

Where Truth Lies in Advertising: Collateral bundling of hidden meanings

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Abstract

Consumer advertising, characterised by its persuasive intent and attention value, is a form of propositional communication that contextually hinges on the psychology of human needs and desires. The advertiser's objective is to depict – with some poetic licence – commercially available items as beneficial and vital. Truthful depiction is not among the objectives of the marketing plan; however, persuasive effectiveness is contingent upon successful synthesis of fact and concoction. Thus, an essence of reality must be crafted into the text to induce target-market confidence. Another consideration is memorability of the advertisement experience, particularly the brand name and its associated positive qualities. Further, it must be readable and socially accessible to achieve receiver engagement. This article – using the five social functions of language and Jakobson's communication language model (Leech, 1981) – investigates the complex phenomenon of meaning-creation in press advertisements¹ to discover their ecological infrastructure. What are the relationships between elements? And how do these render the potential to generate persuasive propositions that linger? Analysis shows that attention-getting features are primary carriers of hidden meanings; and, if realised, these create persuasive impressions of essential and/or urgently needed benefits available in the advertised item. Further investigation reveals that the hidden meanings are cached in a trifecta of thematic information, presupposition and implicature that renders a meaning-making vehicle to deliver advertiser propositions. This strategic apparatus – governed by a principle of semantic interdependency of linguistic, semiotic and intertextual elements – is terminologically labelled as collateral bundling.

Keywords: advertisement, collateral bundling, implicature, intertextuality, persuasion, presupposition, social functions of language, thematic information.

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Introduction

Advertisements, a form of persuasive communication, warrant a holistic multi-functional approach to discover the mechanics of meaning-making. This article offers a framework of thematic information, implicature and presupposition to deliver a grounded exposition of the persuasive apparatus at work. First, analytical approaches of the field and key concepts are introduced. Following this, a baby-shop advertisement is analysed to exemplify hidden-meaning collateral bundling, and to expose how natural-language social functions are exploited to draw in the receiver. The article then examines nine health-and-beauty (H&B) advertisements from the 1940s to deconstruct the operative meaning-making devices. Each advertisement analysis is annotated with a meaning-making summary.

Analytical Approaches

Advertisements have increasingly engaged researchers from the humanities, and the social and medical sciences, resulting in a flow of cross-disciplinary publications that offer different analytical approaches. Despite the various approaches and research foci, a common interest is the meaning-making ecology of advertisements as persuasive texts. The wider literature around advertising has three principal trajectories:

- Historical and economic perspectives (**e.g. Myers, 1994; Nevett, 1982; Presbrey, 1929; Sampson, 1874**)
- Consumer culture, media and society; and marketing and the advertising agency (**Barthes, 1977; Berger, 2015; Crawford, 2008; Godin, 2005; Goffman, 1976; McLuhan, 1964; Myers, 1998; Packard, 1957 – among others**)
- Linguistic and socio-semiotic perspectives, constituting the studies most pertinent here – in particular pragmatically oriented approaches.

The most noteworthy for the linguist is the seminal work of **Leech (1966)**, which provided the fundamentals for several exemplary book-length publications (**e.g. Bruthiaux, 1996; Cook, 2001; Dyer, 1982; Geis, 1982; Hermerén, 1999; Myers, 1994, 1998; Schmidt and Kess, 1986; Tanaka, 1994; Vestergaard and Schrøder, 1985**). Leech identified the internal structure and communicative facets of advertisements, establishing advertising language as a unique text type. He flagged the abstract features that distinguish this genre: it has a well-defined social purpose; it is frequently disjunctive (truncated and ungrammatical), yet pragmatically skilful; it operates at a psychological level; and it is colloquial, not formal. Leech (**1966**) also pointed out the four cornerstones of advertiser ambition: Attention Value, Memorability, Readability, and Selling Power.

The first three of these are the crucial tools that determine the effectiveness of the last.

With regards to denotative and connotative meanings in advertising language, Leech highlights how linguistic forms function in unconventional ways to refer to ‘entities and events in the world’ (**ibid: 9**). He contends that receivers interpret the ‘seeming incompatibility of meaning’ in advertisements by finding a tie that will reconcile the infringement with something in ‘the normal communicative function’ (**ibid: 178**) – which then renders the advertisement message meaningful. The idea of cohesive ties is an underpinning of pragmatics, which focuses on correspondences between pragmatics elements and the social functions of language (table 1).

This research adopts a pragmatically oriented approach. It uses the idea of social functions and Jakobson’s communication model (fig. 1) to illustrate how meanings are rendered by attention-getters – both at the linguistic (expressive) plane and in pictures (iconic elements). Attention-getters are the standout features: these include words, phrases, full sentences; and visuals (graphetics,ⁱⁱ pictures, white space). The pragmatic psychological and emotional underpinnings of marketing strategy – which, in the words of Packard (**1957**), are configured to appeal to our ‘hidden needs’ – are important determinants. In brief, hidden needs are the wants and desires of humans: they include the need to achieve, to be creative, to belong, to look attractive and youthful, to be loved, and to be praised.

SOCIAL FUNCTION	ORIENTATION TOWARDS
Expressive (attitudes/feelings)	Addressor
Informative (informational)	Subject-matter (new information)
Phatic (socially oriented/ interpersonal)	Channel of communication
Aesthetic (artistic value/status)	Message in socio-cultural setting
Directive (socially controlling/ aims to influence)	Addressee

Table 1 The five social functions of language. Source: Leech, 1981, pp. 40-42.

