or 'brought to mind') by the signal. But they differ in that icons *have a physical resemblance* between the signal and the meaning and an index *has a correlation in space and time* with its meaning. But a symbol *is an arbitrary pattern* (usually a sound pattern in a language) that gets its meaning primarily from its mental association with other symbols and only secondarily from its correlation with environmentally relevant properties.

There is risk in the way audience involvement is created, in the sense that the advertisement's message may be incomprehensible and/or an unintended meaning may be conveyed on a connotative level. Hoeken *et al.* (2009: 56) also refer to this aspect in their qualitative investigation into the difference between form and content in a certain campaign. The research stresses the role of the target audience as a co-creator of meaning. Despite the unstable connotative meanings of these signs in modern print advertising, they support a specific intended marketing message. This is illustrated by means of a few representative examples from the complete data set in Table 1.

## Indexical signs

An index can be described as a sign that represents its object or concept by means of a temporary, spatial, or even a causal connection with the object (Peirce 1935-1958: 143). Dirven and Verspoor (1999: 2) state that an index indicates something in the immediate proximity. This becomes more apparent if one considers the origin or the Latin word “index”, meaning pointer or forefinger. Indexical signs are common in advertisements because advertisers hope to create a relationship between the product and another concept by means of indexical signs, which usually have a positive connotation (Vestergaard & Schroder 1985: 38).

Davison’s (2009) research within the field of marketing indicates that an indexical sign’s designation of the concept to which it refers is based on an associated meaning. For example, a red traffic light indicates that one should stop. An index is strongly related or linked to the object that it refers to and thus must share a common feature with the object – if this were not so, it would not be able to refer to the object. An index contains a sort of icon, albeit an icon of a specific type. For example, smoke is an index of a fire because these occur in close physical proximity to each other, or because the one precedes the other. This does not necessarily mean that there is any similarity between smoke and fire, but there is a causal relationship in terms of time and space. Similarly, a bullet hole is an index that a shot has been fired (Peirce 1935-1958: 143; 230). A concept or sign can thus be deemed an index if it has a causal relationship with the object and confirms the object’s existence.

Dirven and Verspoor (1999: 2) explain that there is no index without the matter or object to which it refers; in other words, the index implies the presence of the matter or object. Indexical signs can also be cognitively abstract. Each complete index will always comprise an iconic element or dimension. For example, the arrow of a weather vane is clearly an index because it refers to an object (the direction of the wind) that exists in the physical environment. However, a weather vane is not necessarily only an index because it also shows the four fixed directions of north, south, east and west (Peirce 1935-1958: 143).

The data provides evidence that indexical signs in advertising language have a conventional meaning (despite the unstable meaning options) in support of the implied marketing message. A flashy ribbon can function as an index pointing to a special gift inside the wrapping (in contrast to an object placed in a plastic shopping bag).

## Icons

Iconicity is the structure in language that reflects the structure of experience in some way or another (Croft 2003: 102). Icons are semiotic systems that refer to signs with a physical form that closely resembles the characteristics of the situation to which they refer (Crystal 2008: 234). The word “icon” is derived from the Greek word “eikon”, which means “image” – although an icon is only an approximation of reality, as Dirven and Verspoor (1999: 3) posit: the traffic sign that warns drivers to watch out for children near a school depicts two or three children crossing the road on a zebra crossing. Such a picture only corresponds approximately with reality; in reality there might be

a whole group of children or only one child crossing – yet the general meaning of the road sign is clear.

Fiske (1982: 50) defines an icon as being the similarity between two concepts. An iconic sign is thus a close image of what it represents (Messaris 1997: ix). Icons refer only to a single characteristic of a concept and are never used to mark any other characteristics of the concept. It is possible to identify the object represented by the icon without any additional information (Peirce 1935-1958: 143).

Although an icon suggests the object to which it refers, mainly because it is similar in some way, the similarity between the icon and the object is not always based on a visible resemblance between the sign and the object. For example, the similarity may rest on an acoustic resemblance, as in the case of onomatopoeia in language (Peirce 1935-1958: 140-144).

The examples in the data analysis also confirm that irrespective of the unstable meanings of the signs (icon/index/symbols) used in advertising communication, a consensus meaning needs to be negotiated between the audience and the copywriter to arrive at a plausible marketing message. A passport full of visas may be accepted as an icon for success or being a world traveller; images (signs) of healthy human organs may be accepted as icons for healthy living or medical care; and an umbrella may be accepted as an icon for protection (from the sun/disease) or an icon for coverage (mobile phone network or short-term insurance).