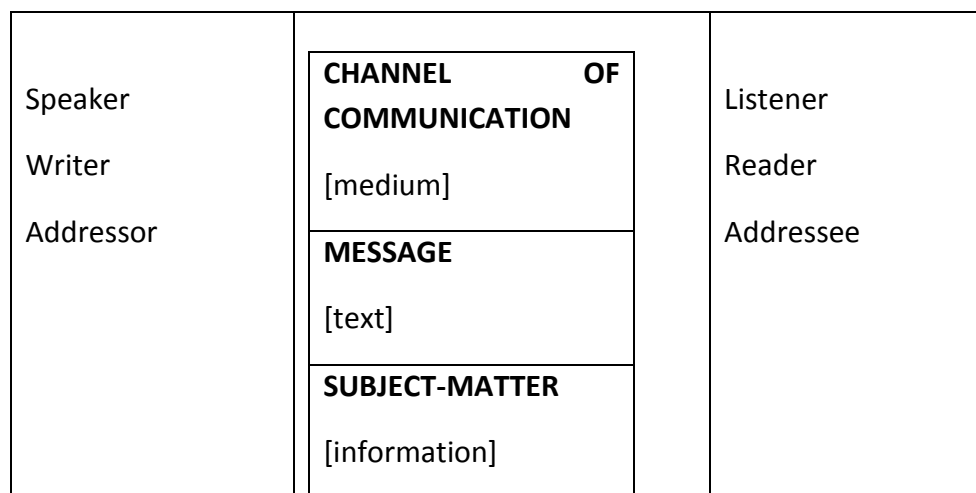


Figure 1 Jakobson’s communication model. Source: Adapted from Leech, 1981, pp. 40-42.

The Advertising-Text Selling Mechanism

Copywriters and graphic designers produce artfully crafted texts to convey persuasive messages (Aitchison, 2008; Berger, 2015; Cook, 2001; Geis, 1982; Leech, 1966; Packard, 1957). The addressor goal is to stimulate buying behaviour by creating texts of strong Selling Power. The text-creation process relies on the fundamentals of natural-language communication – which is powered by the precept of language as an organic socio-cultural edifice (Bolinger, 1980; Halliday and Hasan, 1976, 1985; Leech, 1981). The socio-cultural relationships contextually situated in everyday exchanges critically influence receiver interpretation of denotative and connotative meanings (Bolinger and Sears, 1981; Leech, 1983; Yule, 2017). Principally, the following cohesive devices are important in advertisement construction:

- **Information structure**, or organisation of text – the way information is organised by the addressor, and reveals addressor stance (position) or emotion
- **Implicature** – a cognitive trajectory of possible meaning-making, whereby receivers can infer meanings, based on a cooperative principle (even where an assertion is illogical).
- **Presupposition** (also known as implication) – the knowledge assumed as known to the receiver (presumably shared by addressor and receiver)
- **Reference** – a relationship between two entities, where an addressor uses discourse elements (e.g. pronouns) to enable receiver identification of something. Copywriters can effect reference ambiguity by employing ellipsis
- **Thematic information** (something known) – the socio-cultural accepted knowledge that situates the communication within the scope

- of reality, such as a human condition (e.g. emotion, illness) or need (e.g. clothing, food safety) or desire (e.g. career success, romantic love)
- **Turn-taking** (mimicked by conversational advertisements) – a conductor of politeness and face-to-face involvement.

Exploitation of cohesive devices maximises persuasive strength of propositions (**Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001; Leech, 1966**). In particular, three elements are essential to create Selling Power: thematic information, presupposition and implicature (fig. 2). These are hidden meanings that form a collateral bundle of potential interpretations, configured to promote presumable benefits and positive qualities of consumer items. They are cached primarily in attention-getters, configured to generate propositions that urge buying behaviour.

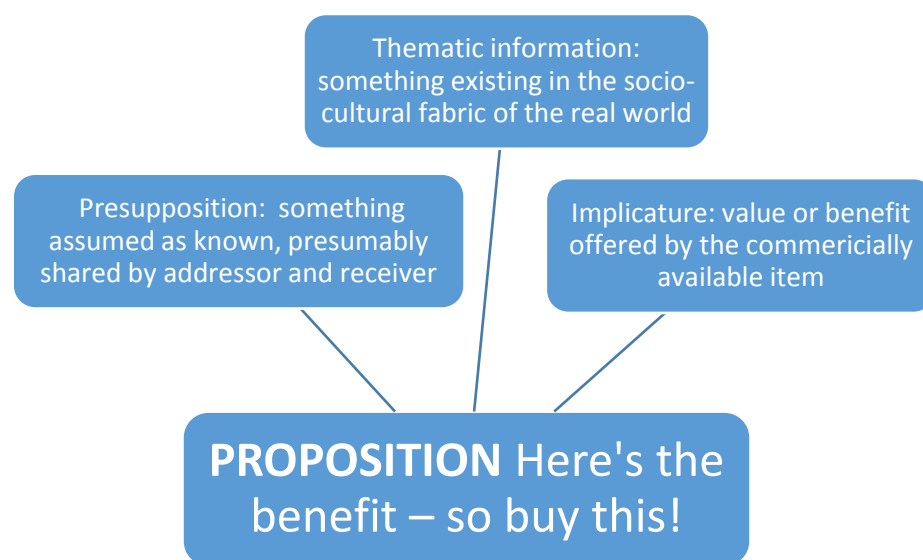


Figure 2 Propositions are formed by collateral bundling of hidden meanings.

The Roles of Hidden Meanings and Social Functions in Advertisements

To illustrate the idea of hidden-meaning collateral bundling, an analytic example of a baby-product advertisement is provided below: ‘The Baby Shop: Newborn to 24 Months’ (**fig. 3**).ⁱⁱⁱ Here, two noun phrases (NPs) – in declarative mood^{iv} – accompany a smiling healthy-looking toddler, safely anchored in a baby chair. The NPs are disjunctive in that they are verbless:

<i>Disjunctive NP</i>	THE BABY SHOP
<i>Disjunctive NP</i>	NEWBORN TO 24 MONTHS

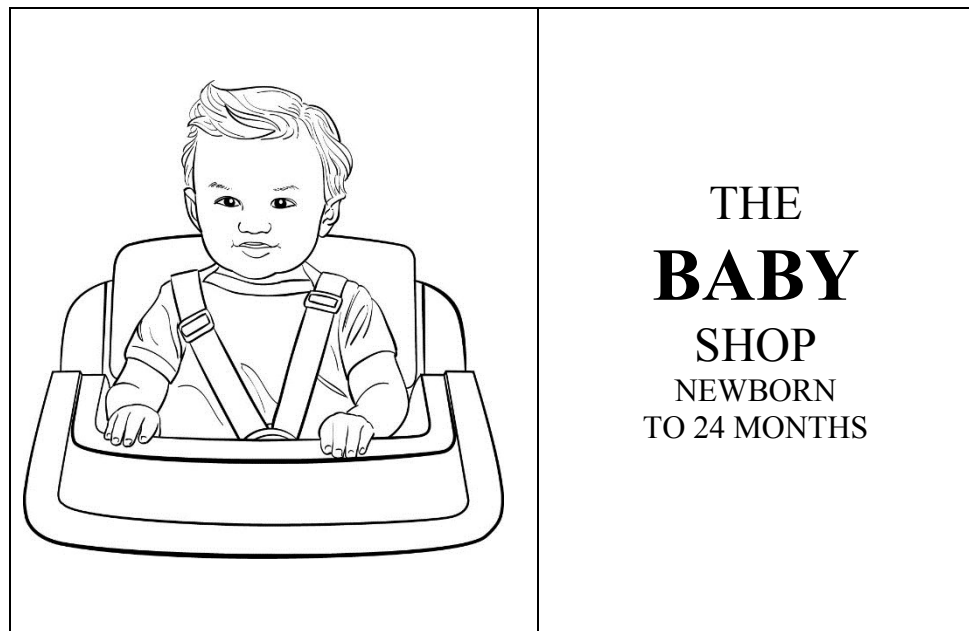


Figure 3 Advertisement: The Baby Shop: Newborn to 24 Months. Line-drawing artwork by Bruce Rankin, Melbourne, Australia.

Ungrammaticality and incomplete phrases are a common feature of advertisement copywriting (Leech, 1966; Rush, 1998). However, despite the disjunctive NPs, by virtue of real-world knowledge (thematic information relating to the need for clothing), the receiver understands that the commercially available item is clothing – not babies for sale. The advertiser is calling to satisfy the presupposed need for baby and toddler apparel. Ostensibly, the toddler is attired in items available at The Baby Shop (which is the brand name); and a link is thus established between product brand and implied positive ideas of comfort, happiness and safety. The visual reception of the baby holding on to the baby-chair tray with both hands potentially signifies an indexical of support and security (Goddard, 2015; Williamson 1978). Thus, the brand name by pictorial association is potentially laden with positive values:

Thematic information + Presupposition + Implicature → Proposition

<i>Theme</i>	Clothing
<i>Presupposition</i>	Babies and toddlers need clothes
<i>Implicature</i>	Clothing determines comfort, happiness and security
<i>Proposition</i>	The Baby Shop has baby and toddler clothing that brings comfort, joy and safety! So, buy this benefit!

In addition to hidden-meaning collateral bundling designed to communicate meanings, an important step is to render the text socially accessible, which facilitates transformation of receivers into participants (**Bruthiaux, 2000**). The strategy of receiver socialisation helps simulate a real-world experience, and can increase memorability of the item (**Maxwell and Dickman, 2007**). This is achievable by incorporating the Expressive, Informative, Phatic, Aesthetic and Directive functions into the text:

- Expressives communicate the attitude of the addressor
- Informatives contain new information (such as brand name or value)
- the Phatic is an interpersonal channel of communication (such as greetings) that establishes a socially oriented connection between addressor and receiver
- the Aesthetic holds a socio-cultural value (artistic or literary)
- Directives aim to influence the receiver's behaviour.

These functions, as found in the data at hand, are often covert; for example, explicit Directives (like 'buy now!') are absent – but are recoverable by the semantic circuit of the bundled hidden meanings. In relation to The-Baby-Shop (fig. 3), the Informative, Expressive and covert Directive functions are recoverable from the NPs in apposition:

<i>Informative</i>	The Baby Shop
<i>Expressive</i>	These clothes are suitable for babies and toddlers!
<i>covert Directive</i>	Buy clothing from The Baby Shop!

Investigative Methodology

The research aim is to practically demonstrate how hidden-meaning collateral bundling incorporates social functions to create Selling Power. The early-twentieth century decades of industrialisation and mass production yield advertisements containing a variety of linguistic and pictorial devices; thus this era offers an appropriate data source. The 1940s is a period of heightened marketplace competition, where advertisers focused on creating an image to drive consumption (**Myers, 1994: 22-24**). Accordingly, nine artefacts from this brand-building era are presented here as an ideal set to illustrate how persuasive devices are employed to enable advertiser ambition.