## Symbols

A symbol may be described as a sign that has no obvious link or similarity with the object that it describes (Peirce 1935-1958: 169-170). As mentioned before, there is no resemblance between the acoustic word “cat” and the four-legged animal it represents. Only the agreement of the members of a particular cultural group allows the animal to be so named. Saussure (1959: 66-67) emphasises that linguistic symbols are allocated arbitrarily and that there is no inherent relationship between the concept and the acoustic image.

Symbols (both linguistic and visual) contain a hierarchy of meaning. Shelestiuk (2003: 233-234) writes that “[t]he direct meaning constitutes the first layer of sense and serves as a basis for the indirect (secondary) meaning – the second layer of sense, both of them united under the same designator (a name, a visual image, a significant object or person, etc.)”. The visual image of an angel can symbolise purity. Alternatively, the visual image of an apple can mean temptation. The relevant and required meaning of a sign in a specific advertisement can often be deduced from the context of the advertisement (*ibid.*).

Brummett (2006: 13) observes that symbolic meanings (lexical and visual) eventually change. She maintains that the word “gay” (a linguistic symbol), which once meant “happy” or “joyful”, now refers to a sexual orientation. Thus, the very nature of a symbol is that it can change and although the signifier or sign is the same, the signified might change. Similarly, the meaning of visual symbols has changed over time in the same way. Early in the twentieth century, American women who wore an anklet were thought

to be immodest, whereas today it is simply regarded as a piece of jewellery with the sole function of adornment (Nair 2011: 2).

Metaphor and metonymy are regarded as the fundamental mechanisms of symbolic transfer. This means that in certain cases symbols may be built on metaphor or metonymy. If a symbol can be seen as a static sign, then metaphor and metonymy are the fundamental types of logical connection between the meanings by means of their fixed or potential characteristics.

One may differentiate between lexical and visual symbols. Saussure (1959: 66-67) emphasises that linguistic symbols are allocated arbitrarily, and that there is no inherent relationship between the concept and the acoustic image. On the other hand, visual symbols are always similar to the symbols representing them in some way. This is because the similarity originally led to the evocation of the concept. Hempelmann and Samson (2007: 185-186) explain this as follows:

A visual symbol for the concept of knife must always resemble that which it stands for, as this resemblance is how the concepts is evoked. Such a symbol could not for example, be round like a circle, but must be elongated and pointed, regardless of how much it is abstracted or may rely on contexts in a picture such as a symbol for an object that is cut with the knife or a symbol for a hand that holds it. Their iconicity, that is, their causal remembrance of which they stand for, will mean that different levels of abstraction lead to different degrees to which a visual pun is compatible with both its meanings.

It is clear that symbols often rest on an iconic base. However, there are exceptions, such as visual symbols that have been created by convention in which there is no correspondence between the concept and its symbol. Not all symbols have a symbolic foundation origin; for example, a stop sign on a red octagon. Stop signs invariably have the word "stop" imprinted on them. A graduation cap may be accepted as a symbol for academic achievement, diamonds may be accepted as a symbol for romantic love, and A+ may be accepted as a symbol for excellence (academic grades, quality meat, rating of service delivery, etc.).

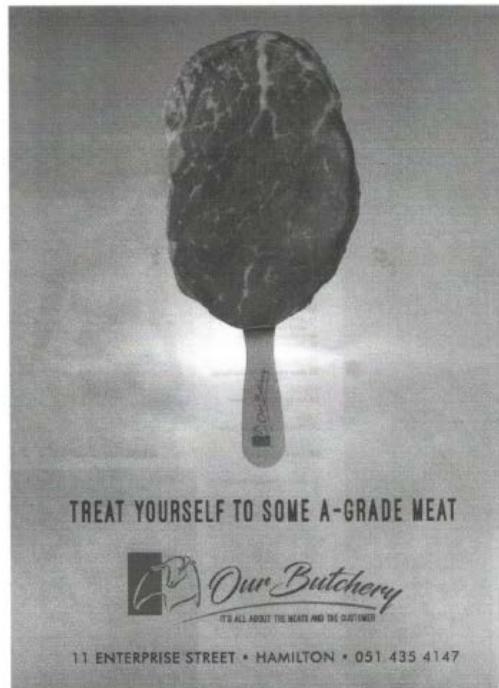
The reason for the unstable meanings of signs in advertising language may be linked to the constant need for creativity. The use and meaning of these visual signs is a combined effect of cooperative communication between the target audience and the copywriter. The intended target audience expect the signs to have relevance in their construction of the implied marketing message. These signs often function as the point of attention in the advertisement to attract attention that will promote the consumption of commodities (Herbst 2005: 14).