The analytical taxonomy (fig. 2) comprises a formulation of thematic information, presupposition and implicature. This is a hidden-meaning trifecta designed to deliver the advertiser's proposition. The analysis here is primarily linguistic; however, emotive and socio-psychological devices are acknowledged as critical co-contributors to meaning-creation. The following discussion is in two sections: first, text-only artefacts; then text-and-image configurations.

Discussion and Findings

Text-only advertisements

Six text-only artefacts are discussed here: Klexema, Hayfix, Deaf, Goitre, Your-Face-Is-Your-Fortune and Are-You-Nervy. These display:

- a simple NP (the headline) as attention-getter
- followed by body-text block/s and standing details (utilitarian information, like proprietor and address).

The standout NPs, although verbless, aptly function as independent clauses, and contain the power of suggestion. Klexema (treating baby eczema) and Hayfix (treating hayfever) – use the most basic of attention-getting devices, namely bold type in full capitals (fig. 4). The white space around the bolded words is typical, creating a prosodic-like effect that emphasises standout elements.

‘Mate! Let me help you!’

which parallels:

‘**Baby with eczema! Let me the Klexema specialist help you!**

Further, the NP ‘Baby Eczema’ can be likened to a proper name (like Baby Susie or Baby Johnny), thus simulating an interpersonal conduit that reinforces the idea of having a conversation. Additionally, the device of covert Aesthetic also is recoverable in the similarity between the Klexema disjunctive clause and the command found in the biblical creation story:

Klexema disjunctive clause Let the Klexema

Biblical creation story ‘Let there be light’ (**Genesis 1.3**)

This kind of tie, which has potential to connect the receiver with an external text, is an example of intertextuality; and frequently it is culture-specific. Intertextual references of biblical nature, as recoverable here, surface both in the Australian context and other cultures with a history of Christianity (**Berger, 2016**). The idea of intertextuality is that interpretation of a textual element depends on knowledge of an element of an external specific text. External connections may link ‘to whole subject matters of language [...] we could not make sense of ads unless we came to them with experiences of different discourses’ (**Myers, 1994: 5**). These different discourses may be from any of the worlds of human engagement – fictional and non-fictional; and they populate the semantic pathways of advertisement communicative devices (**Cook, 2001; Kuppens, 2010; Regev, 2007**).

To sum up, the Klexema analysis reveals how attention-getting linguistic features operate to convey meanings, and to submerge agency (the role of the advertiser). Despite the absent words ‘Buy this product’, hidden meanings enact such a directive. Of significance is the tie between implicature and consumer benefit (value), which forms a collateral bundle that crystallises the gist of the advertiser persuasive intent:

Implicature: There is a cure for this condition

Benefit: Klexema relieves eczema

Leading to the proposition:

Proposition: Klexema offers a remedy - So, buy this benefit!

Klexema: meaning-making summary

Theme: The problem of skin affliction

Presupposition: There is eczema associated with babies

Implicature: There is a cure for this condition

Benefit: Klexema relieves eczema in babies

Social Function: covert Directive, Informative, Phatic, covert Aesthetic

Similar to Klexema, Hayfix employs declarative mood; and bold capitals are used to attract the reader. The headline 'Hayfix' declares product name and function, couching the presupposition of a cure for hayfever. The covert Directive and Informative (product name) are evident; and the Expressive is reasoned from the disjunctive complements 'Fixes hayfever permanently' and 'Relief immediately':

<i>NP</i>	HAYFIX
<i>Disjunctive Complement</i>	Fixes Hay-Fever permanently
<i>Disjunctive Complement</i>	Relief Immediately

The Hayfix implicature segues to the product value to form a collateral bundle that communicates the advertiser message.

Hayfix: meaning-making summary

Theme: Hayfever causes respiratory discomfort

Presupposition: There is a cure for hayfever

Implicature: Hayfix relieves hayfever suffering

Benefit: Hayfix provides immediate and permanent relief for hayfever

Social Function: Expressive, covert Directive, Informative

Given that hayfever suffering is known to cause ongoing respiratory distress, the disjunctive complements respectively imply Hayfix will effectively end this catarrhal condition; and that it meets an urgent need. The product value is that it offers a quick and lasting fix:

Hayfix offers a permanent, immediate remedy for hayfever. So, buy this benefit!

Two further examples of text-only advertisements are 'Deaf' and 'Home Treatment for Goitre' (fig. 5). The disjunctive NP appears as headline, naming the problem; and the advertiser implies that their commercially available items provide the solutions. Both employ declarative mood; and the covert Expressive, covert Directive and Informative functions are recoverable.



Figure 5 Two advertisements: Deaf, Goitre. Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p. 2, p. 31.

'Deaf' and 'Goitre' are thematically similar as (if unassisted) both are disabling and socially isolating. Deafness may adversely affect memory and learning ability; and goitre, a disfiguring condition, causes difficulty in breathing and swallowing (Papadakis, 2014). The difference between these conditions is that the physical manifestation of goitre is visible and socially sensitive; thus, the Goitre advertiser assures privacy (Expressive function) by delivering 'home treatment'. The trajectory of discussion above for Klexema and Hayfix applies to the linguistic elements of Deaf and Goitre, clinching the propositions:

We offer a remedy for deafness. So, buy this service!

We offer a remedy for goitre in the privacy of your home. So, buy this service!