## ELEMENTS OF CREATIVITY

According to Arens *et al.* (2013: 346), the effect visuals contribute to an advertisement's success includes capturing the reader's attention, arousing the reader's interest in the headline, creating a favourable impression of the product or advertiser, and providing continuity for the campaign by using a unified visual technique. These goals are applicable to all three sign types referred to in this article, including a graduation cap as a symbol to indicate academic success (advertisement for eggs), a red ribbon as an index for a special gift (advertisement for a toothbrush), and an umbrella as an icon for protection (advertisement for sun screen).

Novelty and utility are regarded as two valuable elements of creativity (Stuhlfaut & Yoo 2013: 82-84) in the sense that new relationships are created between unrelated concepts. In terms of utility, the viewpoint is that the fertile ability to create variations of a concept determines the usefulness of such a concept.

The example of an advertisement for a butchery in *Get it* general circulation magazine (2017) demonstrates the impact of all five the listed elements of creativity (Stuhlfaut & Yoo 2013), namely novelty, utility, artistry, expressiveness and emotional response in the creation of new signs and/or meanings to attract attention.



**FIGURE 1:** ICE CREAM AS CREATIVE SIGN FOR SPECIAL TREATS

This advertisement uses an ice cream as sign for “special treats” (as supported in the heading: “Treat yourself to some A-grade meat”). There is no logical link between ice cream and good quality meat. The intended target audience thus has to be actively involved to create the plausible marketing message: eating meat from an ice cream stick from this brand owner is a special treat. The implied link is created between a special cut of meat from this butchery as a special treat.

The use of layout in this advertisement portrays the piece of steak in an upright position on a typical ice cream stick and the shape of the steak also iconically reminds of the form of an ice cream on a stick. This layout and the form of the ice cream stick resembles, at a graphological level, the form used by different and well-known brands for their (expensive) ice cream products, such as Ola, in comparison to their (cheaper) lollies (Ola 2017).

Van Niekerk and Jenkinson (2011: 116-134) refer to the creative use of font and layout to activate intertextual associations based on the iconicity related to font types and layout as graphological iconicity. There is for instance a generally accepted knowledge (iconic comprehension) of the difference of the font and layout used in a dictionary, in the Bible, on cellphone screens, and in newspaper headings.

In terms of the five elements of creativity (Stuhlfaut & Yoo 2013), this sign (ice cream as a sign for special treats) is new. The sign may also be used again for different luxury cuts of meat/different special treats. In terms of layout and colour, the advertisement is a work of art (in the sense that it is not merely a reality-based picture of the object as we know for instance from eating kebabs). In terms of expressiveness, the form of the (ice cream) stick is intertextually well-known from quality ice cream brands such as Magnum (Ola brand). The cut of the meat and the layout/placement of the product on the page of the magazine therefore activates an emotional response.

Van Niekerk and Jenkinson (2011: 124-125) also refer to the intertextual value of the iconic play with font and layout in advertisements. The deviations in the conventional font and layout function as signs to activate intertextual knowledge and help to create authenticity. This is the case when images of toys replace letters or words in a headline advertising toys or where letters are visually formed with seeds or fruit in a headline advertising a fruiterer.

Creating original and appropriate signs (with unstable meaning options) for a specific brand is thus the challenge to ensure the brand is recognised and remembered by the target audience. Koslow (2015: 6) describes creative advertising as original and appropriate for the brand. Such advertisements require more attention from the target audience to arrive at the intended and implied marketing message.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Fourie (2001: 346) holds that “Connotative meanings are relatively unstable: they can vary considerably according to culture, historical period, and the experience of the individual”. In terms of the examples referred to in the analysis and the elements of creativity mentioned by Stuhlfaut and Yoo (2013), there is no logical connection

between the “perfect” female body and a measuring tape; there is no logical connection between a bolt of lightning and a clean swimming pool; and there is no logical and direct link between the human brain and car tyres. Meaning is thus negotiated and the target audience acts as co-creator of a plausible message.

In addition, the signs in the examples have fertile possibilities in the sense that a variety of other measuring tools could be used to advertise the brand promising you the perfect figure. Different elements of nature can be put to use to communicate the challenges experienced by swimming pool owners; and different parts of the human body can be put to use to connect tyres to the qualities of your physical body, such as using your eyes (watch out), using your feet (travel), and using your hands (protect).

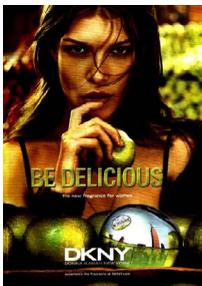
In terms of an emotional response, human nature does not stand neutral towards signs such as a bolt of lightning, the physical appearance of the human brain, or measuring tools/equipment.