Again, implicature segues to product value, forming a collateral bundle that communicates the benefit. The analyses for 'Deaf' and 'Goitre' are presented below:

Deaf: meaning-making summary

Theme: Unassisted deafness is disabling

Presupposition: There is a cure for deafness

Implicature: Deafness can be remedied

Benefit: This service provider offers a remedy for deafness

Social Function: covert Expressive, covert Directive, Informative

Goitre: meaning-making summary

Theme: Unassisted goitre is disabling and disfiguring

Presupposition: There is a cure for goitre

Implicature: Goitre can be remedied

Benefit: This service provider offers a remedy in the privacy of your home

Social Function: covert Expressive, covert Directive, Informative

Another text-only artefact ‘Your-Face-Is-Your-Fortune’ – for the facial cosmetic product *Makeups* (fig. 6) – offers attainment of social and emotional wellbeing. Thematically, it evokes the idea of feminine beauty (which is the creative impetus of make-up). Unlike the disjunctive examples above, the declarative headline is a complete sentence: ‘Your Face Is Your Fortune’. This construction fulfils two functions. First, it establishes an immediate personal touch by employing the possessive *your* (strengthened by repetition); and then the (simple present) verb *is* adds emphasis and finality to the semantic equivalence of the two nouns ‘face’ and ‘fortune’.



Figure 6 Advertisement: Your-Face-Is-Your-Fortune. Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p. 11.

The declarative simple present renders a sense of something that is always true (an unchanging, indisputable situation) – akin to ‘Frogs croak’. The catchline ‘Give It Every Care’, again a complete sentence, is in imperative mood. The ideas of ‘face’ and ‘fortune’ are presented as interdependent variables, where beautiful skin will ensure positive outcome. The equivalence of ‘face’ with ‘fortune’ is reinforced by the pronoun ‘it’ which could refer to either noun:

Declarative: **Your Face is Your Fortune**

Imperative: **Give It Every Care**

Each attention-getter has its presupposition: first, the headline ‘Your Face Is Your Fortune’ establishes a correlation between looks (face) and success (fortune); and then the imperative ‘Give It Every Care’ suggests that skin is being neglected. Together, the two statements are expressively authoritative, grave and admonishing, akin to ‘Your health is your responsibility; so give it every care’ – simulating medical advice. Simulation of real-life situations to approximate overtures of giving professional or friendly advice is an advertiser technique that is used across cultures (Hiramoto, 2011: 251).

Undertones of command, concern and warning are recoverable in Your-Face-Is-Your Fortune, and collectively form the Expressive. The implicature is that care of skin will engender positive change, while neglect of skin will result in misfortune. The benefit of *Makeups* is that it provides the means to create a lovely face and bring success. The advertiser's proposition is:

Makeups offers the necessary tool to create a beautiful face and ensure success. So, buy this product!

Your-Face-Is-Your-Fortune: meaning-making summary

Theme: Facial beauty is socially desirable

Presupposition 1: There is a correlation between looks and success

Presupposition 2: You are not giving your skin adequate care

Implicature: Improving looks secures success: neglect will have opposite effect

Benefit: Makeups offers the necessary tool to create a beautiful face and ensure success

Social Function: Expressive, Directive, Informative

The 'Are-You-Nervy' advertisement (like Your-Face-Is-Your-Fortune) opens with a personal touch (fig. 7). As headline, the interrogative – common in everyday greetings (like 'How are you?') – solicits the addressee; and simulates an intimacy normally reserved for friends or doctor–patient relationship. It also thematically engages with the social reality of psychological discomfort (feeling nervous). This is a mental-health-related product, and is likely to involve medication. The choice of the interrogative is significant as a device in the promotion of this product type because interrogatives (like imperatives) have no entailment: they 'do not depend for their validity on listener beliefs' (Geis, 1982: 29). This attribute assists the advertiser to avoid taking responsibility for addressee interpretations of stimuli; and thus diminishes the possibility that an advertiser be accused of misleading the receiver.

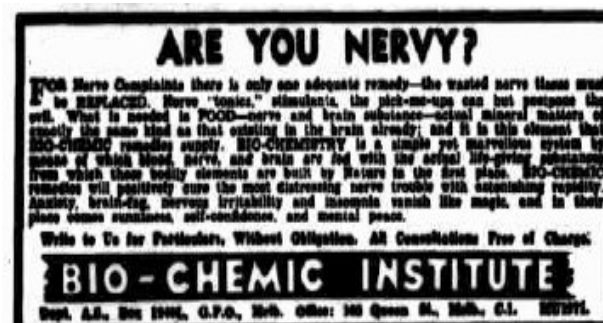


Figure 7 Advertisement: Are-You-Nervy? Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p. 11.

The other Are-You-Nervy attention-getter is the service-provider name 'Bio-Chemic Institute'. As an attention-getter, the brand name 'Bio-Chemic Institute' plays a significant persuasive role. Typographically, it is set in full capitals on a sombre white-on-black panel. The word 'Institute' evokes the idea of a lawful organisation; and then 'bio-chemic' suggests scientific research-based solutions.

The prefix 'bio-' denotes scientific specialisation of living systems; while 'chemic' could be a play on alchemy or chemistry, suggesting knowledge of transformative chemical substances. Further, the suffix '-ic' – which is used to form adjectives like 'acidic', 'atomic' and 'bionic' – denotes chemical compounding, and scientific engineering processes. Semantically, '-ic' is similar to prefixes like 'bio-'. Such affixes facilitate positively connoted ties to scientific and medical discourses. The affixation gives the impression of something bio-medical or scientific; yet is 'sufficiently understood by virtue of being used in many everyday contexts' (Janich, 2017: 210). In this way, the affixation is capable of generating associations advantageous to the advertised item.

The phenomenon of meanings evoked by a name, as in the case of Are-You-Nervy, delivers a platform to argue for covert Expressive function couched in branding – where the advertiser equates certain attributes with a name and creates a unique identity (Beasley and Danesi, 2002). The name 'Bio-Chemic Institute', which inducts a scientific connection, gives credence to the claim that brand names contain social functions, linking to attributes and feelings. As Geis (1982: 111) points out: 'Certainly, proper names have reference' and 'In this respect, proper names are like definite descriptions'.

The individual attention-getters of Are-You-Nervy do not contain propositional content, but together – when the hidden meanings satisfy the Phatic, covert Directive, Informative and covert Expressive functions – then the product benefit is invoked:

The Bio-Chemic Institute can provide a scientific cure for nervous conditions. So, buy this benefit!

Are-You-Nervy?: meaning-making summary

Theme: Unwellness is undesirable

Presupposition: Psychological conditions are a social reality

Implicature: There is a remedy for nervous condition

Benefit: The Bio-Chemic Institute can provide a scientific cure for nervous conditions

Social Function: Phatic, covert Directive, Informative, covert Expressive

To sum up, the text-only artefacts discussed above show how meanings are recoverable from attention-getters, and illustrate copywriter dependency on social-function elements to enable advertiser propositions. Despite the absent words ‘Buy this product’, hidden meanings coalesce to communicate such a persuasive command.

Advertisements of linguistic and pictorial content

Pictures, such as line drawings and photographs, first began to appear in press advertisements in the 1930s. Today, visuals are a primary tool of contemporary marketing campaigns. Their function is to evoke feelings (Berger, 2016; Messaris, 1997); and by reflecting social practices, they prompt a social relationship between advertiser and individual (Lick, 2015: 222). This section discusses three text-and-image advertisements, namely Cuticura Talcum Powder, Longmores Hair Restorer, and Horlicks. These artefacts incorporate attention-getting line artwork; speech bubbles; and storytelling cartoon strips (as narrative) that work with linguistic standout features to create meanings.

‘Cuticura-Talcum-Powder’ (fig. 8) below exemplifies the idea of images as attention getters. The headline ‘Your Baby’s Best Friend’ sits adjacent to the product flask – which displays the brand name, and pictures a toddler. The brand name appears again at baseline. The prosodic-like effect of the white spaces emphasises these features.



Figure 8 Advertisement: Cuticura-Talcum-Powder. Source: The Argus 26 September 1940, p. 2.

The Cuticura-Talcum-Powder linguistic attention-getters are a simple NP as headline, and a possessive complement. These are phrases in apposition, as they both refer to the same thing (the product). They also are an instance of repetition, which is a prosaic reinforcement device of the copywriter.

NP **Cuticura Talcum Powder**

Complement **Your Baby's Best Friend**

The function of the Cuticura NP is to declare the product and brand name, which is market information for the receiver. The complement identifies the product as a trustworthy friend of baby; and personalises this identification with the possessive *your*. The direct address in *your* implicitly calls the absent referent (parent or carer): this implies responsibility to provide for baby.

The idea that baby has needs is presupposed, and dovetails with already available product knowledge: talcum powder, sometimes 'baby powder', is a moisture-absorbing preparation purportedly with function to keep skin dry and help protect from rash. Parents and carers are aware that babies need empathy and goodwill assistance to prevent or alleviate rash. The value of this item is that it provides comfort to ensure baby's wellbeing and (emotional) security – just as a caring friend would. Thus, facts mingle with emotive appeals to create an atmosphere of 'poetic truth' (**Simpson 2001: 591**).

The Phatic also is recoverable from the Cuticura graphic design. There are visually two portrait-like images that tie to everyday social setting. First, the oval holding the infant, mimicking a framed photograph; and then the mirror-like frame displaying the words 'Your Baby's Best Friend' – which offers the parent/carer opportunity to see themselves reflected as baby's best friend. This receiver interpretation, if achieved, reinforces the idea of parent/carer responsibility; and assists advertiser-urging to buy the product.

Cuticura-Talcum-Powder: meaning-making summary

Theme: Babies need care

Presupposition: Baby has needs to be satisfied

Implicature: Responsibility to provide for baby

Benefit: Cuticura talcum powder provides comfort to ensure baby's wellbeing and emotional security.

Social function: Expressive, covert Directive. Informative, covert Phatic

In terms of social functionality, three attributes evident in the Cuticura artefact – namely, the Expressive, covert Directive and Informative – emerge as common in advertisements. With respect to the Expressive, advertisers consistently imbue their items with positive connotations (**Gardner and Luchtenberg, 2000; Williamson, 1978**): the positive values, by implication, will satisfy a human, want, need or desire.

The product 'Longmores-Hair-Restorer' (fig. 9) offers to bring back a previous hair colour condition; that is, to transform grey hair. Thematically, the advertisement rests on the idea of grey hair as undesirable (negative value); and presupposes that it needs to undergo a restoration process (positive value). It suggests that hair restoration is socially desirable; and, conversely, grey hair (as an indicator of aging) attenuates social status. Hair restoration will reinstate the social status associated with looking young.

The headline 'Defy time' and catchline 'Be young again' – in imperative mood – together suggest that the product on offer is a forceful agent with power to counteract (defy) the effect of aging, which in truth is a natural (normally irreversible) outcome of getting old. Typographically, the brand name (at base) is graphetically emphasised (**Fischer, 1999**), and functions to suggest that Longmores carries an upwardly mobile quality.