The qualitative analysis identified and classified the sign type based on the literature study in phase one of the analysis. The different connotative meaning options for the specific sign in each advertisement was listed in phase two of the analysis. The signs in the data illustrate the value of connotative meanings awarded to signs in order to arrive at a plausible marketing message; a plausible message is co-created between the target audience and the copywriter (see Table 1).

Table 1 serves only as an example of the second phase of the analysis of all the data in which the meaning options for the identified sign types were listed. This table illustrates the unstable meaning of signs (intended and unintended meaning) and the involvement needed from the audience to construct a plausible marketing message.

As explained before, the implied marketing message was constructed in the final stage of analysis by listing the most plausible meaning option (from phase two of the analysis) for the sign, based on the genre conventions of advertising that expect a positive claim about the brand name.

**TABLE 1: CO-CREATION OF MEANING BETWEEN COPYWRITER AND INTENDED TARGET MARKET**

Sign and brand	Visual image	Intended meaning of visual sign	Unstable connotations (unintended meaning of sign)	Marketing message	Heading
Scrabble board (ABSA 2010)		Easy access/ simple solutions (to finance)	Fun and games (finance for a younger market; children)	Getting car finance with ABSA is as easy as using the right words/asking for help	Just say the word
Painting colour cards (Outsurance 2012)		Options/ individual preference	Variety/ not boring/ excitement/ fun	Outsurance has the package to fit your individual preference	English: Insurance that fits your needs perfectly  Afrikaans: Versekering wat jou behoeftes perfek pas
Bitten apple (DKNY 2014)		Seduction	Healthy/ organic option/ fruity smell	DKNY will make you smell irresistible	Be delicious

Three signs representative of the dataset in each category (index, icon and symbol) are discussed against the background of the unstable connotative meanings and the implied marketing message (phase three of the analysis).



**FIGURE 2:** LIGHTNING BOLT (INDEX)

In the BioGuard advertisement above, an index is used as a type of semiotic sign in order to deliver the marketing message. The bolt of lightning is an index or pointer that indicates rain. The marketing message lies largely in the visual aspect, although the lexical aspect echoes the visual correspondingly. There are temporal, spatial and causal links between the index and the object to which it refers. In other words, rain will follow the bolt of lightning (causal and temporal) and will take place in the same space and place. Another characteristic of an index is that there is no significant relationship between the object and the index. Despite the fact that the lightning (the index) refers to the rain, the two concepts – of lightning and rain – do not have the same meaning. Thus, this case also concerns the connotation of the concept of a bolt of lightning (which indicates that rain is on its way) because the denotation of lightning refers to bolts of lightning only. The target market's experience of the struggle involved in keeping a swimming pool blue after a thunderstorm would make it receptive to the marketing message.



In the USN advertisement, a symbol (a measuring tape) is used to support the marketing message. The measuring tape may function as a symbol of slimming and weight loss, irrespective of its utility value and value as an instrument. Measuring tapes are often used in advertisements for slimming products. There is no link or similarity between the symbol (the measuring tape) and the object or concept (slenderness) that it represents. The sign has been allocated arbitrarily and co-created convention dictates that a measuring tape may be a symbol of slenderness or slimming. In addition, in this advertisement the focus shifts from the concrete (the measuring tape and its default use) towards the more abstract meaning as a symbol of weight loss.

Symbols and other figures of speech seem to shift between concepts according to a specific pattern. As a result, the shift pattern will, for example, always be from the concrete to the abstract. However, the pattern in the case of metaphors and other figures of speech may be different; it may move from abstract to concrete, from concrete to concrete, and from abstract to abstract. Although the empirical data set seems to indicate that symbols do shift from a concrete concept to an abstract one (measuring tape for weight loss), it appears that this is not always true in the case of advertising communication. Thus, an advertisement using the sign A+ as a symbol for the excellence of a skin care product does not move from the concrete to the abstract. In this case, the transfer is from an abstract concept (A+) towards another abstract concept: skin care. The unstable connotative (symbolic) value of "A" is to indicate excellence.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear that the use of new semiotic signs and the new meanings of existing signs is one of the instruments that copywriters use to attract the attention of the audience by making the audience co-creators of the marketing message. Because of the unstable meaning of these signs in advertising communication, they serve as the impulse for an intellectual game that requires audience involvement in order to construct the implied marketing message. It is evident (meaning options per sign in Table 1) that meaning is negotiated between the intended target audience and the brand owners as there is no direct marketing message, but only an implied message.

This value of this investigation lies in the exploration of the value of the unstable relationship between visual signs and what they may depict (meaning) in a specific advertisement to enhance audience involvement and thus attraction to the brand.

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