<i>Imperative</i>	Defy time
<i>Imperative</i>	Be young again
<i>NP</i>	Longmores sulphur hair restorer
<i>NP</i>	Longmores

The Expressive, Informative and Directive functions are recoverable, as annotated in the summary.

Longmores-Hair-Restorer: meaning-making summary

Theme: Grey hair is undesirable

Presupposition 1: Grey hair needs restoring

Presupposition 2: Grey hair diminishes social status

Implicature 1: Hair restoration is socially desirable

Implicature 2: Hair restoration will reinstate social status.

Benefit: Longmores will restore youthful looks and social status by restoring hair colour

Social Function: Expressive, Directive, Informative

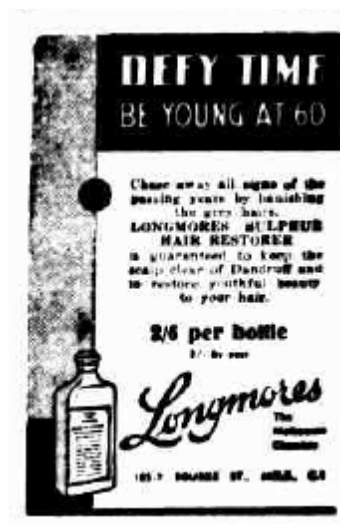


Figure 9 Advertisement: Longmores-Hair-Restorer. Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p. 11.

Both Cuticura-Talcum-Powder and Longmores-Hair-Restorer are graphically basic and functional. Complex advertisements, however, combine words with pictures in elaborate ways, such as ‘Horlicks’ (fig. 10). The literature (Geis, 1982; Myers, 1994) shows that this class of advertisement operates at two levels:

1. linguistic attention-getters carry meanings
2. real-world mimicked elements functionally symbolise veracity (e.g. presence of a product authority or celebrity; or graphs and testimonials) and meld with other elements (like body text and utterances of fictional characters) to reinforce or extend implicit messages.

Horlicks is a powder-based beverage, purportedly of a rejuvenative nerve-tonic type that restores physical and mental fitness. The device of storytelling cartoon is used to help relay advertiser meanings. There are meanings potentially retrievable from both the words and the pictures – and these are designed to be understood based partly on what is actually said and partly on receiver belief or knowledge (Geis, 1982: 41-56). The Horlicks’ pictures enact a family mini-drama. They are positioned between the linguistic attention-getters, namely two NPs and a complex clause:

<i>Disjunctive NP</i>	MY BOY A COWARD?
<i>Disjunctive NP</i>	HORLICKS
<i>Complex clause</i>	GUARDS CHILDREN AGAINST NIGHT STARVATION

The negative trait of cowardice constitutes the problem. The product name 'Horlicks' is the solution (positive value). The complex clause comprises the verb phrase (VP) 'guards children' and the complement 'against night starvation'. It suggests existence of a nocturnal agent with intent to attack children in sleep. Horlicks, however, offers the security of effective protection: 'Horlicks guards children from night starvation'. There is an implied mysterious connection between cowardice and the obscure night starvation.

The emotive interrogative headline 'My boy a coward?' – with the possessive 'my', uttered by the mother – employs the convention of direct speech in conversation. It has three functions:

- Socially engages the target audience (parents)
- Expressively establishes the mother's distress that her son is associated with the negative trait of cowardice (fear of challenge, weakness of character)
- Presupposes that boys should be fearless.

Thematically, the advertisement rests on the idea that timid behaviour in boys is inappropriate. The Phatic and the Expressive are recoverable from the headline 'My boy a coward?'; and the covert Directive and Informative are recoverable from the collective stimuli of the linguistic attention-getters that relay the idea of Horlicks offering both night protection to children, and a remedy for weakness and timidity:

Horlicks supplies night protection, and the energy needed to achieve your child's desirable health and social outcomes. So, buy this product!

**MY BOY
A COWARD?**

SMALL BOY: "Cowardly Custard Johnnie! Cowardly Custard Johnnie!"

BOY: "Did you hear that?"

WIFE: "Those boys are always picking on him. It isn't fair!"

HUSBAND: "The kid's got no life in him. I never thought he'd turn out to be a coward!"

WIFE: "Fred, don't say that! He isn't well . . . so pale and thin. I'm taking him along to see Dr. Reynolds."

DOCTOR: "Mrs. Martin, young Johnnie's a rather nervous type of child. These troubles of his are really due to his sleep. You see, children grow during sleep. This uses up their energy. Heartbeats and breathing at night also use up energy. Naturally, if energy isn't replaced during sleep, children get run down, pale, thin—just pick at their food. Put Johnnie on to Horlicks."

WIFE: "Well, you can't call him a cowardly custard now!"

HUSBAND: "Darling, it's amazing! He's a regular tiger!"

HORLICKS

GUARDS CHILDREN AGAINST NIGHT STARVATION

Figure 10 Advertisement: Horlicks. Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p. 39.

While linguistic forms and social functions are explainable, the obscure idea of protection ‘against night starvation’ is peculiar. It violates the conversational cooperative principle of Maxim of Manner, which states that obscurity should be avoided (**Grice, 1975**). This peculiarity raises the puzzle of ‘what is night starvation?’; and suggests that the violation is a strategy to intrigue the addressee. In this case, ostensibly, the intention is to absorb the reader in the Horlicks four-frame cartoon story.

Picture-wise, in the first Horlicks frame, we see a distressed mother (head and shoulders). She is holding onto a horizontal bar (symbolically representing a barrier, and/or a support offering security). The two next frames visually communicate father-mother concern for their boy child, who appears socially isolated and troubled. Then, mother and child are pictured in consultation with a male adult, presumably a doctor. The final frame shows the boy performing a diving stunt, being watched by three boys. It is apparent that something triggered a dramatic change – from negative condition (withdrawn, listless) to positive condition (confident, energetic). The line drawings tell a story of emotional and physical transformation. Thus, seemingly, pictures have the power to generate intended meanings (**Messarís, 1997**). Together with the standout words, the comic strip may adequately relay the idea of Horlicks as a remedy for physical weakness and timidity.

However, the full meanings of the advertisement are gleaned only by reading the cartoon storytelling words, which reveal that the boy is being taunted by peers and name-called ‘Cowardy Custard Johnnie’. His father, Fred, is disappointed in him, but the mother is determined to get help for the child. Thematically, the advertisement rests on the idea that timid behaviour in boys is inappropriate; and, from the cartoon story, we learn that it attracts bullying and social isolation.

We also learn – from the doctor, who is the product authority – the meaning of ‘night starvation’. The idea underpinning nocturnal starvation is that children grow while they sleep; and even their breathing and heartbeat are depleting essential resources that need replenishment. The medical diagnosis is that the boy is ‘a nervous type’. ‘Put Johnnie on to Horlicks’, orders the doctor. Horlicks supplies the energy needed to achieve health (and popularity). The final words uttered are by the father: ‘Darling, it’s amazing. He’s a regular tiger!’ These words show that the father’s confidence in his son has been restored by the positive action of Horlicks. This example illustrates how everyday conversation is used as an identity-building device to involve viewers (**Berger, 2016**).

Horlicks: meaning-making summary

Theme: Timid behaviour in boys is inappropriate, and attracts bullying and social isolation

Presupposition: Boys should present as fearless and energetic

Implicature: There is a remedy for physical weakness and timidity

Benefit: Horlicks supplies the energy needed to achieve your child's desirable health and social outcomes.

Social Function: Phatic, Expressive, covert Directive, Informative

Summary and Conclusions

Advertisers harness a range of linguistic and semiotic devices to design advertisements that maximise Selling Power. To illustrate the meaning-making phenomena at work, nine press advertisements from the 1940s brand-building era have been investigated. Analysis shows exploitation of the natural-language reference system to relay persuasive propositions via collateral bundling of thematic information, presupposition and implicature. The primary carriers of meanings are the eye-catching attributes; however, meanings can be reinforced and extended by other features (like dialogue between fictional characters, ellipsis and intertextuality). Integration of the social functions of language to engage viewers as participants emerges as a staple of advertisement design.

Of linguistic interest is that advertisements are characterised by both disjunctive syntax and full sentences – variously in declarative, imperative and interrogative structures. Given the pre-meditated nature of advertisement design, it is predictable that choice of grammatical structure is linked to target audience (children, women, men, adult). Thus, a further direction of this research is to study the syntax and grammatical mood of standout features in relation to market segmentation.

Acknowledgements

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Fig. 8. Advertisement: Cuticura-Talcum-Powder. Source: The Argus 26 September 1940, p. 2. Reproduction of The Trade Mark of Cuticura is Authorised by Management, Cuticura Labs, Sales and Marketing, USA.

Fig. 10. Advertisement: Horlicks. Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p. 39. Reproduction is authorised by GSK Consumer Healthcare Australia.

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Fig. 4. Two advertisements: Klexema and Hayfix. Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p.2, p. 31.

Fig. 5. Two advertisements: Deaf, Goitre. Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p. 2, p. 31.

Fig. 6. Advertisement: Your-Face-Is-Your-Fortune. Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p. 11.

Fig. 7. Advertisement: Are-You-Nervy? Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p. 11.

Fig. 9. Advertisement: Longmores-Hair-Restorer. Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p. 11.

List of Figures

Fig. 1. Jakobson's communication model. Source: Adapted from Leech, 1981, pp. 40-42.

Fig. 2. Propositions are formed by collateral bundling of hidden meanings

Fig. 3. Advertisement: The Baby Shop: Newborn to 24 Months. Line-drawing artwork by Bruce Rankin, Melbourne, Australia.

Fig. 4. Two advertisements: Klexema and Hayfix. Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p. 2, p. 31.

Fig. 5. Two advertisements: Deaf, Goitre. Source: The Argus 16 November 1940, p. 2, p. 31.

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List of Tables

Table 1. The five social functions of language. Source: Leech, 1981, pp. 40-42.

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ⁱ This research is part of a greater study of 250 Australian press advertisements for personal products and services over some 100 years, from the mid-1800s to the late 1950s.

ⁱⁱ Graphetics is the creative violation of normative typography (such as manipulation of fonts) that render eye-catching deviations from standard formats (see **Fischer, 1999**).

ⁱⁱⁱ For copyright reasons, the original advertisement is not reproduced here. The original was accessed 25 May 2016 at shop.nordstrom.com/c/baby

^{iv} In simple terms, 'mood' refers to three grammatical forms: declarative (expressing fact), interrogative (expressing a question), imperative (expressing a command).

^v Bold emphasis on the Hayfix standing details (proprietor name and address) is likely due to the competitive atmosphere of the 1940s era, characterised by shift from the individual supplier to chain stores (including chemist franchises) and multinationals (see **Myers, 1994**).